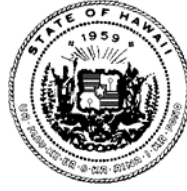


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 22, 2023

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1366 HD1 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.**

Hearing: February 24, 2023, 11:30 a.m.
Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure and offers comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation in this measure not replace or adversely impact priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The bill's purpose is to require the Department of Human Services to establish a three-year return-to-home pilot program to return homeless individuals in the state to families and relatives in their home states. Appropriates funds for the implementation of the return-to-home pilot program. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1).

The HD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Requiring the Department of Human Services to contract with eligible nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, or foundations as part of a public-private partnership to administer the Pilot Program;
- (2) Authorizing the Department of Human Services to enter into contracts as part of the public-private partnership without regard to the Hawaii Public Procurement Code and law governing purchases of health and human services;
- (3) Requiring program participants, or their families, to pay half the cost of any transportation used to return the participant to their home state, unless the participant is indigent and lacks the financial resources;

- (4) Requiring all funds provided to eligible nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, or foundations be matched by these entities on a dollar-for-dollar basis;
- (5) Changing the effective date to June 30, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (6) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

DHS appreciates the Legislature's commitment to addressing homelessness in Hawaii and the importance of linking an individual with their family as a strategy to end the person's homelessness. DHS appreciates the revision made in Section 2 (d) that includes that the participant of the program, family, or relatives be responsible for one-half of the cost of any transportation used to return the participant to the participant's home.

Regarding Section 2(c), the Department does not have the staff, rules, or system infrastructure to provide such services and maintain documentation to track whether an individual previously accessed the return-to-home funds. In addition, implementing a new pilot state program would require a general fund appropriation and may duplicate existing private capabilities not subject to State procurement law.

The broader concern is the unintended consequence that a state-funded and state-implemented program will attract individuals to Hawaii, knowing they may have access to a one-way return ticket by claiming to be homeless and lacking resources to return. This concern stems from experience and reports from contracted homeless service providers fielding inquiries from the U.S. mainland who *plan* to become homeless in Hawaii and access homeless services upon arrival or after they deplete their funds. While certain DHS services and benefits do include citizenship requirements, we do not have timed residency requirements for US citizens. Consequently, DHS must provide services to eligible individuals in most circumstances unless the person receives the same federally funded benefit in another state. DHS suggests the Legislature consider providing funds to private organizations with existing programs through the grant-in-aid process per Chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



Democratic Party of Hawai'i Supports H.B. No. 1366, HD1

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i supports H.B. No. 1366, HD1, to establish a pilot program to return homeless individuals to families and relatives in their home states.

The platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i speaks to economic justice, as follows:

We believe that all people have the right to live a dignified life free from poverty and poor health.

We broadly support measures that are designed to promote a *right to a dignified life* free from poverty and poor health. We ask for the *right to a dignified life* to be considered in all relevant measures enacted by our Legislature.

Mahalo.

Dennis W. Jung
State Party Chair
Democratic Party of Hawai'i



The Institute for Human Services, Inc.
Ending the Cycle of Homelessness

TO: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Jill Wright, Director Community Relations
IHS, The Institute for Human Services, Inc.

RE: HB1366: RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS - Return-to-Home Pilot
Program

HEARING: February 24, 2023 at 11:30 AM

POSITION: IHS **supports** the passing of HB 1366

IHS, The Institute for Human Services has been operating a homeless relocation program since 2015, when we were granted seed funds from the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association to address the many transient homeless encountered in Waikiki. Since then, we have worked with a number of private funders to continue delivering this program. The program has by all accounts been a success, and at its peak pre-COVID, was successful in relocating over 100 people each year. In the past 8 years, we have helped relocate over 600 people from Oahu primarily to the mainland US and neighbor islands.

Maui also conducted a similar program with a grant from HLTA. I don't have data that speaks to the success of that program.

Over the past two years, we have seen an uptick in the number of out of state visitors in both our outreach and shelter programs. There are many people looking to return to their families and more affordable cities. If there were dedicated staff and consistent funding to this program, we could work more quickly to identify serious candidates for the program, connect to their support networks, and help return people home expeditiously. I believe this would save our state much more in benefit and healthcare dollars.

The cost to our community to support a homeless individual is estimated on the low end at around \$35,000. For high utilizer, chronically homeless individuals, that can reach over \$1M. The cost to return a person home - including airfare, staffing, ground transport, etc.. averages just over \$1000 per person.

Hospital emergency departments would be well served by this program as some homeless individuals head for the hospitals as their first portal for triage into homeless services, knowing that they will get referred to shelter, and service providers are not likely to turn them away if they are coming from a hospital ED.

Please give consideration to funding this program in order to expand access for both Oahu and Maui.



HAWAI'I LODGING & TOURISM
A S S O C I A T I O N

Testimony of
Mufi Hannemann
President & CEO
Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

House Committee on Finance
House Bill 1366, HD1
February 24, 2023

Chair Yamashita and members of the Committee, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, the state's largest and oldest private sector visitor industry organization.

The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association—nearly 700 members strong, representing more than 50,000 hotel rooms and nearly 40,000 lodging workers—**supports House Bill 1366, HD1 as a segment of our state's concerted efforts to address homelessness in our communities.**

Since 2014, our organization has helped to coordinate repatriation programs around the state for homeless individuals, working with organizations such as the Institute for Human Services, Kauai Economic Opportunity, Inc., and Maui Family Life Center. Utilizing both public and private funds, this program paid half the cost of the travel fare necessary for these individuals to return to their home, with the balance of the fare being paid by the individual, a family member, or similar. Pre-pandemic, it was reported that nearly 800 people participated and just two percent have returned to Hawai'i.

We believe a major reason for this high level of success was that the repatriation program required that the individual be met at their destination by a family member or a loved one. This ensured that we were not sending people to other jurisdictions just to continue the cycle of homelessness but to receive the care and access to social programs and services that they needed through a caring and compassionate point of contact. As such, we would suggest the insertion of language that would make participation in the program conditional upon the participant being met by someone upon their arrival.

Additionally, we appreciate the amendments that were made to this measure that requires that half of the participant's travel fare be paid by the participant themselves, a family member, or other loved one. This condition was particularly effective for us and was a key point in keeping our return rate under 2%.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-1366-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 4:07:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB1366, HD1, because this measure will help get homeless back to their families on the mainland. When the homeless person is able to return to their home and family, they will be in a strong support group which will help them become stable and heal from the issues which may have caused them to become homeless.

This is also a win for Hawaii's taxpayers because this program will save the state millions dollars which would have been used for the large segment of homeless.

Finally, this program will protect the finite amount of resources for Hawaii's local homeless.

This program has already reunited hundreds of homeless with their families on the mainland with less than 2% returning to Hawaii.

For the foregoing reasons, I stand in strong support of HB1366, HD1.

HB-1366-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 11:48:32 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Matson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Please defer HB 1366, as many homeless advocates who are familiar with the diverse needs of this population would agree that the stated intent of this bill may be noble, but it's misguided. First, there is no evidence that there is even an accessible group of people who may benefit from this pilot program. From the 2022 Point in Time Homeless Count across our State only 8% of unsheltered individuals from islands other than O'ahu reported arriving in Hawai'i in the past year or less. Of those 8% or 34 households only EIGHT individuals said they may potentially be interested in a return ticket home. Locating these individuals may be problematic and disseminating information in an unbiased way may also prove challenging. As this program will potentially only benefit a dozen people or so, if they can be tracked down and offered tickets back to wherever they came, and if they still want to return there what is the point of spending time and personnel in setting up and maintaining such a program? The potential for a "fly them away" program to be abused is high, as those being offered tickets elsewhere may be the most "problematic" repeat users of our service providers and we would just be shifting our responsibility to help them by sending them somewhere else where they may actually find themselves in a worse situation.

As you can see in the Department of Health's testimony during the last hearing they have neither the resources nor the desire to maintain records on which individuals across the State use this program to avoid repeat customers. The potential liability for the State in paying to fly people off island who may have mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues is a whole other can of worms. Will there be any verification on the other end that someone is actually there to receive them and/or provide support? What is to prevent people from traveling here on a one-way ticket once they hear about this program with the hopes that if things don't work out the State will pay their return ticket? As the DOH warns, this may actually lead to an INCREASE in homeless relocating here from elsewhere.

There are so many other and better ways to be spending our money and time to help address our houseless crisis, this is not it. Those 8 homeless individuals who want to leave the islands can find support and get a return ticket through private charities and homeless organizations that are already familiar with their individual cases and situations, in fact probably with everyone reading this email donating their excess Hawaiian miles to HOPE Services we could buy each of them a ticket to anywhere in the world that they may want to go if someone is willing to receive and house them on the other end. There is no need to create another program and expect the DOH to

figure out all these details when we are talking about such a small population of people AND this is basically a glorified "move them along so they are no longer our issue" piece of legislation.

Here is the attached results from the point in time survey:

https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/content/sites/hawaii/2022_btg_pit_count_report_-_4.6.22.pdf

Mahalo for your time,

Shannon Matson

Hawai'i Island Resident