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February 5, 2019

TO: The Honorable Representative Tom Brower, Chair
House Committee on Housing

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

SUBJECT: HB1458 – RELATING TO HOUSING

Hearing: Tuesday, February 5 2019, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 423, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator supports this measure, as it provides funding for a key program to reduce and prevent homelessness.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to make an appropriation for the state rent supplement program.

Homelessness remains one of the most pressing challenges facing Hawaii, and the State 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 multiple state agencies and homeless service providers to implement this framework through the delivery of housing-focused services like Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing, as well as outreach and treatment services for unsheltered homeless individuals experiencing severe mental illness and/or addiction. 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.

The Coordinator notes that the state rent supplement program is an effective tool in reducing and preventing homelessness. The program provides a shallow rent subsidy for households that are low-income and would not otherwise be able to cover the full cost of rent on their own. Because the level of funding for the state rent supplement program is capped at a maximum of \$500 per month per household, the program has the ability to address a large number of households and is one of the more cost effective programs to address homelessness. In addition to directly assisting homeless individuals and families to access housing, the state rent supplement program prevents homelessness for households that – but for the additional funding provided by the program – find themselves at imminent risk of homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

Tuesday, February 5, 2019
9:30 AM - Room 423, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
HB 1458
RELATING TO THE HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY

Honorable Chair Brower and Members of the House Committee on Housing, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning House Bill (HB) 1458, relating to housing.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) supports the intent of HB 1458, provided that it does not adversely affect the Governor's Biennium budget. HB 1458 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 House Committee on Housing with the HPHA's testimony regarding HB 1458. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.

HB-1458

Submitted on: 2/5/2019 7:13:37 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/5/2019 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	O`ahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i	Support	No

Comments:

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State Rent Supplement Program Public Hearing Quotes

Ron

"writing to let you know how vital that help is for mt rental apartment, that I cannot otherwise afford on my own. My disability compensation is not enough t cover my survival expenses. I count on the rent supplement program to be able to hold onto my rental studio. That is my only hope for not becoming homeless again. I appreciate you being able to take into account my situation, as I am on SSDI and am unable to work."

Rodrigo

"Right now, I am depending on the help that I am giving me. My wife is on dialysis two years now and the help the program give us help us a lot because the money I receive is not enough. I am paying \$900 a month and I receiving only 1051. We need the money to buy the things we need, like soap, tissue, paper towel. And my wife sometimes need extra money sometimes to buy the things that she needs. I don't know what will happen if will gonna happen if take out the help you're giving us. I hope you will consider some of our reasons for helping us. Thank you."

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Eufemia

"I'm just here because I was receive the letter that came about the supplemental rental because my ss is not enough for me sir. And I cannot work as of now because I have dizziness and my BP is too high. Last week I went to the hospital because my BP is 190/110 so I want to work but I can't. and I was alone in my apartment on Beretania."

Larke

"one of the issues that I faced. I'm working 2 part time jobs, I will be 70. I'm waiting to max out on social security. But even with that, the issue I'm finding over the last two years, is that rentals are increasing so much that they are basically out of range of any moderate income, pretty much below \$30,000. In fact, when I was trying to look for housing now, many are demanding 3x the months rent and some type of income. So a program like this becomes absolutely essential. Where you can find owners willing to rent to this program was one other issue. This program is often identified with section 8. But, um, at this point, what I saw, and I've lived in my area since '78. And even studios renting for 180-200 are now being price at 900, 1000, 1100. So this program has been a godsend to even attempt to even afford these rentals. And, um, now my only concern is if the program does waiver, might be if it has an adverse effect on some owners, and reduces their confidence in the program. But I do appreciate the fact that you are trying to come up with ways to help keep the program going in some form for all of us, rather than just cutting it completely, so thank you."

Wilma

"I have 4 kids, and what I have to say about this program, is this program is really help my family. Only my husband is working. I cannot work because nobody can pickup my kids from school and drop off and my other one is not in school yet. And so my husband tries his best to help, so this program has really helped our

31A 321

family, and I'm here. I just want to let you know if you can please help us to on this program because I don't want my kids to be homeless or we don't have any place to go. Thank you."

Mary bell

"I receive supplement after 8 years I waited. I was told that I applied for palolo and never got called, it's been 11 years. I know it's frozen, but every time I ask, there's nothing. No help. And already, I'll be 80. So I can't go out to work. And my daughter was in jail. So she came out but she no longer came back. So I have to do it all by myself. And it's very hard because I can't work. And my social security is only \$769 a month. So that really helps. Not much but it helps. I just pray that you get the million dollars you need. Thank you."

Daniel.

"I stay on supplement right now. I get five...(*can't understand)...if someone give it to me, but I like stay on the supplement rental and then because it's helping. When I'm sick, my payment does go down. And then I don't have any question right now. Thank you."

Linda

"I'm very thankful for all the help you've given me throughout the years. I couldn't have made it without it, and I still won't be able to make it without it. But I appreciate that you would want to work with the amount for everyone, so someone would always get something. It would be given equally, distributed equally, and I appreciate that. And I just want to say thank you again."

Thomas

"I came from the homeless shelter and this RSP has changed my life. I'm grateful. That's pretty much all I've got to say."

Duwayne

"I'm the specialist that assists the folks that have spoken to you today. It's difficult to have people come in and say what's in their heart as well as what's on their mind. A lot of times they don't understand the workings of the government and they ask me to basically be their interpreter to what's going on. I'm sure there's a lot of people out of the 399 that we do have on assistance right at the moment that would like to come in and say something, but they didn't. However, I know, because they call me every day, they're asking about the letter that was sent out and I give them the best answer. They're either going to suspend, terminate, or reduce the amount of benefits they may be entitled to. With that being said, the hope is that there will be something for these people to cling to, so they will be able to keep their units. And they can continue to live the life's they are leading. Basically, this is their lifeline. As you can see, some of them came up just like me – getting emotional. They want to say – 'keep the program for them.' And I want to say, 'Keep the program for them.'"

