



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

January 29, 2020

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

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

Hearing: Friday, January 31, 2020, 2:50 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

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

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill amends the definition of "chronically homeless" to provide clarity and improve the delivery and development of homeless services.

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

January 31, 2020

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

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

SUBJECT: SB2893 – RELATING TO CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

Hearing: Friday, January 31, 2020, 2:50 p.m.
Conference Room 016, 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.



Friday, January 31, 2020

SB2893

Testifying in Support

Aloha Chair Ruderman, Vice Chair Rhoads, and Members of the Committee on Human Services,

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i (The Party) stands in **support of SB2893**. The bill amends the definition of “chronically homeless” to provide clarity and improve the delivery and development of homeless services aligning the State’s definition with the federal definition. This step will reduce confusion among providers, communities, and private partners. 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 Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i have the highest rates of homelessness among all individuals (excluding families with children) with 68 and 63, respectively, of every 10,000 individuals experiencing homelessness. These rates are 2.5 times the national average. Of Hawai'i'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%.

Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i'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 Hawai'i are unsheltered. Finally, Hawai'i's chronically homeless population has more than doubled since 2007.

Per O'ahu's 2019 point-in-time count, most of Hawai'i'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.

O'ahu has 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, we urge you to vote favorably on this bill. 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,



Josh Frost
Co-Chair, Legislation Committee
Democratic Party of Hawai'i



Zahava Zaidoff
Co-Chair, Legislation Committee
Democratic Party of Hawai'i

<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/>