



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 168 / HR 173: REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO PERFORM A STUDY ON THE HOMELESS PROGRAMS OFFICE TO DETERMINE IF IT IS ALLOCATING ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR EACH REGION OF OAHU FOR HOMELESS SERVICES

TO: House Committee on Health and Homelessness
FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: **Thursday, 3/23/23; 10:40 AM; CR 329 & via videoconference**

Chair Hashimoto, Vice Chair Aiu, and Members, Committee on Housing:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HCR 168/HR 173**, which asks the Department of Human Services (DHS) to study if their Homeless Programs Office allocates adequate funding for regions of Oahu. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has long been a supporter of funding to create substantial rental housing in our State.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i along with other providers of services to people experiencing homelessness is concerned that the lack of adequate funding hinders current programs. Salaries have not kept up with inflation, which can result in difficulty hiring and retaining staff. Even more important it can hinder continuity of care which is critical when building trust and working with people experiencing homelessness. It also is difficult to develop new innovative programs to serve the many needs created by homelessness.

The funding for homeless services has been stagnant for many years. While we greatly appreciate the legislature's support to continue both programs in the base budget of DHS and core programs such as Housing First, we feel it is time to study the true costs of these services. DHS is the right agency to provide this study and review of what might be truly adequate funding for its homelessness services as well as any gaps in services for some regions of Oahu, as requested by this resolution.. We hope this will provide guidance to the legislature as it deliberates how to provide adequate funds to end homelessness.

This is an appropriate time to ask DHS to consider this issue since the new Governor as well as the Legislature are focused intently on the issues of homelessness. Along with developing affordable housing, local services must be available to provide outreach and navigation into housing.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 527-4813.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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March 22, 2023

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HCR168 / HR 173 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO PERFORM A STUDY ON THE HOMELESS PROGRAMS OFFICE TO DETERMINE IF IT IS ALLOCATING ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR EACH REGION OF OAHU FOR HOMELESS SERVICES.**

Hearing: Thursday, March 23, 2023, 10:40 a.m.
Conference Room 328 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of these resolutions and respectfully offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the resolutions is to request DHS to perform a study on the Homeless Programs Office (HPO) to determine if it is allocating adequate funding for each region of Oahu for homeless services.

DHS appreciates the Legislature's attention to the issue of homelessness and recognizes that homelessness is a statewide issue not limited to specific geographic areas.

HPO currently administers contracts on Oahu for shelter, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and homeless outreach. The office also administers statewide contracts for civil legal services and the State Homeless Emergency Grant (SHEG) program. As part of the procurement process for its contracted services, HPO utilizes the Request for Information (RFI) to solicit community feedback, including information regarding community needs. DHS

requests the Legislature's support for executive budget requests to sustain funding for existing HPO programs and to increase funding for homeless services contracts by 5%.

DHS notes that HPO is only one source of funding for homeless services. Other executive branch entities – including the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA), the Statewide Office on Homelessness & Housing Solutions (SOHHS), the DHS Med-QUEST Division, and the Department of Health (DOH) – fund housing and supportive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and for those at risk of homelessness. The Social Service Division provides contracts for domestic violence shelters and related services. The US Veterans Administration also provides programs that serve eligible veterans experiencing homelessness. The City & County of Honolulu also funds homeless and housing programs on Oahu, including emergency shelter, homeless outreach, rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention, and permanent supportive housing.

DHS comments that the requested study may duplicate information already provided by the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) in its mandated annual report to the Governor, Legislature, and the Mayors of each county. Pursuant to section 346-381, Hawaii Revised Statutes, HICH annually reports to the Legislature on its efforts, including assembling fiscal and demographic information to support policy development and track outcomes regarding homeless services. In addition, the HICH report includes information about the Point in Time Count and an overview of services provided by DHS and other government agencies. The annual HICH reports are available online at:

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/reports/legislative-reports/>.

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