



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/04/2021

**Time:** 09:00 AM

**Location:** Via Videoconference

**Committee:** House Housing

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB 1387 RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Hawaii Public Housing Authority to establish a pilot program to ensure that all housing units in the Kuhio Park Terrace and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes are provided with sufficient internet speeds and connection quality. Appropriates moneys.

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers comments on HB 1387, which establishes a pilot program to ensure housing units at Kuhio Park Terrace and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes are provided sufficient internet speeds and connection quality.

Equitable access to the internet and technology resources has been a long-standing issue. The need for equitable access to connectivity became more evident with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required the people of the state to work and learn remotely. The Department appreciates that this measure recognizes the need for access to sufficient and quality connectivity to the internet, especially for populations which cannot afford access or live in areas of the state where connectivity is not available.

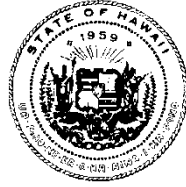
The Department defers comment on the specified pilot program to the appropriate agency.

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

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted

work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at [www.hawaiipublicschools.org](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org).

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



HAKIM OUANSAFI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BARBARA E. ARASHIRO  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

## STATE OF HAWAII

HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY  
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 17907  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

Statement of  
**Hakim Ouansafi**

Hawaii Public Housing Authority  
Before the

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

**Thursday, February 4, 2021**  
**9:00 AM - Room 423, Hawaii State Capitol**

In consideration of

**HB 1387**

**RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING**

Honorable Chair Nakamura and Members of the House Committee on Housing, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning House Bill (HB) 1387, relating to broadband access.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) **appreciates the intent** of HB 1387, and offers the following comments. This measure requires the HPHA to establish a pilot program to ensure that all housing units in the Kuhio Park Terrace and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes are provided with sufficient internet speeds and connection quality.

The two, sixteen-story towers that the bill references as the Kuhio Park Terrace complex are not owned by the HPHA, but rather owned by the Michaels Organization through a public private partnership, and broadband initiatives regarding that property would need to be done through the Michaels Organization. The Puuwai Momi public housing complex is under the jurisdiction of the HPHA and currently has internet accessibility through Hawaiian Telcom.

In order to truly conduct the pilot program for the HPHA's Puuwai Momi property that is envisioned in this measure, the HPHA believes that a study on the state of broadband access in all public housing properties should be conducted first, as HB 616 would accomplish.

While the HPHA has no experience in providing broadband internet access, the Agency has been working with broadband advocates on the state of broadband access in all 85 public housing properties.

Their preliminary estimate is that a study would cost approximately \$500,000 to accurately report costs to provide universal broadband access in all public housing projects in the State as a telecommunications network architecture firm would need to be contracted to perform an assessment of the current broadband infrastructure. At minimum, approximately three engineers would be needed to study the wiring and speed of service, while also taking into account the different types of buildings and the materials they are made of, as well as their locations on the island where those properties reside. To perform this study, we respectfully request a \$500,000 appropriation to provide for this broadband access report, so long as it does not adversely impact the Governor's Biennium Budget.

Please know that all HPHA public housing projects have internet access through either Spectrum or Hawaiian Telcom and most tenants also qualify for low-income rates that may be provided by those internet service providers. The purchase of broadband internet service is strictly between the tenant and internet service provider, as are other services, such as cellular phone service, electricity, and other utilities.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the Committee with the HPHA's testimony. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.



**TO: Chair Nakamura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and Members of the House Committee on Housing**

**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

**DATE/LOCATION:** February 4, 2021; 9:00 a.m., Conference Room 423

**RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 1387– RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING**

**We ask you to support HB 1387 which seeks to establish a pilot program to ensure that all housing units in the Kuhio Park Terrace and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes are provided with sufficient internet speeds and connection quality.** We strongly support this bill which aims to close the digital divide that many of our lower income families experience. Digital equity and access is one of many disparities that was highlighted as children and families navigated the challenges that COVID brought to our communities.

As a provider of serviced to both the Kuhio Park Terrace and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes, we witnessed firsthand the technology frustrations of many in these communities, which included lack of access to technology, devices and reliable internet. This technology resource gap meant that children and families struggled to:

- Remain consistent with student learning...
  - o increasing learning loss and widening learning gaps for students of lower socio-economic status.
  - o increasing stress for families who had multiple children at home who needed to access virtual learning platforms, without adequate resources.
- Have access to necessary healthcare services when things moved to virtual and tele-services... making basic care as well as life-saving necessities such as mental health care and COVID vaccines difficult to access, further increasing health disparities.
- File for unemployment... increasing stress and financial instability for many families.
- Search for new employment opportunities consistently... increasing household stress during an already stressful time.

Many of the organization and programs that serve the community adjusted and pivoted to meet the needs of children and families – providing access to technology and internet, securing and distributing devices and wifi hotspots for children, setting up socially distanced learning centers to provide in-person student support, setting up pop up unemployment assistance centers, and assisting where ever we could.

The COVID pandemic has exacerbated, not only health disparities but, the many economic disparities that exist in our communities and has highlighted with emphasis that we live in a world of “haves” and “have nots”. We believe a pilot program to provide quality broadband internet in KPT and Puuwai Momi would greatly benefit all residents of the public housing complexes, especially students for whom it’s essential for learning, and bring a much needed 21<sup>st</sup> century resource to typically under-resourced communities. This bill is also a public health necessity. Internet provides information needed for families to better understand and manage their health conditions, speak to physicians and sign up for vaccines. While we understand this is investment, it is an investment in Hawaii’s future ensuring that all of our children have equal access to learning and that individuals and families have access to healthcare and other quality of life services.

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii’s not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 18 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of HB 1387**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.



Better Tomorrows Hawaii Office | 1475 Linapuni Street | Suite 100 | Honolulu, Hawaii | 96813 | 808-983-1639

February 3, 2021

Chair Nadine K. Nakamura  
House Committee on Housing  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 422  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha Honorable Chair Nakamura and Committee Members,

I have service as the resident services coordinator for Kuhio Park community for over 10 years. In that time, I have come to know this population very well. It was heartbreaking when Covid-19 hit our community and I can only think of a handful of households that haven't been touched.

Becoming aware of the socio-economic, language and educational divide between those with access to the internet and our population, I and my partners at Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services, Parents and Children Together and Hawaii Literacy began meeting almost a year ago to try and identify a way to bring site-wide wi-fi to around 3,000 residents.

This population includes around 800 school-age kids and teens who needed and still need access to distance learning. Further, having access to Telehealth services could have greatly benefited them. It's a frail population, with over 50% Micronesians who've been exposed to nuclear toxins that, it's said will continue to manifest health conditions in their population for 5 generations. These folks paid it forward with promises of care.

While we've been successful in bringing rental assistance, food deliveries and personal protective equipment, the goal of site-wide wi-fi has eluded us. Please help end this disparity. This help will echo through the island as many of our residents work in the service industry – a much needed workforce. Yet, without access to education and health services, the future for our residents may look very differently.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this testimony.

With sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Ann C. Peterson'.

Ann C. Peterson  
Director of Hawaii Operations

**HB-1387**

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 8:26:52 AM

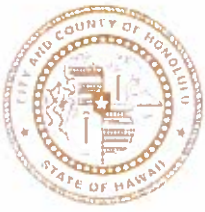
Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2021 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Fully support this measure that may result in ensuring that all housing units in the Kuhio Park Terrace and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes are provided with sufficient internet speeds and connection quality. Our recent experience with COVID-19 showed us the importance of internet access to providing education to our children and health care to our kupuna and others.





**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
530 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 202  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065  
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5010 • FAX: (808) 768-5011

**LATE**

**RADIANT CORDERO**  
Councilmember District VII  
(808) 768-5007  
(808) 768-1208 (fax)  
e-mail: [rcordero@honolulu.gov](mailto:rcordero@honolulu.gov)  
387

February 03, 2021

TO: REP. NADINE K. NAKAMURA  
CHAIR OF COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

REP. TROY N. HASHIMOTO  
VICE CHAIR OF COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

FROM: COUNCILMEMBER RADIANT CORDERO *RC*  
CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT VII

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1387 RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written testimony in support the pilot program for Towers at Kuhio Park and Puuwai Momi public housing complexes under HB 1387 Relating to Public Housing.

High-speed internet access at home has become increasingly important to access information and ensuring educational opportunity for families in public housing, regardless of their economic status. Due to the Covid19 pandemic, public housing community I represent was negatively impacted due to lack of resources, access to opportunities and healthcare services.

Initiatives will help bridge the digital divide. It will increase internet access for unconnected households and improve access for under connected households. During the first year of the initiative, our communities have made progress toward developing plans and partnerships for establishing high-speed connections for low-income families with children, and many communities have begun implementing the initiative, distributing devices, establishing internet connections, and providing digital literacy training.

Future data evaluation from this pilot program will demonstrate that families in public housing communities need initiatives to increase access and better implementation of broadband internet.

Thank you for taking the time to discuss and consider HB 1387.

LATE

**HB-1387**

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 10:14:18 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2021 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sara Lee Saramosing	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I, a Kalihi Resident supports HB 1387. It is very important that families in our public housing complexes have better broadband resources in order to access education and health care services. As a Substitute Teacher and Community Health Worker in Kalihi, I see the value in students having access to internet to complete assignments & connect with their peers during this time of isolation. If this bill is approved, it will greatly benefit many families in our community.

LATE

**HB-1387**

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 10:42:49 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2021 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Demiliza Saramosing	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support HB 1387 because I think it's absolutely important that multi-generational families in our public housing complexes have better high speed broadband network in order to access education and health care services. As an educator, I recognize that internet is a necessity for students to access Google drive, Zoom, email, etc. in order to excel in school remotely. As a caring community member, I also acknowledge that internet access allows for more telehealth resources for families concerned with quarantining/staying indoors due to COVID19, especially when Kalihi is currently a hotspot for the virus. In regards to care for mental health concerns, a better broadband network can allow safer ways to engage and connect with loved ones in Hawai'i and throughout the Pacific during this time of isolation.

With a better and more expansive broadband network, families who are often times living in large multi-generational homes and who are competing for internet access, can be able to access these important resources without overwhelming stress and hassle.

To ensure the well-being and success of students and families, I advocate for the HI State Legislature to support HB1387.

LATE

**HB-1387**

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 9:00:07 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2021 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lauralee Baoy	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of HB 1387 to provide internet access to KPT and Puuwai Momi low-income communities. I work at Parents and Children Together, Community Teen Program as a Youth Development Specialist in the heart of KPT.

With COVID-19 and a new school year, schools were faced with providing a way for youth to learn. Schools especially in the Kalihi area struggled to get enough learning devices for youth and on top of that providing internet access as many youth do not have wifi access at home. It took time for schools to get devices for all students who needed them and then to get working hotspot wifi access for youth who did not have internet access at home.

Fortunately our program received 75 hotspots through a grant to assist youth in the community in obtaining internet access. We provided hotspots to youth attending Kalakaua Middle School, Dole Middle School, Fern Elementary, Kalihi Waena elementary, Ka'ewai Elementary, Linapuni Elementary and Farrington High School. Some schools did have hotspots but they found that the hotspots supplied to them from the DOE did not function at high capacity within the KPT towers. Many youth expressed frustrations with lag-time and being unable to smoothly follow teacher's instruction online with continuous dropped connections. The hotspots that we did have from T-mobile were sufficiently better in KPT towers than those provided by the DOE as stated by one school principal for use by those students in the KPT community.

We do provide school day support at our program where youth can join us Monday through Friday until 8:00am to 2:30pm. These youth are able to get support for school and also access high speed internet. We have had some success in having structured learning at our program with youth who would otherwise not access online learning from home but we are a small program and limited in space and the number of youth we can service at one time due to restrictions in size of gathering and for the sake of COVID-19 safe practices. (social distancing, etc)

Our Puuwai Momi Community Teen program site operates primarily from a van supplying hotspot internet access for youth who need help with school daily from

11:30am-1:30pm to our program members in the Puuwai community because our building site run by HCAP in the community is not accessible at this time.

It is vital that each community, especially those in low-income areas have the same opportunities and tech equity as those in affluent areas on Oahu. Our youth are struggling with the pandemic and need reliable access to internet to be successful in school.