

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

Testimony of **John Mizuno**  
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness  
Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**  
**AND**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS**  
Tuesday, March 12, 2024  
9:10 a.m., Conference Room 329

In consideration of  
**Senate Bill No. 2885 SD2**  
**RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

Aloha Chairs Marten and Belatti, Vice Chairs Amato and Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB2885 SD2 which will establish a working group within the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS) to develop a triage center program that focuses on serving homeless individuals with substance abuse issues or mental illness. I respectfully request that any appropriation does not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

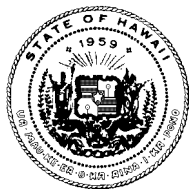
**Creating more space for individuals with mental or behavioral health needs** is a priority for the SOHHS and the Green administration. Homeless individuals suffering from behavioral health conditions often repeatedly enter hospitals and the criminal justice system. Expanding both clinical and community-based facilities for behavioral and mental health healing will save the state's dollars and will allow emergency departments and law enforcement officers to direct resources to other priorities in our communities.

If this bill passes, I will be happy to co-chair this working group to develop the triage center program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure.

Mahalo,

John Mizuno  
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 9, 2024

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2885 SD2 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.**

Hearing: Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:10 a.m.  
Conference Room 211, State Capitol & Video Conference

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure, provides comments, and requests amendments to correct a drafting error. The Department defers to the Department of Health and the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS). DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation does not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to establish a Homeless Triage Center Program Working Group within the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions in the Department of Human Services. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

The Senate Committee on Health and Human Services (SD1) amended the measure by:

(1) Deleting the contents of the original measure and inserting language to establish a working group within the SOHHS in DHS to develop a triage center program that

focuses on serving homeless individuals with substance abuse issues or mental illness.

- (2) Amending section 1 to reflect its amended purpose; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

The Senate Committee on Ways and Means (SD2) further amended the measure by:

- (1) Inserting an unspecified termination date for the triage center program working group;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2050, to facilitate further discussion on the measure; and
- (3) Making technical nonsubstantive changes for purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

DHS agrees to participate in the working group to develop and assess additional models of service to address the needs of homeless individuals with co-occurring behavioral health and substance use concerns. According to the 2023 statewide Point in Time Count, of the total individuals surveyed, 26% (=1,640) reported severe mental illness, and 20% (=1279) reported chronic substance use.

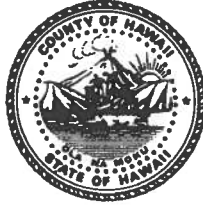
The Department respectfully notes there is a drafting error starting on page 5, lines 1 through 3; the lines should be deleted.

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

**Mitchell D. Roth**  
*Mayor*

**Deanna S. Sako**  
*Managing Director*

**Robert H. Command**  
*Deputy Managing Director*



**Susan K. Kunz**  
*Housing Administrator*

**Harry M. Yada**  
*Assistant Housing Administrator*

**County of Hawai'i**  
**Office of Housing and Community Development**

1990 Kino'ole Street, Suite 102 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • (808) 961-8379 • Fax (808) 961-8685  
Existing Housing: (808) 959-4642 • Fax (808) 959-9308  
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March 11, 2024

**TESTIMONY FOR COMMENT IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2885, SD2**  
**A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**  
**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

Sen. Lisa Marten, Chair

Sen. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS**

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 9:10 AM

Place of Hearing: Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

Aloha Honorable Chairs Marten, Amato, Au Belatti, and Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Human Services and the Committee on Health and Homelessness,

On behalf of the Office of Housing and Community Development of the County of Hawai'i, I am providing testimony in **support** of **Senate Bill 2885, SD1**, which establishes a Homeless Triage Center Program Working Group within the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions in the Department of Human Services.

Homeless individuals suffering from behavioral health conditions and substance abuse issues are often high users of hospital emergency departments, utilizing limited resources and costing the State's health system. This measure would establish a working group to develop a triage center program to assess existing systems and programs and develop a much-needed coordinated system to assist affected individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of this measure.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SKK", is written over a horizontal line.

Susan K. Kunz  
Housing Administrator





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

**TO:** Honorable Rep. Lisa Marten  
Chair, House Committee on Human Services  
  
Honorable Rep. Della Au Belatti  
Chair, House Committee on Health and Homelessness

**FROM:** Angie Knight, Community Relations Manager  
IHS, The Institute for Human Services, Inc.

**RE:** SB2885 SD2 - RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

**HEARING:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 9:10 AM

**POSITION:** IHS supports the passing of SB2885 SD2 with amendments.

IHS, The Institute for Human Services '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 State of Hawai'i.

We understand the confusion in differentiating between Behavioral Health Crisis and Homeless "Triage" Centers. For this reason, we propose to change our and future centers' names to Homeless Triage and Treatment Center to help clarify what this bill was meant to support. While other programs are equipped to offer social detox services or community and residential substance abuse 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.

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 will be 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 psychiatric stabilization and detox due to having co-occurring conditions.

IHS supports the intent of this bill in establishing a working group to continue the discussion of funding existing and much-needed additional HTC sites and ask to be included in said working group.

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 and Treatment Centers (HTC) with oversight falling under the Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division** because Homeless Triage and Treatment Centers are targeted to serve homeless individuals or those at risk for homelessness and are eligible for Medicaid billing for some of the services offered.



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

Often, a client's motivation to begin detox or get mental health stabilization is fleeting. By having HTC's funded and monitored by the DoH, Homeless Triage and Treatment Centers would be more appropriately funded to provide these services in the long term. Since welcoming our first client on June 5, 2023, 'Imi Ola Piha has had 120 successful detox and psych stabilizations out of 152 discharges after admission, a 78.9% success rate.

The need for a community-based, mediated-assisted detox treatment center is great; currently, IHS is the only site in the State able to provide this often life-saving service. The demand for an HTC extends beyond Honolulu City & County. 'Imi Ola Piha has welcomed clients from Maui, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i County.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

# 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 SB 2885 SD2: RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

TO: Committee on Human Services  
Committee on Health & Homelessness  
FROM: Partners In Care (PIC)  
Hearing: **Tuesday, 3/12/24; 9:10 am; CR 329 or via videoconference**

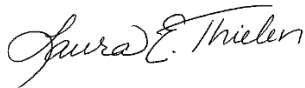
Chair Marten and Members of the House Committee on Human Services  
Chair Belatti and Members of the House Committee on Health & Homelessness

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in SUPPORT OF SB2885 SD2: 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. We strongly support this measure, but **respectfully request that additional members with lived experience of mental health, substance use and experiences including houselessness.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and comments in support of SB 2885 SD2. 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

**LATE**

**SB-2885-SD-2**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 1:03:13 AM

Testimony for HUS on 3/12/2024 9:10:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Angela Melody Young	CARES	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

CARES testifies in strong support.





## **SB2885 SD2 Homeless Triage Center**

### COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, Mar 12, 2024: 9:10: Room 329 Videoconference

## **Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SB2885 SD2:**

*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.*

## **HSAC recommends amendments to the following:**

**Section 1 (1) (c) Add 10) A representative of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition as determined by D.H.S.**

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 a working group and recommends that DHS work closely with DOH given that this service pertains to homeless people that have substance abuse and mental health co-occurring disorders, which services would include mild detoxification and initiating psychiatric medication.

**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.



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

BILL SB2885 SD2  
POSITION: SUPPORT

Hearing Date: March 12, 2024

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato  
Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

Aloha United Way supports SB2885 SD2, which establishes a homeless triage center program working group within the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions in the Department of Human Services, and appropriates funds for this program.

The challenges faced by Hawaii's homeless individuals with behavioral health conditions are immense and often result in high utilization of hospital emergency departments, leading to significant costs for the state's health systems. SB2885 SD2 recognizes the importance of providing appropriate care and support to these individuals by establishing a triage center program focused on assessing their physical and mental impairments and providing timely interventions. By doing so, we can help them overcome barriers to accessing proper medical treatment and essential resources such as food, hygiene, safety, and transportation.

The American Psychological Association has found that rates of mental illness are twice as high among homeless individuals than that found in the general population. Investing in a triage center program is not only a compassionate response to homelessness, but also a fiscally responsible one. This program is grounded in evidence-based practices and has the potential to contribute to ending the cycle of homelessness in Hawaii. The successful pilot program conducted by I.H.S. at 'Imi Ola Piha demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach in transitioning homeless individuals from the streets to permanent housing while addressing their healthcare needs.

We urge you to pass SB2885 SD2, as this will be a crucial and necessary step towards addressing the urgent needs of our homeless population, particularly those suffering from behavioral mental health conditions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kayla Keehu-Alexander".

Kayla Keehu- Alexander  
Vice President, Community Impact  
Aloha United Way

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Skjold".

Suzanne Skjold  
Chief Operating Officer  
Aloha United Way

**TESTIMONY OF ELLEN GODBEY CARSON  
IN SUPPORT OF SB2885**

**I write in strong support of SB2885.**

While I write as an individual, I have served as President of Hawaii Women Lawyers, the Hawaii State Bar Association, and the Institute for Human Services., all in a volunteer capacity. The major part of my legal career and volunteer community work have been spent seeking to protect rights of vulnerable persons and seeking better solutions for our homeless neighbors.

We only need to walk down our urban streets to see that we are failing to protect persons with severe mental illness. They live on our streets, rotating between the ER, jail, and the streets again in a never-ending downward cycle. Over 100 of our homeless residents die on our streets each year, at an average age of only 54. In other words, they lose 25-30 years of their expected lifespan due to the very real dangers of living on the street without effective treatment. Many of them are so mentally ill they lack decision-making capability for life-saving medication and self-preservation, and are in desperate need of treatment and stabilization.

I support SB2885 because it helps create a pilot program and study group for Homeless Triage Centers (HTCs), to offer community-based, medicated-assisted Detox Treatment and mental health stabilization for homeless persons needing these services to turn their lives around. Of critical importance, HTC's can provide immediate intervention and assistance when a homeless individual is finally ready to accept help and wants to detox. Without such prompt intervention, homeless persons often have to wait such a long time for a detox bed to be available, that they end up deteriorating, causing injury to themselves or others, or longer be willing to accept help when a bed finally becomes available.

Thus, community-based HTCs are designated sites for homeless individuals to voluntarily seek medicated assisted substance detox treatment when they are ready, so they can receive withdrawal management services.

Hawaii has a great need for more HTCs.

However, due to the clinical /medical nature of services provided, **I suggest that oversight (and funding) of HTCs should fall under the Dept. of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division rather than DHS' office of homelessness and housing solutions. This will assist HTCs to be eligible for Medicaid billing for some of the services provided, so that some of the costs for these services can be supported by the federal Medicaid program.**

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and helping protect our most vulnerable residents.

Ellen Godbey Carson, Honolulu, Hawaii

**SB-2885-SD-2**

Submitted on: 3/10/2024 11:11:15 AM

Testimony for HUS on 3/12/2024 9:10:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2885 SD2