



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

January 29, 2020

TO: The Honorable Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and
Health

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2893 SD1 – RELATING TO CHRONICALLY HOMELESS**

Hearing: February 19, 2020, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration bill and offers comments.

PURPOSE: Amends the definition of "chronically homeless" to provide clarity and improve the delivery and development of homeless services. (SD1)

The current section 346-378, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), excludes individuals with only physical disabilities from the definition of "chronically homeless individual," and does not consider the duration of homelessness. The change in definition will help to ensure that Housing First services are targeted to individuals who are especially vulnerable due to their long history of homelessness, and disabling conditions (e.g. mental illness, addiction, or physical disability).

DHS agrees that the proposed amendment will align with the federal definition and reduce confusion amongst providers, communities, and private partners who provide homeless services and who may receive funding from both State and Federal agencies.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of "chronically homeless" provides a way to prioritize people with the longest histories of

homelessness and with the most severe needs. It seeks to ensure that persons with the highest needs are prioritized for permanent supportive housing.

The two Continua of Care (CoC) in Hawaii, Partners in Care on Oahu and Bridging the Gap for the Neighbor Islands, have established a Coordinated Entry System (CES) as required by HUD. Each CoC has decided on its own prioritization scheme for the CES based on the needs of its community. Both CoCs utilize the HUD definition for chronic homelessness to ensure those with the highest needs are prioritized for the appropriate intervention to maximize resources available to individuals and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

February 19, 2020

TO: The Honorable Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

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

SUBJECT: SB2893 SD1 – RELATING TO CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

Hearing: Wednesday, February 19, 2020, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness supports this administration bill.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to amend the definition of "chronically homeless individual" in Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), section 346-378(e), to provide clarity and to improve the delivery and development of homeless services.

The change in definition will ensure alignment with the definition of "chronically homeless" currently used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and will avoid potential confusion for homeless service providers and other funders of homelessness. By including an individual's length of homelessness as part of the definition, and expanding the definition to include those with a physical disability, the measure helps to ensure that Housing First services are targeted to homeless individuals with the highest level of need in the community.

The Coordinator notes that the change in definition is also consistent with the State's efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of homeless service delivery, similar to the adoption of performance metrics in State homeless service contracts in 2017. The change in performance metrics was a key factor in increasing the number of individuals exiting homeless

services to permanent housing by 73% between 2016 and 2019 - an increase from an average of 357 per month to an average of 616 per month.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

SB-2893-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2020 2:22:00 PM

Testimony for CPH on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rynette Keen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha mai Kakou:

I am writing to you regarding SB2893 SD1, which amends the definition of "chronically homeless" to provide clarity and improve the delivery and development of homeless services. (SD1).

As a person that has been chronically homeless, I am neither a person with an addiction nor a mental illness. The definition does need to be amended in order to reach a greater population of chronically unhoused. It is important to realize that just because a person is unhoused does not mean that they suffer from a mental illness or addiction problem. I was chronically unhoused and could not get help because I did not qualify under the current definition of being chronically unhoused. I was unhoused due to the extreme cost to occupy a rental unit and my Social Security Disability did not allow me to rent a place of my own and still doesn't. I beseech you to vote in favor of this measure, SB2893 SD1 so that the more vulnerable unhoused can have access to this needed resource.

Sincerely,

Rynette K. Keen, AA, BSW Student

Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work

University of Hawaii - Manoa DE