

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
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WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2309 HD1  
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

SENATOR JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

March 20, 2024, 1:03 PM Room Number: 225

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) supports this bill provided that  
2 its passage does not supplant or adversely impact priorities outlined in the Governor's executive  
3 budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and offers amendments.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) provides the  
6 following testimony on behalf of the Department.

7 The bill establishes a homeless triage center program with the ADAD with a blank appropriation.  
8 Either way one slices the latest 2023 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count data, about 30 percent of  
9 individuals and families experiencing homelessness, whether sheltered or unsheltered, have  
10 reported a substance use problem, and about 40 percent have reported a mental illness.

11 The Department also welcomes more discussion with the community and service providers to get  
12 clarity on the needed triage and withdrawal management aka “detox” services, to better prepare a  
13 competitive procurement, and how the triage center program could be utilized in the community.

14 We understand that triage centers (1) are easily accessible, (2) take a “no wrong door” approach,  
15 meaning they take both walk-ins and referrals from other agencies, (3) do not necessarily have to  
16 operate 24/7, (4) be able to deploy mobile outreach teams to assist those in need, (5) follow

1 SAMHSA's guidelines for behavioral health crisis care, although not every person seeking help  
2 has to be in crisis, and (6) be available outside downtown Honolulu. Therefore, we offer the  
3 following amendments.

4 **Offered Amendments:** Page 2 lines 16-18 are amended to read:

5 (1) Access to emergency food, shelter, housing navigation,  
6 and supportive services [~~, twenty-four hours per day,~~  
7 ~~seven days per week~~];

8 Page 2 line 19 is also amended to read:

9 (2) Mobile outreach and [€] case management services;

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**HB-2309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2024 10:46:36 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2024 1:03:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John C Jack Lewin MD	Testifying for SHPDA	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Chair Joy San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Henry Aquino and

Honorable Members

Re: HB 2309 Relationg to Homelessness

Position: SUPPORT

SHPDA fully supports this bill to facilitate needed triage services for homelessness individuals through the Hawai'i Department of Health. We stand on our previous testimony.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

John C Jack Lewin MD

Administrator

# PARTNERS IN CARE

*Oahu's Continuum of Care*

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*Our mission is to eliminate homelessness through open and inclusive participation and the coordination of integrated responses.*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2309 HD1: RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
FROM: Partners In Care (PIC)  
Hearing: **WEDNESDAY, 3/20/24; 1:03 pm; CR 225 or via videoconference**

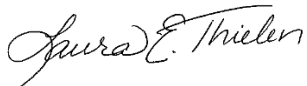
Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB2309 HD1: Relating to Homelessness** which shall establish a triage center program for homeless individuals and appropriates funds for the implementation of the triage center program. Partners In Care (PIC) is a coalition of more than 60 non-profit homelessness providers, individuals with lived experience and concerned community members across O'ahu.

Services including detox and mental health care are severely lacking throughout the state and the establishment of this triage center will fill a gap in available services. While we strongly support this measure, we would encourage more centers and programs like the one being piloted by IHS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and comments in support of HB 2309. Please do not hesitate to reach out to PIC for any additional information.

Mahalo,



Laura E. Thielen  
Executive Director  
Partners In Care – O'ahu Continuum of Care



The Institute for Human Services, Inc.  
Ending the Cycle of Homelessness

**TO:** Honorable Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura  
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
  
Honorable Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino  
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**FROM:** Connie Mitchell, Executive Director  
IHS, The Institute for Human Services, Inc.

**RE:** HB2309 HD1 - RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

**HEARING:** Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at 1:03 PM

**POSITION:** IHS supports the passing of HB2309 HD1 with amendments.

The Institute for Human Services, IHS' 'Imi Ola Piha Homeless Triage Center is the State's only community-based medication-assisted detox center for homeless individuals; moreover, it also is the only ADAD (Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division) accredited community-based detox center in the the State of Hawai'i. While other programs are equipped to offer social detox services or outpatient detox treatment, 'Imi Ola Piha is stand-alone in its community-based services for 24-hour medical support for withdrawal management and wrap-around care with length of stay from 5-12 days in the 8-bed facility.

IHS supports the intent of this bill in establishing funding for existing and much-needed additional HTC sites. However, due to the clinical nature and critical function of establishing stability for those motivated for life-changing intervention, **we suggest that the Homeless Triage Centers be changed to Homeless Triage/Treatment Centers (HTC)**. Unlike Behavioral Health Crisis Centers that are focused on responding to mental health crises that precipitate MH orders and police transport to the facility, community-based **Homeless Triage and Treatment Centers are primarily designated sites for homeless individuals to seek medicated assisted substance detox treatment when they are ready and receive withdrawal management services**. Moreover, many 'Imi Ola Piha clients receive concurrent voluntary services of psych stabilization and detox due to having co-occurring conditions.

Vital to the success of our substance use detox and/or mental health treatment continuum of services, IHS connects individuals graduating from 'Imi Ola Piha with appropriate supportive services, whether that be through residential substance abuse treatment, transitional housing with intensive outpatient treatment, or at one of our shelters with intensive outpatient treatment, until a residential bed may be accessed or stability is established.

Often, a client's motivation to begin detox or get mental health stabilization is fleeting. By having HTC funded and monitored by the DoH, HTCs would be more appropriately funded to provide these services in the long term. HTCs are targeted to serve homeless individuals or those at risk for homelessness and is eligible for Medicaid billing for some of the services offered.



**The Institute for Human Services, Inc.**  
Ending the Cycle of Homelessness

Since welcoming our first client on June 5, 2023, 'Imi Ola Piha has had 124 successful detox and psych stabilizations out of 157 admissions, a 78.9% success rate. The need for a community-based, medication-assisted detox treatment center is great; currently, IHS is the only site in the State able to provide this often life-changing service. The demand for an HTC extends beyond Honolulu City & County. 'Imi Ola Piha has welcomed homeless clients from Maui, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i County, who purchased their plane tickets on their own or through their medical insurance.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



**HB2309 HD1 Homeless Triage Center**  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Mar 20, 2024: 1:03: Room 225 Videoconference

**Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB2309 HD1:**

*ALOHA 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 and recovery-oriented services.*

Most of the people who need temporary care suffer from homelessness that includes **substance abuse, and mental health which is called co-occurring disorder.**

*HSAC supports that this service be managed by the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division so they can prepare a comprehensive state-wide plan for the best utilization of their resources for mild detoxification and initiating psychiatric medication as well as urgent health care.*

**This is a great opportunity to stabilize them and then refer to co-occurring disorder treatment (treats both mental illness and substance abuse in one setting) because once housed. 50% to 70% of homeless will want some form of recovery through treatment.**

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



**LATE**

Committee: Health and Human Services  
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 1:03pm  
Place: Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference  
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT of HB2309 HD1 Relating to Homelessness**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:  
The ACLU of Hawaii **supports HB2309 HD1**, which establishes a homeless triage center program within the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division in the Department of Health and appropriates funds.

This bill is a positive step in the right direction of addressing just some of the potential root causes of homelessness. By acknowledging the need and providing services for those in the houseless community with substance abuse and mental health disorders, we as a state can begin the necessary transition from criminalizing poverty and homelessness to providing the support services so desperately needed to this population.

It is our hope that this pilot program will be just the start for the state in providing necessary services for houseless individuals suffering from mental health and substance abuse disorders and urge the committee to either put into the bill or into its committee the full funding request from the Department of Health for the \$1.6 million it is asking for to implement this bill.

#### **Proposed Amendment**

As drafted, we have a concern relating to this provision in the proposed measure:

(c) The alcohol and drug abuse division shall work in cooperation with local hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, law enforcement agencies, and homeless service providers in establishing the homeless triage center program.

The statutory language is vague and does not specify the work between ADAD and law enforcement agencies. We support investments in diversion and alternatives to incarceration, and also recommend that ADAD work with harm reduction specialists within our community.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

**Carrie Ann Shirota**

Carrie Ann Shirota

Policy Director

ACLU of Hawai'i

[cshirota@acluhawaii.org](mailto:cshirota@acluhawaii.org)

*The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for over 50 years.*



**HB-2309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2024 10:53:20 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2024 1:03:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ellen Godbey Carson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support Homeless Triage Centers. They offer the best chance for our chronically homeless persons to get the help they need for recovery. When a homeless person is finally ready to get help for addiction or mental illness, we need these centers to offer immediate beds and assistance, to help break the cycle of continuing homelessness.

I'm a volunteer for IHS (formerly president) and have seen what a major impact these Homeless Triage Centers can make in the lives of those we serve.

The cost for services for these homeless individuals will be much less through these centers than through the revolving door of police, hospitals, and jails that are likely their fate without effective assistance.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony

Ellen Godbey Carson, Honolulu, Hawai'i