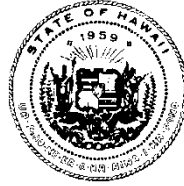


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IN REPLY, PLEASE REFER TO:

Statement of
Hakim Ouansafi, Executive Director
Hawaii Public Housing Authority

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, April 3, 2024
10:30 AM – Room 211, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
HB 2662, HD1, SD1
RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill (HB) 2662, HD1, SD1, relating to human services.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) **supports, with amendments** HB 2662, HD1, SD1, which requires the HPHA to establish a two-year recreation and education upward mobility pilot program for youth tenants in public housing, so long as it does not adversely affect the Governor's Supplemental Budget.

Please know that if this measure passes, the HPHA stands ready to assist the Legislature in this endeavor and looks at this measure as an opportunity to positively impact the lives of youth tenants in public housing.

Additionally, given the age of our housing inventory, the HPHA is currently facing a capital needs backlog upwards of approximately \$870,000,000. With multiple properties constructed over 50 years ago, additional funding is crucially needed to keep public housing units safe, decent and sanitary. As you may know, the HPHA is approximately 90% federally funded and that funding is based on occupied units, as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development (HUD) does not provide subsidies for vacant units. Please note that administrative fees to pay staff is also based on occupied units and as you are aware, all of our positions except for one are from federal sources.

Over the past two years, your assistance with passing legislation to fix vacant public housing units and Governor Green's dedication to affordable housing have brought major strides in reducing the HPHA's vacant public housing unit count to house our most disadvantaged families earning 15% Area Median Income (AMI) or less.

Last year, 440 vacant units were made available for new families. This funding would go towards current and future vacant public housing unit rehabilitation, and modernization work includes but is not limited to lead abatement, electrical infrastructure upgrades, plumbing replacements and upgrades, roof replacements, spall repair, painting, unit modernization, reasonable accommodations, and other federally-mandated improvements and retrofitting of units to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The HPHA is humbly requesting to add the following amendment to the bill:

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$10,500,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the Hawaii public housing authority to rehabilitate, remodel, renovate, and repair approximately 150 housing units; provided that the Hawaii public housing authority may contract out the repair and maintenance of these units without regard to chapter 76, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii public housing authority for the purposes of this Act.

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

Aloha Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Danson Honda, and I am testifying in strong support of HB2662 HD1 SD1. Notably, the pilot program this bill establishes will have an educational component that teaches financial literacy skills.

I'm passionate about this bill because I experienced firsthand the upward mobility that financial literacy can bring. I grew up in a single income family of four in a small one-bedroom apartment, and for the first twenty years of my life, I didn't know what it was like to sleep on an actual bed. I grew up thinking that going to school, getting good grades, and going to college was the key to success. Long story short, I was wrong. It wasn't until many financial mistakes were made that I began learning about managing finances and the homeownership process on YouTube. Not even going to business school in college taught me that. Several years later, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and when I was 24 years old, I became a homeowner of a single-family house in Pearl City. And I'm proud to say that I did it while working as a food delivery driver. Financial literacy was instrumental in making this happen as it taught me that what you do with what you make is just as important as what you make.

But despite everything I went through growing up, I consider myself to be fortunate to have been able to learn from financial mistakes to put myself on a better track. Many people do not have this luxury, especially in our most vulnerable populations such as youth tenants in housing. For these people, learning from mistakes is not an option, as ANY mistakes made could mean becoming homeless. This why we must empower our youth with financial tools and skills they need BEFORE they go off into the real world.

I'm hopeful that financial literacy becomes a graduation requirement in our public school system, but until that happens, let's at least make this a reality for the people that need it the most.

Thank you for your consideration.