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Testimony of **James Koshiba**
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness
Before the
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
March 24, 2023
2:00 p.m., Conference Room 225

In consideration of
Senate Concurrent Resolution 67
Requesting The Governor's Coordinator On Homelessness To Conduct A Study On The Cost Of
Programs And Services Necessary To End Chronic Homelessness By 2030

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

I am writing with comments to express some concerns on SCR67.

As presented, the resolution requests a comprehensive study of costs and projected impacts, covering with a wide ranging scope, and requiring collaboration with several public and private entities. Instead, it may be more efficient and effective for me to brief the legislature periodically or upon request, and certainly prior to the start of the next legislative session on findings related to needs, opportunities, and costs. Unfortunately, taking time and resources to launch a study in the way described the resolution, would, in my opinion, distract from the urgent work of pursuing our five-part strategy to address homelessness. That strategy, in brief, focuses on:

1. Expanding the inventory of housing for houseless individuals
2. Testing new, low-cost ways to produce affordable housing for the homeless, such as kauhale
3. Creating more space for homeless individuals with mental or physical health needs
4. Clearing obstacles along the continuum of care from street outreach to sustained housing placements
5. Calling everyone away from NIMBYism and back to community kuleana

In the process of pursuing these priorities, my office will be assessing needs and costs, including for: permanent supportive housing, for kauhale, for facilities to treat and house those with serious mental and behavioral health needs, as well as for the true cost of providing the continuum of services from outreach to shelter to sustained housing. However, those analyses will be conducted in parts throughout this year and will cover *all* homelessness, not just chronic homelessness as specified in the resolution.

Also, several of the strategies above require testing new ideas like building and operating kauhale; creating new pathways of treatment and care for those with mental and behavioral health needs; and stemming the flow of new entrants into homelessness due to eviction or discharge from institutional settings. Information about the effectiveness and cost new solutions can only be gathered after they are implemented.

For these reasons, I respectfully suggest that instead of the approach requested in this resolution, the legislature's needs and priorities may be better addressed by allowing my office to focus on implementing

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our strategy, testing new solutions, and presenting information on needs, costs, and effectiveness as we gather such data throughout the coming year. Once we have some months of a track record and data, we can present that to the legislature so they can provide suggestions or changes.

Mahalo for your consideration.

James Koshiba
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**COMMENTS ON SCR 67/SR 60: REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR'S
COORDINATOR ON HOMELESSNESS TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE COST OF
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES NECESSARY TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS
BY 2030**

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: **Friday 3/24/23; 1:02 PM; CR 225 & via videoconference**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members, Committee on Health and Human Services:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide **Comments on SCR 67/SR 60**, which asks the Coordinator on Homelessness to do an extensive study on costs and services needed to end homelessness by 2030. 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 agrees with the overall goal of this resolution, to evaluate costs and services needed to end chronic homelessness. However, Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions is a new office. The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness still is in the process of hiring staff. The extensive study requested may require pulling staff off of other critical projects which could take action to actually reduce homelessness. **We respectfully suggest that the Coordinator on Homelessness and his team need time to expand housing inventory, test new solutions, expand facilities for people with mental health or physical needs, and to gain a clear understanding of the barriers to ending homelessness.**

As this work proceeds, many of the questions posed by the study will be answered. The job of this office IS to end homelessness. As this team strategizes, plans and helps to develop services, they will be evaluating the costs of programs and services as indicated in the resolution. Give this Office time to take action vs expend limited resources on an extensive study.

The goal to achieve an end to chronic homelessness by 2030 is a lofty one. All service providers are focused on ending homelessness, 2030 is a short timeframe to solve a crisis with so many moving pieces: lack of housing, mental/physical health needs, coordination with many different state agencies, etc. Setting benchmarks that would show progress made, especially for various sub-populations of people experiencing chronic homelessness, may be a more effective strategy.

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



SCR-67

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 2:26:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/24/2023 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corey Rosenlee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

I strongly support SCR 67.

The Hawai'i State Framework to Address Homelessness stated, it is "estimated 7,620 individuals without a home on a given night," (yet) "Hawai'i has only 5,722 available beds to specifically accommodate homeless persons."

SCR 67 asks a basic question, if money was no object what would it take to reach the goal set out to meet the framework's goal to reach functional zero homelessness.

"Reaching functional zero does not mean there will be zero homelessness, but indicates that a community has an adequate supply of housing units and the appropriate types of interventions in place to rapidly respond to any person who is experiencing homelessness."

The legislature is the pocketbook for the state. In order to solve a problem this legislature needs a plan of action and the cost of that action. For homelessness there is a need for a vision, an aspirational goal with real policy and budget implications.

This is the first step in order to take care of our vulnerable neighbors and trying to end homelessness in Hawaii.

