



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

March 25, 2019

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs

FROM: Scott Morishige, MSW, Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

SUBJECT: SCR 62 – REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR'S COORDINATOR ON HOMELESSNESS AND THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU TO COME TOGETHER AND PRIORITIZE THEIR HOMELESS EFFORTS IN THE AREA SURROUNDING THE HAWAII CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER BY CONVENING A TASK FORCE

Hearing: Monday, March 25, 2019, 2:45 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator appreciates the intent of this measure, and respectfully offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this concurrent resolution is to request the Coordinator and the City and County of Honolulu to come together and prioritize their homeless efforts in the area surrounding the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center by convening a task force.

The Coordinator acknowledges that homelessness is a statewide issue that impacts every county. The Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), which includes participation by the Coordinator and the City & County of Honolulu, has adopted a comprehensive framework to address homelessness that focuses on three primary leverage points – affordable housing, health and human services, and public safety. The Coordinator works closely with State and County agencies and law enforcement to connect trespass and other enforcement efforts together with the offer of services and housing-focused programs, such as Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing. The coordinated efforts to implement the State's

framework to address homelessness have made progress in reducing the number of homeless individuals statewide. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of homeless individuals in Hawaii decreased by 690 individuals (9.6%). The decrease was one of the largest numeric decreases in homelessness in the country, only exceeded by decreases in California, Florida and Michigan. This recent decrease is the second consecutive decrease in homelessness in Hawaii – representing an overall 18% reduction since 2016.

In Kakaako Makai, the State assists with programs for emergency shelter, outreach, and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). Specifically, the Department of Human Services (DHS) administers two emergency shelters to address the needs of homeless individuals and families – the Family Assessment Center (FAC) and Next Step shelter. In addition, the Kalihi-Palama Health Center and the Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center (H3RC) conduct outreach regularly in the area, which includes offers of shelter, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and medical services. The University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) also administers the H.O.M.E. Project, which provides mobile medical services at Kakaako Waterfront Park every Thursday evening from 5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

One example of collaboration with the City & County of Honolulu in Kakaako Makai is the partnership between the Coordinator and the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) HELP Honolulu program. HELP Honolulu pairs HPD officers with State-contracted outreach providers who participate in coordinated outreach efforts that place individuals into emergency shelter or other longer-term placements (e.g. residential treatment, medical respite, etc.) with the assistance of the Coordinator and staff. A recent HPD HELP coordinated outreach effort resulted in the placement of 12 individuals into emergency shelter, and one individual to a residential treatment facility.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



March 21, 2019

**To: The Senate Committee on Human Services & The Senate Committee on Public Safety,
Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs**

Re: SCR 62

Testimony prioritizing efforts to address homeless encampments in the area surrounding the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center

Children's museums play a significant role in promoting lifelong learning and serve as important cultural resources within the community. Our Children's Discovery Center is the first and only children's museum in the State of Hawaii. The Center's mission is: 1) to bring information and experiences about the world to the children of Hawaii and, 2) to instill in Hawaii's children pride in themselves and their ethnic and cultural heritage.

As an Island State, Hawaii is geographically isolated from the rest of the United States and the world. For many children, this means that their personal experiences and impressions about the world beyond our island shores are limited to what is available to them within the State and what they learn or read about in school. In order to broaden their horizons and open new and wonderful worlds to them, a facility such as a children's museum is especially important to so many of Hawaii's children.

Located across from the Kaka'ako Waterfront Park in downtown Honolulu, the facility consists of 45,000 square feet of interactive exhibits within five major galleries. It is a popular visitor attraction for families with children of all ages and a place where they can experience, explore, investigate and discover things about themselves and the world around them in a creative and fun environment where they are learning through play.

Children's museums across the country have become vitally important in the lives of children. Through galleries of hands-on, interactive exhibits, children and adults can learn together through play. Play is an important way that children learn. In the adult world, we use words like "experiment," "investigate," "hypothesize." Here, we use words like "explore," "discover," "imagine" and "dream." In a children's museum, our exhibits are designed and built for that purpose. They also allow for children to use their imagination and creativity and to discover things in their exploration of the environment around them. This is an extremely important element for empowerment, which is what we do here. To nurture and to empower ... and all through having fun and play. What better way could there possibly be to learn!

Over the past ten years, we have experienced extreme hardships due to the homeless population that surrounded the perimeter of our building. For years now, the Children's Discovery Center has quietly observed the steady growth of homeless individuals and families along our sidewalks and the neighboring Kaka'ako Waterfront Park. Subsequently, an inordinate amount of our financial resources needed to be allocated for maintenance and repair issues as a result of trespassing, vandalism and theft on our property. Our board and staff have been trying to "do more with less" without compromising the high quality of our exhibits and educational programs.

Being surrounded by homeless encampments over the past several years has been a huge challenge for us. Coordinated efforts by the city and state, together with social service agencies and health care providers, have not provided any long-term solution to this problem, and we know that the process of restoring Kaka'ako Park and the area will be challenging and complicated. We also know that it will be difficult for the Children's Discovery Center to recover from the conditions that we have endured over the past many years.

Solving the homeless situation is a major and complex challenge, but progress on addressing this issue is critically needed. While we are certainly sympathetic to those who are in need of help, the homeless encampments surrounding the Center have had severe repercussions for the Children's Discovery Center and other stakeholders in the Kaka'ako Makai area over the past many years. Unfortunately, we are seeing this problem intensifying once again. The issues that we've been subjected over the past ten years have been physically, mentally and emotionally devastating. Trespassing, vandalism, theft, and all kinds of harassment have been bad enough; but most hurtful of all, has been the lack of response or concern from those we've reached out to for help. Clearly, there is no easy solution to the problem of homelessness, and as I have stated publicly many times that is NOT what this is about. What it IS about is our children.

It is so important to us for the Children's Discovery Center to be a wonderful safe haven for all families with children who are eager to come here to play and to learn. Our staff has been extraordinarily dedicated to providing outstanding educational programs for those who continue to come because they love the Center and benefit from our programs. For us to continue serving them in the best way we need help in addressing the problems created by the growing homeless encampment in Kaka'ako parks. We are unsure whether it will even be possible for us to recover fully from some of the challenges we experienced that were beyond our control, but ones that may continue to plague us for a long time to come. We have stepped up our efforts to ensure that the Center continues to be a safe and clean environment so that the families who use and love the Center can continue to be inspired by the programs and learning opportunities that our staff works so hard to develop. Drawing from our mission and our purpose, combined with a philosophy which is deeply rooted in the spirit of Aloha, we continue to focus on the children.

The Hawaii Children's Discovery Center continues to serve as a model for the creation of children's museums throughout China today. The first one opened in Beijing in 2015 and the second one will celebrate a grand opening in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia later this year. Presently, we are supporting efforts to develop children's gallery spaces in traditional museums throughout China for early learners, starting with the Shanghai Science & Technology Museum. This is exciting work indeed, and all of us should feel proud that our children's museum in Hawaii served as the original inspiration for this movement. While these are challenging times, the challenges also present us with unique opportunities to step up and become strong advocates for our children on a global scale. We are proud to have the opportunity to bring Hawaii to the world through our children. In the foyer of our Discovery Center the children of Hawaii are described as "Hawaii's Rainbow Connection to the world." We must put our efforts into working together to prepare them to navigate their world and to live and lead with their hearts filled with Aloha.

Loretta Yajima
Chair of the Board of Directors & CEO
Hawaii Children's Discovery Center
111 Ohe Street
Honolulu, HI 96813



STATEMENT OF
AEDWARD LOS BANOS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
HAWAII COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

HAWAII COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



**KAKAOKO
KALAELOA**

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Before the
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND THE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND
MILITARY AFFAIRS**

Monday, March 25, 2019
2:45 P.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

in consideration of
SCR 62
**URGING THE GOVERNOR'S COORDINATOR ON HOMELESSNESS AND
THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU TO COME TOGETHER AND
PRIORITIZE THEIR HOMELESSNESS EFFORTS IN THE AREA
SURROUNDING THE HAWAI'I CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER BY
CONVENING A TASK FORCE.**

Chairs Ruderman and Nishihara, Vice Chairs Rhodes and Wakai, and
Members of the Committees.

The Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) has not acted on
this measure. As Executive Director, I respectfully offer the following **comments**.

The purpose of this concurrent resolution is to request the Governor's
Coordinator on Homelessness and the City and County of Honolulu to come
together and prioritize their homelessness efforts in the area surrounding the Hawaii
Children's Discovery Center by convening a task force.

HCDA notes the Coordinator, state departments, social service agencies and
the city collaborates to offer services and conduct enforcement activities throughout
Kakaako.

HCDA is also in the process of transferring its Kakaako Makai parks to the
city to help that effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SCR 62.

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 5:55:33 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Betty Y Yoshida	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a retired public school teacher I have witnessed the value of the educational experience when young children visited the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center. As a local resident I have witnessed the joy that my grandchildren and mainland/foreign visitors experience at the Center, wanting to return again and again. The Center is unique in its creative exhibits and activities that focus on science, environment, health, tourism, commerce, literature, the arts, and a variety of cultures that make up our Aloha state. Unless you have participated or observed a child in playful learning at the Center, you will not know how special and rare this place is. It exists because of its exceptional staff, generous donors, volunteers, and the repeat visits from many schools. For our children's sake, please find a way to keep it in its present location, safe from outside harm. Mahalo nui loa.

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 10:09:40 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sylvia Wee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing today, as a retired educator, to lend my voice to the throng of others who are concerned about the survival of the Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center. The Center is a valuable educational resource, unique in that it is the only museum in the state that caters to our preschool and lower elementary students, providing hands-on educational experiences appropriate to their age-level.

The homeless situation in the Kakaako Waterfront Park area has created a health and safety issue that affects the continued existence of the HCDC. As an occasional volunteer at the HCDC, I can empathize with the parents who are reluctant to visit the Center. On days when I help prep materials for HCDC hands-on activities, I park in an area where I can see my car during my shift. If I volunteer at the special night activities, I have my husband drop me off and pick me up at the CDC entrance so I do not have to walk to or from my car in the parking lot. If I walk around the grounds of the HCDC, I carefully watch where I step.

I support SCR 62 and am pleased that the Legislature is taking action by encouraging the Governor, Legislature, Mayor, and City Council to work together find a solution to the problems in the Kakaako Waterfront Park area so that all the residents of Hawaii can enjoy the park and the surrounding community.

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/21/2019 9:17:03 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Daisy Ishihara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

"Our greatest natural resource is the minds of the children," is what Walt Disney said. These children, our children, will one day be the leaders of our great state, Hawaii. What better place is there to enrich a child's early learning than at Hawaii Children's Discovery Center, a state of the art museum right here in Kakaako? A place that facilitates learning in a fun way using the child's senses to explore, discover, imagine and dream. A place where a child has choices and making the right choice is important in adult life. It's a safe haven once you are in but getting there is the problem. Being exposed to encampments, unsanitary conditions where unhealthy habits prevail, littering, unsafe conditions in the parking area and walking past loiterers prevent people, locals and tourists from going there! I, Daisy Ishihara, a retired educator and volunteer at HCDC for 18 years, am in favor of this teamwork between our state and city and fully support SCR62. The time is here! Let's protect HCDC, a one of it's kind Children's Museum! A parent once told me, "If I can come here every day, I would!" That tells it all!

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/21/2019 1:19:34 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Valerie Okihara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a retired Hawai`i public school teacher and administrator who volunteers monthly at the Hawai`i Children's Discovery Center (HCDC), I support SCR62. A task force of State and City officials, HCDC representative and other community members will be able to work together on solutions and coordinate efforts to ensure the safety and health of the area surrounding the center. Current efforts are ineffective, temporary and fragmented with the State and City working separately and disagreeing on jurisdiction. For a while after a recent voluntary clean-up by a group of civic-minded homeless, the area felt safe. However, there are already campers moving in again and the HCDC has been affected by criminal incidents. Making the area safe with a well coordinated plan will benefit not only the center and Hawai`i's keiki but also community members who enjoy the park, go to the John Burns Medical School, and do business in the area. Solutions should also provide help for the homeless currently camping in the area.

The Hawai`i Children's Discovery Center provides an enriching and fun environment where Hawai`i's keiki develop language and critical thinking skills which are the foundations for literacy. It also provides experiences and background knowledge which may not be available directly such as viewing x-rays of their bones in a "doctor's office" and a "visit to Asian countries" from which their ancestors may have come. While interacting with others, children develop life skills such as cooperation and concern for others. Parents learn with their children and strengthen positive bonds. Thousands of Hawai`i's children, including those living in disadvantaged areas, also come to the center on field trips at a lower cost funded by grants.

Please vote "yes" on SCR62. The HCDC is a valuable educational resource. The creation of a task force will be a first step toward positive solutions to ensure the health and safety in the area.

Thank you for taking time to read this testimony and for your consideration of this resolution which could impact the future of the Hawai`i Children's Discovery Center.

Valerie Okihara

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/22/2019 5:24:22 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Candace Yanagihara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a resident of Waipio Gentry and have a concern for our keiki's health and safety in the area surrounding the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center.

As a retired educator of over 30 years, a parent, a grandparent, and a concerned citizen, I feel definitely qualified to say that the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center is a key educational facility that fosters learning in even the youngest of our children. Not only do the children learn, but parents, the children's first teachers, have a venue with a myriad of hands-on experiences which stimulate their children's learning and social interactions. Parent involvement in a child's education is one of the keys to a child's success in school.....and HCDC fosters just that kind of parent-child interaction.

As a PAL (People Assisting Learning) volunteer at HCDC for over 10 years, I have seen firsthand the joy and excitement of children (my own 4 grandchildren as well) as they enter the facility and as they engage in the learning environment. Even parents who are coming for the first time are in awe of what the Center provides. HCDC provides learning opportunities weekly for the different age groups from toddler and preschoolers to learning camps (usually filled with a wait list) during school breaks, as well as visits by public and private schools. While I served as a PAL, I've had visitors to our island tell me that they don't have anything like it where they live.

It is such a shame that the situation surrounding the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center is a health and safety issue. How can it be that we cannot protect the areas that our keiki visit and learn in? How can it be that families are reluctant to visit such a place built for families to learn together because they do not feel it is a safe place for their children and themselves?

I realize much time, money, and effort, from many sources, have gone into trying to resolve the homeless issue but the fact remains that the Center is beset with sanitation problems and some families just do not feel safe there due to the close proximity of those who set up their shelters right across the street and in nearby parking lots.

I strongly feel that if there are laws prohibiting loitering/trespassing for schools, then there should also be the same laws/safe zones for wherever large groups of children congregate regularly.

Sincerely submitted and hopeful for a resolution to the health and safety issues surrounding Hawaii Children's Discovery Center,

Candace Yanagihara

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/24/2019 1:09:00 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carol Kuroda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I, Carol Kuroda, am a volunteer and supporter of the Children's Discovery Center at Kakaako for many years. The children may unknowingly learn life skills and awareness of othe cultures through play and hands on activities. It's a joy for me to see their discovery moments, using their creativity in their play and interacting with their adult. CDC provides many special activities, traveling exhibits, excellent Toddler Program, Summer Camps, etc throughout the year. The interior of the museum is clean, safe and a condusive environment for all. The outside of the museum should also be a SAFE, CLEAN and welcoming environment. A consistent and constant enforcement of the laws and patrolling are needed to respect the rights of CDC and the law abiding citizens who come to the museum.

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/23/2019 9:27:39 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jodi Yamami	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

When my daughter was a little one, the Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center was an exciting adventure every time she stepped through their doors. She vividly remembers laughing at herself in the distortion mirrors, trying to blow the biggest bubble with all her might, riding the carousel on special occasions, dancing with Daddy at the Valentine’s Day Dance, and dressing up for the Halloween Costume Ball. Today, she is 16 years old, and she still excitedly goes to the Center, taking with her the children of family friends so they can experience all that she did when she was young. Hopefully those children will have similar delightful memories of the Center as my daughter does instead of remembering the wretched images of piles of garbage on the sidewalks and the fearful feeling while swiftly walking with eyes lowered as they pass the homeless surrounding the Center.

I support SCR62 with the hope that the little ones of today will remember only the positive influence that the Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center provides.

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/24/2019 11:02:07 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bianca Kusatsu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a retired teacher, a volunteer at Hawai'i Children's Discovery Center for 15 years, and a grandmother of 5 grandkids living on Oahu. I have played with each of my grandchild at the Discovery Center where it is a safe and nurturing environment for them to discover, create, and learn to whatever/wherever their imagination takes them. The have learned life skills and respect for the myriad of community helpers by becoming a postal worker, a police officer, and a fireman themselves-all in play. They have learned to play and share with other children as well as respecting the center by cleaning up. We love this place. There is like no other in the state. Please help to keep the surrounding areas of the Discovery Center family friendly and safe for all to attend.

SCR-62

Submitted on: 3/24/2019 12:56:07 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/25/2019 2:45:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Enomoto Ginger	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I have taken my grand children to the CDC and we have enjoyed all the experiences offered.

We have concerns about the homeless people in the area which makes it unsafe.

Please address the situation and clear all homeless in the area.

Thank you for any help you can provide.