



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

March 11, 2020

TO: The Honorable Representative Joy San Buenaventura
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

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

Hearing: March 13, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration bill and offers comments. This Committee passed the House companion measure, HB 2337, by defecting the effective date. This is the remaining vehicle.

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.

SB-2893-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2020 5:53:07 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/13/2020 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Andrea Quinn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Please support SB2893. Many in the homeless population can be helped if there are enough services and funding to assist them, and clarifying definitions is one right step in that process.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

Andrea Quinn

Kihei, Maui



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai‘i

Friday, March 13, 2020

Senate Bill 2893, SD1
Testifying in Support

LATE

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Nakamura, and Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness,

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii stands in support of SB2893, SD1. This measure amends the definition of “chronically homeless” to provide clarity and improve the delivery and development of homeless services.

Amending the definition of “chronically homeless” to align with the federal definition will reduce confusion among providers, communities, and private partners. Thus, amending the State’s definition of “chronically homeless” to better align with the federal agency’s definition will allow more flexibility and consistency in the delivery of homeless services.

In 2019, 44.9 in every 10,000 people in Hawaii were experiencing homelessness, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress. The national average was 17 people per 10,000.

California and Hawaii have the highest rates of homelessness among all individuals (excluding families with children) with 68 and 63 of every 10,000 individuals experiencing homelessness. These rates are 2.5 times the national average rate of 24 per 10,000 individuals. Of Hawaii’s homeless individuals, 75% are unsheltered. Of 1,992 homeless families, 454 were unsheltered, or nearly 23%. Of 222 homeless youth, 149 were unsheltered, or 67%. Hawaii has one of the highest rates of veteran homelessness in the nation with 39 per 10,000 people, 58% of whom are unsheltered. 36% of Hawaii’s homeless population is chronically homeless, meaning individuals with disabilities who have been homeless for a year or more, or have experienced 12 or more months of homelessness over the last three years. More than 85% of chronically homeless people in Hawaii are unsheltered. Finally, Hawaii’s chronically homeless population has more than doubled since 2007.

Per Oahu’s 2019 point-in-time count, most of Hawaii’s homeless population lives on Oahu: more than 4,400 people. More than half of these people are unsheltered, living on sidewalks, in parks and in other public places not meant for human habitation.

Oahu purports to have made great strides in reducing family and veteran homelessness: the number of homeless families decreased by 42% from 2015 to 2019 and veteran homelessness declined 18% in that time. The focus now is on the unsheltered population.

For these reasons, including our rising homeless population, skyrocketing housing prices, stagnant middle-class wages, limited land space, increasing crime and threatened safety, we urge you to vote favorably on this bill to amend the state's definition of "chronically homeless" to align with the federal definition so that necessary services to the homeless population can continue to be provided. Further, amending the State's definition of "chronically homeless" to align with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of "chronically homeless," would allow homeless services providers to use the required federal definition when receiving federal funds to provide services to the homeless community.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

/s/ Melodie Aduja

Melodie Aduja
Co-Chair Green New Deal Committee
Environmental Caucus
Democratic Party of Hawai'i
Email: Legislativepriorities@gmail.com

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2019/05/23/considered-low-income-one-person-honolulu-according-hud/>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/01/hawaii-is-no-longer-no-1-for-homelessness-new-york-is-worse/>



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

LATE

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

March 13, 2020

TO: The Honorable Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

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

SUBJECT: **SB2893 SD1 – RELATING TO CHRONICALLY HOMELESS**

Hearing: Friday, March 13, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, 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.