

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

February 24, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
House Committee on Finance

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

SUBJECT: HB 1666 HD1 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2022, 2:00 p.m.
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness appreciates the intent of this bill, respectfully offers comments, and defers to the Department of Health (DOH) on the establishment and implementation of the pilot. The Coordinator requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to establish a pilot program within the DOH Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) to make one or more licensed mental health counselors available to assist county first responders in responding to mental health crises in areas in the urban core with high rates of homelessness. The bill also makes an appropriation and requires a report to the Legislature.

The Coordinator appreciates the amendments by the House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness to establish the program in AMHD rather than the Department of Human Services (DHS) and adjusting the appropriation expending agency accordingly. In addition, the Coordinator appreciates the clarification that the purpose of the pilot program is to expand existing county programs that provide a similar service.

DOH AMHD oversees a broad range of mental health services that support the work of first responders, such as police. For example, AMHD administers the Mental Health Emergency Worker (MHEW) program in partnership with police to authorize emergency transports for

individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Additionally, AMHD oversees Crisis Mobile Outreach (CMO), Homeless Intensive Case Management (HICM) for individuals with frequent law enforcement or emergency department utilization, and a broad continuum of housing and stabilization beds for severely mentally ill adults. DOH Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) administers similar services for youth.

As Chair of the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), the Coordinator works closely with DHS, DOH and the counties to align programs like CMO with other homeless services. For example, the Coordinator is actively engaged in conversations with the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Community Services, Honolulu Police Department, Honolulu Emergency Services Department, DOH AMHD, and DHS Med-QUEST Division on efforts to streamline referrals for the City's new [Crisis Outreach Response and Engagement \(CORE\) program](#). Specifically, CORE is designed to divert non-emergency medical and behavioral health calls from 911, and recent conversations include the design of flow charts and decision trees regarding referrals to crisis bed stabilization and other related services.

In addition to systems-level coordination, the Coordinator and staff regularly share information regarding programs like CMO, CORE, and HPD community policing efforts with homeless and behavioral health providers statewide through [monthly webinars](#) and [bi-weekly provider meetings](#). Recent webinars have included presentations from HPD, the DOH AMHD Administrator, and the four counties, and upcoming sessions will focus on new medical respite efforts on Hawaii island and updates on CORE implementation.

Finally, the Coordinator acknowledges that mental health responses is one piece of a more comprehensive effort to address homelessness and housing instability. In addition, the HICH adopted recent policy priorities in 2022 advocating for increased low-income housing development for individuals transitioning out of homelessness, reducing upfront barriers to rental housing, and expanding programs that assist key homeless sub-populations (e.g., unsheltered youth, adults with severe mental illness, etc.). For more information about the 2022 HICH policy priorities, visit <https://homelessness.hawaii.gov/advocacy>.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

STATE OF HAWAI‘I
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**Testimony of the Office of the Public Defender,
State of Hawai‘i to the House Committee on Finance**

February 24, 2022

H.B. No. 1666 HD1: RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender supports the concept and intention of H.B. No. 1666 HD1, which will create a pilot program to make one or more licensed mental health counselors available to assist county first responders in responding to mental health crises in areas with high rates of homelessness. However, we raise concerns about the ramifications of coupling social workers or mental health counselors with police officers in homeless communities.

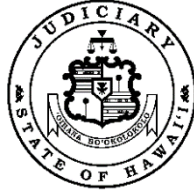
Eugene, Oregon houses one of the original alternative response programs in the United States in the form of “CAHOOTS” or Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets. The 1989 project pairs medics with professional health workers to respond to emergencies involving mental illnesses, medical concerns, and other psychological struggles instead of solely relying on encounters with policing. Since CAHOOTS’ establishment, other American cities such as San Francisco, Portland, and Denver have adopted similar programs referring mental health or social workers to sites of cognitive crises alongside or instead of local police officers. The City and County of Honolulu followed along with the 2021 creation of its Crisis Outreach Response and Engagement program, also known as “CORE,” which is contracted to direct houseless individuals to relevant medical and psychological services in association with HPD and the Emergency Services Department.

Joining mental health counselors or social workers with police officers will effectively blur the lines between service providers and law enforcement. Crucial relationships between service providers and houseless community members could suffer irreparable harm if the latter believe the crisis workers to be collaborating in conjunction with the police. According to [Partners in Care’s 2020 O‘ahu Point in Time Count](#), 25% of the island’s houseless community demonstrated mental health struggles. Within the first nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Honolulu Police Department dramatically increased its enforcement of specific measures targeting houseless folks with citations up 47% from 2019 ([Honolulu Civil Beat](#)).

Building genuine rapport with displaced persons is imperative to any service provider's work, and if the mental health counselor or crisis worker appears in cooperation with officers who've previously harmed the community member, that trust is broken. The mere presence of an armed officer can escalate tense situations, even if the crisis worker is the central responder. The last response a mentally ill individual needs during a vulnerable and sensitive time is a police officer uniting with a service provider they've interacted with and in whom they've had confidence.

Bills such as the proposed provide our homeless neighbors struggling with mental illnesses modest assistance instead of facing the often-fatal consequences of police interactions, but they do not address the sources of psychological distress and ongoing financial insecurity. Mental illnesses cannot be treated by one-off conversations with mental health professionals. Even if crisis counselors de-escalate a heightened situation involving a homeless individual, where does said houseless person go next? According to the [State of Hawai'i's Daily Emergency Shelter Vacancy](#) list (updated on February 22, 2022), there are approximately 110 bed spaces available on O'ahu. However, the previously mentioned Point in Time study noted that most recently in January 2020, 4,448 individuals were houseless on O'ahu. If every individual experiencing houselessness wanted to obtain emergency bed space, only around 2% would have access to the shelters based on the study's numbers. As helpful as mental health interventions could be in the immediate moment, most of O'ahu's houseless population would remain on the streets should the number of shelter spaces and transitional housing availability remain the same. To dramatically improve the conditions of our houseless neighbors, interventions, financial or otherwise, should be tailored to the specific needs of each community and individual suffering through hardship.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

Testimony to the Thirty-First State Legislature, 2022 Regular Session

House Committee on Finance
Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 24, 2022, 2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference

by:

Judge Shirley M. Kawamura
Deputy Chief Judge
Circuit Court of the First Circuit

Judge Melanie M. May
Deputy Chief Judge
District Court of the First Circuit

Judge Trish K. Morikawa
Circuit Court of the First Circuit

Judge Kenneth J. Shimozone
District Court of the First Circuit

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 1666 HD1 – Relating to Mental Health

Purpose: Establishes a pilot program within the adult mental services division of the department of health to expand existing county programs that make one or more licensed mental health counselors available to assist county first responders in responding to mental health crises in areas in the urban core with high rates of homelessness. Requires a report to the legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2060.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary provides the following testimony supporting a pilot program within the adult mental services division of the department of health to expand existing county programs that make one or more licensed mental health counselors available to assist county first responders in responding to mental health crises. These programs will assist in providing better aid and assistance to those individuals who fall under Act 26 (2020), and/or other sections of Chapter 704 of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes. In addition, they could provide assistance to patients while their cases are pending, as well as upon final disposition of their cases. It also has the potential to divert those suffering mental health crises from the criminal justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1666, H.D. 1

February 24, 2022
2:00 p.m.
Room 308 and Videoconference

RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1666, H.D. 1: 1) establishes a Mental Health Crisis Pilot Program within the Department of Health (DOH) to provide licensed mental health counselors to assist first responders in responding to mental health crises in areas with high rates of homelessness for a period of two years; 2) requires DOH to administer the pilot program in each county with a population greater than 600,000; 3) sets reporting requirements for DOH; and 4) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds to DOH in FY 23 for the pilot program.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

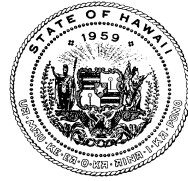
- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1666, H.D. 1
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

REPRESENTATIVE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: 2/24/2022

Hearing Time: 2:00 p.m.

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) supports this measure and
2 offers comments and amendments.

3 **Department Testimony:** The Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) offers the following
4 testimony on behalf of the Department.

5 The Department is committed to protecting and improving the health and environment
6 for all people in Hawaii including assuring that basic mental health care is available,
7 appropriate, of high quality, and accessible. The AMHD is responsible for leading, fostering and
8 coordinating a comprehensive mental health system that promotes mental wellbeing through
9 the delivery of dignified, holistic, and culturally relevant mental health care and services.

10 The AMHD provides statewide services across the crisis care continuum including
11 providing licensed mental health professionals to consult with law enforcement who are
12 dispatched to respond to individuals, both homeless and housed, when they are experiencing a
13 mental health crisis. The pilot program described in this measure provides for licensed mental
14 health counselors to assist county first responders in responding to mental health crises. This
15 pilot program fits within the programs that the AMHD is developing to expand our crisis care
16 continuum which currently includes a statewide 24/7 Department of Health (DOH) Hawaii

1 CARES crisis line, Licensed Crisis Residential Services (LCRS), Crisis Mobile Outreach (CMO), and
2 short-term behavioral health case management-based Stabilization Bed Units (SBU).

3 We respectfully request that all references to “licensed mental health counselors” be
4 changed throughout the measure to instead reference “mental health professionals” because
5 the Department anticipates the need to be flexible with utilizing staff who may specialize in
6 other mental health fields and who shall be designed by the Department to participate in the
7 proposed pilot program.

8 Mental Health Professionals (MHP), as defined by the Department, are individuals who
9 provide a wide array of clinically oriented services under the clinical supervision of a Qualified
10 Mental Health Professional (QMHP). MHPs function as team leaders who provide direct
11 supervision within their scope of practice and other interventions. MHPs have earned the
12 following degrees and/or licensure: Licensed Social Worker (LSW), Master of Science in Nursing
13 (MSN), Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN), and those who have a master’s degree in
14 Counseling, Psychology, Psychosocial Rehabilitation, Sociology, Human Development, or other
15 field approved by the Department.

16 The Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Human Services,
17 the Governor’s Coordinator on Homelessness, and the four Counties to enhance crisis care
18 across the state.

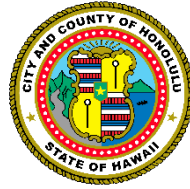
19 **Offered Amendments:** Please replace all references to “licensed mental health counselors” in
20 this measure with “mental health professionals”, which represents a broader group of
21 individuals as noted above.

22 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

23 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department humbly requests that this measure be considered as a
24 vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and
25 requests outlined in the Governors executive budget request.

**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HOUSING
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR

TRISH LA CHICA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 23, 2022

Testimony in SUPPORT OF HB1666
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

REPRESENTATIVE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE KYLE YAMASHITA, VICE CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: February 24, 2022

Room Number: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Office Position: The City and County of Honolulu's Office of Housing SUPPORTS this bill to create a pilot program to make one or more licensed mental health counselors available to assist county first responders in responding to mental health crises in areas with high rates of homelessness.

Offered Amendment: None.

Fiscal Implications: None for the Office of Housing

Office Testimony: The City and County of Honolulu's Office of Housing finds there is a lack of support in assisting the unsheltered population through our County's first responder programs with regards to mental health. Having a licensed mental health counselor present with first responders during a crisis situation involving individuals experiencing mental health issues will assist the City in providing the right assessment and identify appropriate services or service referral for that individual.

Currently, the City's Department of Emergency Services provides assistance to persons experiencing homelessness on the street through the Crisis, Outreach, Response, and Engagement (CORE) program. CORE is staffed by community health workers experienced in social work and emergency medical technician training. The Office of Housing requests that should this bill pass, that the definition of "first responder" include the front line workers involved in the CORE program. HB1666 will help to expand the City's efforts to prevent and decrease the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the City and County of Honolulu.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

ALII PLACE
1060 RICHARDS STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 768-7400 • FAX: (808) 768-7515

STEVEN S. ALM
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

THOMAS J. BRADY
FIRST DEPUTY
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



**THE HONORABLE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Thirty-First State Legislature
Regular Session of 2022
State of Hawai`i**

February 24, 2022

RE: H.B. 1666, H.D. 1; RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Yamashita, and members of the House Committee on Finance, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in support of H.B. 1666, H.D. 1.

Among the chronically homeless population, national statistics indicate that 30-60% either have mental health conditions or have experienced lifetime mental health problems.¹ State-specific data indicates that 23% of homeless individuals in Hawaii may be severely mentally ill.² In Hawaii, it is currently estimated that 46 out of every 10,000 people are homeless—one of the highest rates in the nation—and 70% of our homeless individuals live in unsheltered locations.³ Every day, our county police officers and other first responders (as a whole) come into contact with homeless individuals who have mental health issues, yet they are not qualified—nor is it their role—to serve as mental health professionals or mental health crisis interventionists.

While it is unclear what is meant by “available,” as used in H.B. 1666, H.D. 1, to describe the mental health counselors who would be assisting county first responders, the Department supports the general premise that having the direct assistance of licensed mental

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *Current Statistics on the Prevalence and Characteristics of People Experiencing Homelessness in the United States*; July 2011. Available online at: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/homelessness_programs_resources/hrc-factsheet-current-statistics-prevalence-characteristics-homelessness.pdf; last accessed February 9, 2022.

² Based on sheltered individuals in Hawaii. See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2015 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report: Part I: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S.* Available online at: https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_State_HI_2021.pdf; last accessed February 29, 2022.

³ “2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), dated March 18, 2021. Available online at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>; last accessed January 25, 2022.

health counselors could better equip first responders in handling the myriad of mental health issues that they come across in the community.

Because H.B. 1666, H.D. 1 does not outline specific details regarding the proposed pilot program, the Department respectfully suggests that a steering committee or working group be formed, to better formulate a plan before the pilot program is implemented. Also, the Department notes that the Honolulu Police Department has initiated at least two programs in recent years that may have served similar purposes: HELP (Health, Efficiency, and Long-Term Partnerships)⁴ and LEAD (Letting Everyone Advance with Dignity).⁵ These may be worth looking into before any plans for the proposed pilot program are finalized.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu supports the passage of H.B. 1666, H.D. 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

⁴ See <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/36258370/new-hpd-unit-offers-help-to-homeless/>; last accessed February 9, 2022.

⁵ See <https://homelessness.hawaii.gov/law-enforcement-assisted-diversion-lead/> ; last accessed February 9, 2022.



HB1666 HD1 Mental Health Counselor with First Responders Pilot

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

Thursday, Feb. 24, 2022, 2:00 pm: Videoconference

HSAC Supports HB1666 HD1:

GOOD MORNING CHAIR, VICE CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies.

This pilot program as well as others are needed to **get support to first responders to help them as well as the people in distress**, especially when so many people have mental health or substance abuse issues.

One of the hidden values of having a mental health counselor help first responders is that many of the first responders that are dealing with crisis situations develop their own mental health challenges.¹

- There is large movement nationally to recognize that **30% of first responders develop health conditions** including depression, PTSD, anxiety, sleep disorders and substance abuse disorders.
- They need the support to deal more effectively with crisis situations to safeguard their own mental health.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.

¹ SAMHSA: First Responders: Behavioral Health Concerns, Emergency Response and Trauma 2018
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

February 22, 2022

To: The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair

The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

House Committee on Finance

From: Nohealani Wescott

Subject: H.B.1666 - Relating to Mental Health

Hearing: Thursday, 02-24-22 2:00 PM

House conference room 308 Via Videoconference.

Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Yamashita, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Nohealani Wescott, and I am writing in **Strong Support** of H.B.1666. I am currently in my junior year of the Bachelor's program at the University of Hawaii, Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health. I believe the best way to address the current homeless and behavioral health crisis is through a multidiscipline approach, which includes the collaboration between first responders and those in social work.

There is an interest growing across the United States that supports social workers and law enforcement officers' pairing to best support someone in crisis. It takes four years of college and several hundred hours of practicum to graduate, which is much more training than our local police department can commit to in order to thoroughly understand the dynamic needs of someone in crisis. It is also unfair to judge how our local law enforcement agencies handle certain situations without offering support. I also want to acknowledge the importance of increasing the safety of street-level mental health clinicians that may otherwise not feel safe enough to attempt an intervention for someone who shows indications of being violent. The ultimate goal would be to reduce the need for traditional police intervention by identifying other opportunities to divert a person in crisis to a provider option instead of jail.

I believe funding a pilot program to evaluate the benefit of having a licensed mental health counselor with a law enforcement officer will provide a framework for future collaborations that will strengthen the state's overall crisis response.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony in **Strong Support** of H.B.1666.

Respectfully,

Nohealani L. Wescott

nlw@hawaii.edu

February 23, 2022

To: The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair

The Honorable Representative Adrian K Tam, Vice Chair

House Committee of Finance

RE: H.B 1666

Thursday 02-24-2022 2:00

House Conference room 308 via Video conference

My name is Mahealani Gascon and I am writing in support of H.B 1666. I am currently attending University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. This is my junior year at the Myron B Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health. I am here submitting my testimony as an individual. This bill would establish funding for a Mental Health Crisis Pilot Program. This pilot program is to allow licensed mental health counselors to assist first responders in responding to a mental health crises regarding the homeless population.

This particular program is being done in different states. For example, Greeley Police Department in Colorado has this policy currently in place and numerous of law enforcements personnel mentioned that this new training with their co-responders have boosted their understanding of mental health issues and created more options for carrying out their jobs.

I feel that this program is a great strategy in order to address the current homeless and behavioral health crisis. The collaboration of social workers with law enforcement to better serve someone in crisis continues to grow across the nation. In order for me to obtain my social work license, I need four years of college, close to 500 hours of internship and whole lot of learning throughout the process. This is far more training than what the police department can devote to properly understanding the tasks that can be performed of someone in crisis. I also feel that this would help to reduce the standard police interventions and use different strategies that the mental health counselor can contribute to in order to de-escalate a crisis situation.

In my humble opinion, I agree that establishing a pilot program to assess the benefits of having a licensed mental health counselor working with a law enforcement officer will provide the groundwork for future partnerships that will benefit the state's overall crisis response.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony in support of H.B.1666.

Sincerely,

Mahealani Gascon

To: The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair House
Committee of Health, Human Services, and Homelessness and Finance

Regarding: **HB 1666 HD1 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

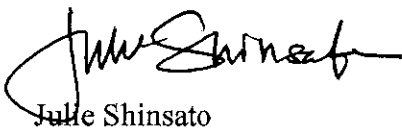
Good Afternoon Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Julie Shinsato and I am currently employed with a non-profit organization specifically providing services to our homeless and physically and/or mentally disabled population. I am in **support** of HB1666 HD1 as this bill would provide an efficient and effective streamline of referral services to our most vulnerable population.

For example, having a license mental health counselor available during a response call to a mental health crisis could easily identify mental illness symptoms in which case the license mental health counselor could then divert the patient to the appropriate care rather than having to go through the Honolulu Police Department. Secondly, the license mental health counselor would have the knowledge and experience in working with this type of population and would be best at de-escalating most situation. Nonetheless the most important take away from this program would alleviate the “frequent flyer” of high utilization of emergency rooms for non-emergency services.

Again, I am in **support** of HB1666 HD1 I strongly believe if we want to see or make a difference in our community we must address the underlying issues of mental health and collaborate with all medical personnel in order to achieve a safer and better community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,



Julie Shinsato