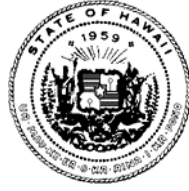


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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
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February 4, 2023

TO: The Honorable Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

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

Hearing: February 7, 2023, 8:45 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & 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. Appropriate funds for the implementation of the return-to-home pilot program.

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. However, as this proposal has been before us several times, the department's previous concerns regarding a 100% state-funded and state-administered program remain the

same. DHS recommends the Legislature provide funds or match funds through the Grant In Aid process under Chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to community programs that already assist individuals in returning home through partnerships with private, corporate, and other charitable organizations throughout the State.

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 that are 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 DHS services and benefits do include citizenship requirements, we do not have timed residency requirements for US citizens. Consequently, DHS is obligated to provide services to eligible individuals in most circumstances unless the person receives the same federally funded benefit in another state.

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



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

Committee on Human Services
Committee on Health & Homelessness
House Bill 1366
February 7, 2023

Chair Mizuno, Chair Au Belatti, and members of the Committees, 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 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.

We strongly suggest amending the measure to include clarifying language to this effect.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.