



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1031: RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

TO: Senator Russell Ruderman, Chair, Senator Stanley Chang, Chair; and Members, Committees on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: **Monday, February 11, 2019; 3:05 PM; CR 016**

Chair Ruderman, Chair Chang, and Members, Committees on Human Services and Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of SB 1031, which establishes and funds the long-term rental assistance pilot program for elders. I am Betty Lou Larson, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i. We are also a member of Partners in Care.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 70 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Our Housing Assistance Program for elders finds that many of our clients who are homeless or at the point of homelessness could rapidly be housed with the type of subsidy proposed in this bill.

Skyrocketing housing costs are an especially serious threat to Hawai'i's kupuna living on fixed incomes. One elderly veteran came to CCH after being homeless for 14 years. He was unable to afford a unit even though he was willing to share with a friend, also a homeless elder. Their salvation was an ongoing rental subsidy which got them a unit where they no longer had to spend much of their budget on buying ice daily and eating out due to no place to cook. These kupuna were overwhelmed with gratitude that they would not have to weather gusty winds and could take a hot shower.

In Hawai'i, 1,386 elders, 60 years or older, are homeless (Homeless Service Utilization Report, 2017). Many other elders face falling into homelessness each year as Hawai'i rents climb beyond their means. Affordable senior housing takes years to obtain and cannot assist elders in a crisis. Rent subsidy programs like Section 8 and the State Rent Supplement Program, are now closed for new applications due to their already long waiting lists.

A Long-Term Rental Assistance Pilot Program for Kupuna can address the needs of this especially vulnerable population. The program would provide rental assistance, on an ongoing basis, to homeless elders and elders at imminent risk of homelessness. Catholic Charities Hawaii supports a **\$1.5 million** appropriation for this pilot program. Our kupuna need safe, decent, and affordable housing to enable them to age in place.

Thank you for addressing our vulnerable kupuna who urgently need affordable housing. Please contact me at (808) 373-0356 or bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.



SB-1031

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 2:10:25 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Goodman	Testifying for Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force	Support	Yes

Comments:

TO: Senator Russell Ruderman, Chair, Senator Stanley Chang, Chair, and Members, Committees on Human Services, and Housing

FROM: Mike Goodman, Director, The Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force, Member, Partners in Care

RE: SB1031

**Hearing: Monday, 2/11/19; 3:05 pm; CR 016
Chair Ruderman, Chair Chang, and Members, Committee on Human Services, and Housing:**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support of SB 1031**

The University of Hawai'i's Center of the Family's 2017 Homeless Services Utilization Report shows that 1,386 elders over the age of 60 were homeless. It's a travesty we're doing such a poor job caring for our kapuna. Rising rents will make many more homeless who are on fixed incomes.

There's an old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; Once someone becomes homeless, it's exponentially more difficult, and more expensive, to rehouse that person than it would have been to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. And if that person is not rehoused, or worse, if 1,368 of our kapuna are not re-housed, then we have the crisis we're faced with today.

This difficulty and cost of rehousing people, does not even take into account the damage caused by becoming homeless, even when that person is homeless for a short period of time. For example, having an eviction on their credit report can make hard, if not impossible, to rent housing on the commercial market for up to ten years. There are also many adverse health effects of being homeless, some of which can cause permanent damage. The health risks of homelessness are also particularly acute for the elderly.

This pilot program is about prevention. It's an important step toward ameliorating the shame we should all feel for allowing our kapuna to become homeless.

I PROPOSE ONE AMENDMENT.

I propose that the pilot program be expanded to include handicapped persons not currently served by other programs. Just like our kapuna, they live on fixed incomes and are often physically vulnerable.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-1031

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 9:47:25 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-1031

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 7:24:13 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:



Inspiring Hope, Changing Lives

Visit us on the web: www.hopeserviceshawaii.org

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HOPE Help Line: 808-935-3050

Hearing: SB 1031 in support
Date: February 11, 2019
Location: State Capitol, Room 016

Aloha Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:


I am submitting testimony on behalf of HOPE Services Hawai'i, a nonprofit homelessness service provider, in support of SB 1031, which would establish a long-term rental assistance pilot plan.

Rental prices in Hawai'i have skyrocketed over the last several years, putting the dream of a safe and comfortable home out of reach for many of our neighbors, especially for our kūpuna who live on fixed incomes. Hawai'i County, which was already struggling with the highest poverty rate in the state, has been hit especially hard, as result of the eruption that decimated a large chunk of our already insufficient housing inventory.

Alexis A., a senior who was displaced by the eruption and temporarily lived in Sacred Heart Shelter (our micro-unit shelter for kūpuna lava evacuees), recently told Hawaii News Now, "I saw prices shooting up 200, 300 percent."

Alexis eventually found a place to live, but many others are not so lucky. In fact, those who work a full-time job at minimum wage are only able to afford \$525 a month in rent, far below the average rental price in Hawai'i.

I urge you to do your part to ensure that those who have worked so hard for us, are not forced onto the streets by rising rents they cannot keep up with. Please do right by our kūpuna by supporting SB1031. Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Brandee Menino


Chief Executive Officer
HOPE Services Hawaii, Inc.

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY



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Our mission is to eliminate homelessness through open and inclusive participation and the coordination of integrated responses.

Testimony in Strong Support of SB 1031: Relating to Homelessness

TO: Committees on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Partners in Care (PIC)

HEARING: Monday, February 11, 2019 at 3:05 p.m., Conference Room 016

Dear Chair Ruderman, Chair Chang, and members of the Committees on Human Services and Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1031, which would establish a long-term rental assistance pilot program for kupuna. Partners in Care (PIC), a coalition of more than 50 non-profit homelessness providers, strongly supports this bill.

Many kupuna in our state have worked hard all their lives, but now may face homelessness due to skyrocketing rents. Partners in Care feels it is a tragedy that 1,386 elders (age 60 or older) are already homeless. Many other seniors may face homelessness as their rents rise. These seniors often just have an economic need though their health and safety are put at risk if they become homeless. Senior housing projects have extremely long waitlists. Section 8 and the State Rent Supplement Program are closed for new applications. A shallow rent subsidy program is urgently needed to help homeless elders and those at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

Addressing homelessness requires a multi-faceted approach using interventions that are targeted to the particular characteristics of the population being served. Low-income elders living on fixed incomes are a gap group that have few resources to avoid homelessness when their incomes become stretched too thin to pay their rents. This economic need can be resolved with an ongoing shallow rent subsidy. Seniors lack the ability to increase their incomes to pay higher and higher rents. The Long-Term Rental Assistance Pilot Program proposed in this bill would help very vulnerable elders to obtain or retain housing. Partners in Care supports \$1.5 million for a pilot program to divert our kupuna from homelessness.

Partners In Care strongly supports SB 1031 to help our kupuna live in decent, safe housing so they can age in place in our community. Thank you for your consideration of this very important bill.

SB-1031

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 5:28:49 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

SB-1031

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 2:29:51 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-1031

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 8:49:19 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Diane S. Martinson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB1031. With rents continuing to rise, especially in this state with desirability of location and outside money interests, our kupuna on fixed incomes must not be forgotten. This bill addresses the unique challenges faced by elders on fixed incomes. Thank you for addressing this issue.