

DAVID Y. IGE
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Statement of
Hakim Ouansafi
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
AND
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**

**Monday, February 11, 2019
3:05 PM - Room 016, Hawaii State Capitol**

In consideration of
SB 1395
RELATING TO HOUSING

Honorable Chairs Ruderman, Chang, and Members of the Senate Committees on Human Services, and Housing, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning Senate Bill (SB) 1395, relating to housing.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) **supports the intent** of SB 1395, provided that it does not adversely affect the Governor's Biennium Budget. SB 1395 appropriates funds to support the state rent supplement program (RSP).

The RSP is a State funded program that was originally set up to assist middle-income families, who were not threatened by poverty, but were not economically sound to afford the high cost of living in Hawaii. The program was originally designed to assist teachers, policemen, and firemen. The program was later extended to include the general public and has a maximum rental subsidy of \$500.

With the assistance of the Legislature in providing an additional RSP position during the 2016 legislative session, the HPHA has expanded the RSP program to currently serve 390 families and is ready to assist more families if \$3,000,000 in additional funding is provided.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the Committees with the HPHA's testimony regarding SB 1395. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.

SB-1395

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 9:52:33 AM

Testimony for HMS on 2/11/2019 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
David Deges	Testifying for Hawaii Island HIV/AIDS Foundation	Support	Yes

Comments:

SB-1395

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 7:25:13 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/11/2019 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
David Mulinix	Testifying for Our Revolution Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

SB-1395

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 5:30:53 AM

Testimony for HMS on 2/11/2019 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Claire Gearen	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Dear Chairs Russell E. Ruderman and Stanley Chang, Vice-Chairs Karl Rhoads and Dru Mama Kanuha, and Members of the Housing and Human Services Committees,

My name is Claire Gearen, and I write in strong support of Senate Bills 471, 1031, and 1395 as a concerned private citizen. I am also a member of Faith Action for Community Equity, which supports a continued \$200,000,000 appropriation for the rental housing revolving fund. It is urgent that we maintain progress reducing homelessness and increasing access to affordable housing.

Thank you for the generous notice about the February 11 hearing for these bills. As Senate Bill 471, 1031, and 1395 all relate to rent subsidies for citizens at risk of homelessness and are being heard during the same time, I would like to address these bills together in combined testimony.

I have felt the high housing costs in Honolulu as I have at times contributed more than 50% of my income towards housing. In contrast, my twin sister lives in Oregon and for the same price as my one bedroom condominium is raising her two children in a four bedroom house. My parents and another sister and her family are currently sharing a house in Pauoa as an akamai way to save on Oâ€ahu's high housing costs.

At one time or another in the last five years, each of my siblings and I residing in Hawaiâ€i have needed some family assistance. At one point I accepted help with my maintenance fees for a year as an alternative to downsizing to a studio. With thanks to United Ways, legislators now know that in 2017 there were 165,013 families in Hawaiâ€i that were Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households, and many ohana in Hawaiâ€i lack the extra resources to assist the next generation. Shallow short term rental assistance can keep families housed for less than the cost of servicing them once they become homeless. Shallow long term rental assistance for kupuna on fixed incomes makes sense as housing costs rise far beyond expectations when they were in the workforce. Our pride as a community is entwined with care of our elders. We should not see kupuna on the streets.

Some parents are now advising their millennials to move to the continent or refrain from having children, advice that is surprising for a potential grandparent to say. We all know that in the last two years we were one of only a few states to lose residents. In addition, the birth rate declined by nearly a half. We need residents and an upcoming generation to keep our economy balanced and sustainable. Passing legislation to increase access to affordable housing and reduce homelessness will send a message to families that the situation will improve and that there could be a future for them here in the islands. As someone who considered a move to Portland, Oregon only a few years ago as expenses surpassed my income, I know the difference short term shallow housing assistance can make in keeping me rooted at home. While my assistance came from family, we should have a government program for those without extended family means.

I urge you to pass legislation to provide shallow rental assistance to qualified residents.

Sincerely,
Claire Gearen