



**EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS**  
HONOLULU

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
GOVERNOR

February 20, 2019

**TO:** The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

**SUBJECT: SB 1395 – RELATING TO HOUSING**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 20, 2019, 10:05 a.m.  
Conference Room 211, 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  
GOVERNOR



HAKIM OUANSAFI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BARBARA E. ARASHIRO  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY  
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POST OFFICE BOX 17907  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

Statement of  
**Hakim Ouansafi**  
Hawaii Public Housing Authority  
Before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**Wednesday, February 20, 2019**  
**10:05 AM - Room 211, Hawaii State Capitol**

In consideration of  
**SB 1395**  
**RELATING TO HOUSING**

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, 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 Committee with the HPHA's testimony regarding SB 1395. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.

**SB-1395**

Submitted on: 2/18/2019 10:23:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/20/2019 10:05:00 AM

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

Comments:

**SB-1395**

Submitted on: 2/16/2019 1:44:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/20/2019 10:05:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Thomas Flores	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

SB 1395 RELATING TO HOUSING

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Conference Room 211

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

SB 1395 RELATING TO HOUSING

Aloha, Committee on Ways and Means:

I am writing to inform you, that I am a current recipient of the Rent Supplement Program pertaining to SB1395. My name is Thomas Flores, and I would love the opportunity to share my point of view in regard to the Rent Supplement Program. I arrived in Honolulu Hawaii in 2016, with a sack clothes and very little financial resources. During the first week of living in Honolulu, HI, I submitted job applications and lived out of a hostel on a day by day basis. By the second week, I received a call for an interview at CJ's New

York Style and Deli located inside the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Thankfully, I was hired on the spot for the Dishwasher position, and looked forward to receiving my next pay check and an employee meal.

As my financial resources depleted, I submitted an application at Next Step Homeless Shelter, located in the Kakaako area. After one month of being wait listed, I was accepted into Next Step Homeless Shelter and assigned to Case Worker, Garret Koshiba. I lived at Next Step Homeless Shelter for about a year and experienced challenges that helped me grow as an individual. As I was living at Next Step Homeless Shelter my life began to change in a positive direction. Next Step Homeless Shelter offered the Go Cook and Go Bake Programs held at Kapiolani Community College. Each program was three months long and paid each participant \$50 per day. I gladly accepted this opportunity and earned my basic cooking and baking certification within six months.

A week after completing the Go Cook and Go Bake programs. I updated my resume from Dishwasher to Cook and Baking Apprentice and submitted applications to several businesses in search of employment. About two weeks later, I received a call from Safeway for an interview. I attended the interview for the Baker position and was hired immediately, due to my Go Bake certification.

Next Step Case Worker, Garret Koshiba, explained, since I was generating income; I would be able to qualify for the Rent Supplement Program operated by Catholic Charities. We submitted an application to Catholic Charities, which got accepted. Next, Catholic Charities Administrative Program Manager Dani Gella constantly searched to assist me in finding housing before the deadline. Ms. Gella and Garret Koshiba would communicate with me on their days off to discuss my housing situation. After months of searching for a Landlord who would accept the Rent Supplement Agreement; Case Worker, Garret Koshiba and Program Manager Dani Gella found me a place to live, and now I live in a small studio with a bed to sleep in, which is a dream come true. Furthermore, since the supervision of the Rent Supplement Program has transferred from Catholic Charities to Hawaii Public Housing; Public Housing Specialist II, Mr. D Malachi has done an exceptional job in ensuring that I have a place to live through his professional communication and passion for helping others in need.

Furthermore, the Go Cook and Go Bake programs inspired me to continue my education at Kapiolani Community College. I am one semester from obtaining my AS in Pastry Arts and would like to continue my education by earning an AS Culinary Arts as well. I believe this education will give me a competitive advantage in the food industry and most importantly, I will never go hungry.

I understand the Rent Supplement Program may cease to exist or endure changes. Therefore, I am asking the Committee on Ways and Means to allow the Rent Supplement Program to continue so it may change people's lives for the better. I would like to continue to better myself as a person, so I may reach my full potential. However, it would be extremely difficult for me to survive without the Rent Supplement Program.

For the reason being, I have no family in Hawaii. The Rent Supplement Program, Hawaii Public Housing and Catholic Charities are my family.

I understand cost, expenses, and return on investment are important factors when it comes to making a decision in regard to SB1395. However, I ask the Committee on Ways and Means to take into account the intangible value involved. For instance, I am proud to be a resident of Hawaii. Moreover, Hawaii's cultural values have affected me for the better. For instance, I leaned to help others, regardless if I enjoy their company or not, because it is the right thing to do. With that said, investing in the Rent Supplement Program is the right decision, because some recipients will grow exponentially and give back to the community.

Lastly, the Rent Supplement Program has opened many doors for myself. For instance, Kapiolani Community College, Frolic Hawaii, and a branch within City of Honolulu have asked me to conduct interviews, because they consider myself a success story. Kapiolani Community College is creating a poster with me on it, that will encourage students to join the Go Cook and Go Bake programs. The poster will be finalized in March of 2019. The interview and photos will be sent to Frolic Hawaii. The City of Honolulu would like to conduct the interview for the purpose of raising funds for the Go Cook and Go Bake Programs. Furthermore, on September 26, 2018, I was blessed with the opportunity to bake for Governor David Ige and his guest at Kapiolani Community College.

Believe me, I am not much of a talker, because I prefer to work. Therefore, I share these blessings in this testimony, because without the Rent Supplement Program none of the interviews in regard to our success would be possible. However, my counselors, who I consider family have asked me to conduct the interviews, so I will. Furthermore, Hawaii Public Housing invited me to attend the Senate Hearings on SB1395, and I will because they are my family. Mahalo for your valuable time and consideration. I wish the Committee on Ways and Means the best with the decision-making process.

Mahalo,

Thomas Flores

\*(Attached is Linda Ford's Testimony. Ms. Ford does not have an email address to submit her testimony, therefore, with her permission I have included her testimony

Below:)

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Conference Room 211

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

RE: Senate Bill 1395

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Linda Ford and in less than six months I will be 70 years old. I am also disabled and require a walker or rollator to help with my balance to be able to walk. I live by myself with a little bird as my companion. With Rent Subsidy, I have a better quality of life. I have a reason and hope to wake up every morning. I am very thankful for the rent subsidy that I receive. I am grateful and appreciate all the help that you have given me. Yet I have a fear that I will become a statistic of being lost and forgotten, living with hopelessness and despair, becoming homeless, so I implore you, please continue the Rent Subsidy Program.

Thank you and May God Bless You All,

Linda Ford



**LATE**

**SB-1395**

Submitted on: 2/19/2019 12:27:36 PM  
Testimony for WAM on 2/20/2019 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Goodman	Testifying for Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force	Support	No

Comments:

**RE: SB1395**

**Hearing: Wed, 2/20/19; 10:05 am; Rm 211**

**To:** Committee on Ways and Means; Chair; Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair, Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran

**From:** Mike Goodman, Director, The Hawaii Kai Homeless Tas Force; Member of Partners In Care

**RE: SB1395**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB SB1395, to provide funding for the State Rent Supplement Program subsidy.

This program serves families who barely make ends meet and require either temporary or permanent financial assistance to prevent them from becoming homeless.

It's far more cost effective (not to mention humane) to prevent families from becoming homeless than it does to rebuild their lives and rehouse them after they become homeless.

The State Rent Supplement Program provides what is referred to in the parlance of homeless service providers as "shallow subsidies". This is distinguishable from "deep" subsidies, which are for those at the lowest end of the financial spectrum. Since this program serves families with more or less stable incomes, modest subsidies are sufficient to prevent homelessness. Therefore, this program tends to do alot of good relative to the amount of money spent.

**DESPITE THE HAWAII KAI TASK FORCE'S SUPPORT FOR THIS BILL, WE RECOMMEND CONSOLIDATING THIS BILL WITH SIMILAR BILLS, AND COMBINING THE STATE RENT SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM WITH OTHER SIMILAR PROGRAMS:**

The Director of the Department of Human Services, Pankaj Bhanot, once commented that one of the problems he has fighting poverty, is the “silo-ing” of assistance programs; In other words, too much compartmentalization, too much duplication, and too many restrictive mandates preventing flexibility and creative solutions.

We have programs that provide rent subsidies to families, and other programs for individuals with certain handicaps. We have a bill for a pilot program to provide subsidies for our kapuna. There are other bills to re-direct \$75 million dollars from the Rental Housing Revolving Fund for the chronic homeless, some of which would also be used for rent subsidies. This bill provides “shallow” subsidies, while other programs provide “deep” subsidies.

There are at least 20 Senate and House Bills introduced in 2019, which pertain to affordable housing and rental subsidies. The following is only a partial list.

**(SB1031, SB471, SB474, SB229)\*** SB1 (Aloha Homes Senator Chang’s bill?) SB400 (Aloha Homes Senator Chang’s bill?) SB14, SB886, SB1119, SB890, SB1020, SB123, SB1183, SB1194, SB515, SB636,, SB363, SB1331, SB1468, SB387 (For teachers from Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund), SB1189, SB886, SB100,

**(HB643, HB574, HB473, HB476, HB1554, HB476)\*** HB1204, HB955, SB1182, HB956, HB1373, HB479, HB1141, HB1312, HB543, HB1403, HB962, HB819, HB1036,

The Hawaii Kai Task Force supports many of the foregoing bills, all of which have laudable goals and salient points. Accordingly, we think this bill, and all similar bills should be “kept alive”, until a conference committee or other appropriate Legislative entity, can consolidate the best of each into a single rent subsidy program.

THE BILL SHOULD PROVIDE THE BROADEST DEFINITION OF A BONA-FIDE BENEFICIARY POSSIBLE. THE BILL CAN ALSO SPECIFY WHICH BENEFICIARIES HAVE PRIORITY OVER OTHERS. It should then be left to the Department of Human Services, (or whichever department is chosen to manage the program), to decide whether or not and how to divide the rent subsidy program into specialized units.

**Thank you for the opportunity to testify.**

***\*(Bills initiated by Partners In Care)***