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**HB943 RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

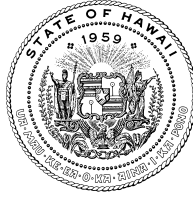
Chair Martin, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **SUPPORTS THIS BILL**

As the mission of the OPD is to assist indigent defendants before all courts, our office advocates on behalf of individuals experiencing homelessness with regularity. Deputy Public Defenders represent individuals who are charged with all levels of crime, many of which intersect with mental health, addiction, and homelessness.

A triage center program, we hope, divert individuals away from pretrial incarceration and towards support services, and is important in the ongoing policy discussions regarding pretrial incarceration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

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

JOHN MIZUNO  
DIRECTOR  
STATEWIDE OFFICE ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Testimony of **John M. Mizuno**  
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness  
Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
& HOMELESSNESS**  
Thursday, February 6, 2025  
10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

In consideration of  
**House Bill No. 943**  
**RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

My name is John Mizuno. I am the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness and the Director of the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS).

First, on behalf of my office and Governor Green, I want to thank the House of Representatives for introducing HB943.

I am writing in strong support of **House Bill 943**, which requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Health to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program to serve homeless individuals and individuals at risk of homelessness with substance abuse issues or mental illness.

We agree with the legislature's findings in **HB 943** that according to the 2024 Homeless Counts by State, Hawaii is ranked fifth in the nation for the highest rates per capita of homelessness. The 2024 Oahu Point in Time Count reported that among homeless persons, sheltered and unsheltered, forty percent were chronically homeless; twenty-six percent self-reported substance abuse problems; thirty—three percent self—reported a mental illness; fifty-five percent reported one or more disabling conditions; and thirty-six percent reported a physical, developmental, or other disability. The 2024 Bridging the Gap Point in Time Count reported that of the 1,276 unsheltered individuals, forty percent reported a mental illness, and thirty-four percent reported having a substance use disorder.

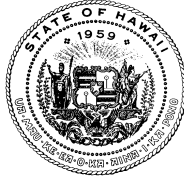
We also agree with the legislatures' findings that homeless individuals suffering from behavioral health conditions are often high users of hospital emergency departments, which costs the State's health system millions of dollars each year for emergency ambulance transportation and emergency mental health evaluations. We also agree that these frequent utilizers of emergency and homeless services often present with co-occurring illnesses and need specialized care that requires clinical expertise to evaluate their physical and mental impairments and to assist in overcoming barriers to accessing proper medical treatment and resources to meet basic needs like food, hygiene, safety, and transportation.

We also agree to support existing crisis intervention programs by implementing a homeless triage and treatment center program for homeless individuals and individuals at risk of being homeless within the alcohol and drug abuse division in the Department of Health and to appropriate funds to the Department of Health to implement a homeless triage and treatment center program.

Thank you, Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members, for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of House Bill 943. I am grateful for your consideration of this important measure and the positive impact it will have on our office, allowing us to collaborate with others and provide more services for our precious people facing housing instability. We appreciate the legislature's continued commitment to helping those facing housing instability, especially those facing challenges with alcohol and drug abuse.

Mahalo!

Brandon Mitsuda  
Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions  
Special Assistant



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
P. O. Box 3378  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0943  
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

REPRESENTATIVE MARTEN, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS

February 6, 2025, 10:00am and House Conference Room 329

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.

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

7 This bill requires the ADAD to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program with a  
8 blank appropriation.

9 The bill states that 26 percent of individuals self-reported substance use problems, and 33  
10 percent reported mental illness. The National Institute for Mental Health recommends the use of  
11 therapeutic models such as cognitive behavioral therapy combined with medication to manage  
12 substance use and mental health (or dual) diagnoses.

13 The Department welcomes discussion with local hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, law  
14 enforcement agencies and service providers to gain further clarity on delivery of the services  
15 addressed in this bill.

1 We understand that a homeless triage and treatment program (1) takes a “no wrong door”  
2 approach, meaning they take walk-ins and other agency referrals, (2) does not have to fully  
3 operate 24/7, (3) uses a mobile outreach component, (4) follows SAMHSA guidelines for  
4 behavioral crisis care generally, although not everyone served in is in crisis, and (5) is easily  
5 accessible especially for those outside downtown Honolulu.

6 **Offered Amendments:** None

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



## **HB943 Homeless Triage and Treatment Center** **COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS**

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Thursday, Feb 6, 2025: 10:00: Room 329 Videoconference

### **Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB943 and offers Comments:**

*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 that DOH develop a 3.7 ASAM medical withdrawal management program** to help those with the more severe withdrawal symptoms and that services are oriented towards homeless people that have **both substance abuse and mental health co-occurring disorders for alcohol and opioids and benzodiazepines**. For services for methamphetamine, detox would include milder detoxification and initiating psychiatric medication.

HSAC recommends the triage center, if 3.7 ASAM qualified, can also help people with more chronic physical health conditions such as untreated wounds, infections, undiagnosed diseases and illnesses.

Most of the people who need temporary care suffer from chronic homelessness that includes **substance abuse, and mental health which is called co-occurring disorders and have co-morbidity physical health conditions too.**

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

**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.**

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Thursday, February 6, 2025 10:00 AM Room 329

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF HB 943 RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee:

Thank you for hearing this measure and for the opportunity to submit testimony in support.

Waikiki Health is a Federally Qualified Health Center providing primary care as a core service at multiple clinics in Waikiki, McCully/Moiliili, Kaimuki, and by means of mobile medical unit. We also operate the Keauhou Shelter in Moiliili, which can accommodate 76 individuals using a Housing First model and providing wrap-around social services as well as integration with our nearby primary care and behavioral health services if needed.

We very much understand the need for this measure, as many of our clients come to us with alcohol and substance abuse issues. We have discussed this measure with our program specialist and support its passage.

Mahalo again for the opportunity to submit testimony.



Alexis Charpentier (MPH), Chief Executive Officer



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

**TO:** Honorable Rep. Lisa Marten  
Chair, House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Honorable Rep. Ikaika Olds  
Vice Chair, House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

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

**RE:** HB 943 - RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

**DATE:** February 3, 2025

**POSITION:** IHS supports the passing of HB 943

IHS, The Institute for Human Services supports the passing of HB 943.

When it was first established, 'Imi Ola Piha Homeless Triage and Treatment Center was the State's only community-based medication-assisted detox center for homeless individuals; moreover, it is the only ADAD (Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division) accredited community-based detox center in the State of Hawai'i. Since then, other detox centers have opened but do not offer the same type of treatment.

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 for homeless individuals to seek medically assisted detox and withdrawal management when they are ready to break free of their addiction. Moreover, many 'Imi Ola Piha clients receive concurrent psychiatric stabilization with their detox due to having co-occurring conditions.

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. Currently, the legislative GIA that originally helped launch operations has been fully extended. Though our facility is funded in part through fee-for-service billing, it doesn't cover the full extent of the costs required to keep the facility operating. **We recommend a funding model similar to emergency management services:** DoH funds services in full with a qualified contractor for operating the facility and receives the revenues from all billable services to defray cost of the program. This model would ensure that a vital public health service continues to be available for those experiencing homelessness in want of detox, a persistent barrier to many chronically homeless individuals leaving the streets to enter treatment or shelter.

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.





HAWAI'I HEALTH  
& HARM REDUCTION CENTER  
*The New Chapter for Life Foundation and The CHOW Project*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 943

**TO:** Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, & HSH Committee Members

**FROM:** Nikos Leverenz  
Policy & Advancement Manager

**DATE:** February 6, 2025 (10:00 AM)

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Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) **strongly supports** HB 943, which requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Health to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program.

Triage services are vital to assisting with the medical stabilization of those who have experienced extended periods of time on the street and likely untreated chronic conditions and behavioral health problems. Once a person has been stabilized they are able to consult with medical professionals and make decisions about entering treatment and obtaining ongoing medical care and other available support services.

HHHRC provides homelessness services in Regions 1 and 6 on O'ahu and is a member of [Partners in Care \(PIC\)](#), a planning, coordinating, and advocacy alliance that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill needs within O'ahu's continuum of care for homeless persons. HHHRC also provides wound care and other acute medical care to those experiencing homelessness through our street medicine team's [mobile medical unit](#). Our team also provides syringe access, naloxone training, STI testing for women of childbearing age, and linkage to behavioral health services and other medical care. We also provide outpatient behavioral health services in our Kaka'ako clinic.

HHHRC's mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai'i and the Pacific. We work with many individuals impacted by poverty, housing instability, and other social determinants of health. Many have behavioral health problems, including those related to substance use and mental health conditions, and have also been deeply impacted by trauma related to histories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**HB-943**

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 3:45:10 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	Roar cares	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support

## Testimony in Strong Support of HB 943

Before the Hawai‘i House Committee on Human Services

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

Aloha mai kākou. My name is Pedro Ortiz, an intern at the Windward Community-Based Outpatient Clinic and an HCHV (Health Care for Homeless Veterans) Outreach Counselor with the Department of Veterans Affairs on Oahu. I stand in strong support of HB 943, which establishes a homeless triage and treatment center program to address the intersecting crises of homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness in our state.

The findings in this bill reflect the urgent need for compassionate, trauma-informed care for our most vulnerable populations. Homeless individuals suffering from behavioral health conditions—whether substance abuse, mental illness, or co-occurring disorders—are often high utilizers of emergency services, costing our healthcare system millions annually. More importantly, these individuals are our neighbors, our veterans, and our ‘ohana. They deserve access to care that addresses their immediate needs while providing pathways to stability and healing.

The success of the ‘Imi Ola Piha the Triage and Treatment Center, piloted by The Institute for Human Services, demonstrates the power of collaboration and community-based care. This program has successfully detoxed individuals struggling with addiction, stabilized those with mental illness, and transitioned many into housing and long-term treatment. These results show that when we provide immediate access to care, we can break the cycle of homelessness and addiction.

HB 943 builds on that success by establishing a statewide program that will:

1. Provide emergency food, shelter, and housing navigation.
2. Offer medical assessments, substance abuse treatment, and detoxification services.
3. Deliver behavioral health services and trauma-informed, culturally-based life skills groups.
4. Collaborate with hospitals, law enforcement, and homeless service providers to ensure a seamless continuum of care.

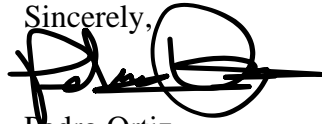
As someone who works daily with homeless veterans on Oahu, I see the transformative impact of programs like this. Many of the veterans I serve struggle with PTSD, substance abuse, and chronic health conditions. Without access to timely, specialized care, they remain trapped in a cycle of crisis and instability. This bill offers a lifeline—a chance to heal, rebuild, and reclaim their dignity.

This effort aligns with our Hawaiian values of mālama (to care for) and laulima (many hands working together). Addressing homelessness requires all of us—government, community organizations, healthcare providers, and law enforcement—to come together in service of our lāhui (community).

To Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and the members of this committee: Mahalo for your leadership in addressing this crisis. I urge you to pass HB 943 and ensure that no one in Hawai'i is left without the care and support they need to thrive.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pedro Ortiz', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Pedro Ortiz

HCHV Outreach Counselor, Department of Veterans Affairs  
Intern, Windward Community-Based Outpatient Clinic  
portiz2@my.hpu.edu

**HB-943**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:14:32 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steven P. Katz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

As a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist working in Hawaii and as a father of a son coping with a severe mental illness and substance abuse I strongly support this bill. For more than fifteen years my son's psychosis has made it i,possible for him to find and keep steady employment. He has found himself living on the street for years at a time. He has been nearly successful in his suicided attempts. He needs a safe place to live with all the support he can get. It is time for Hawaii to become a leader in caring for those who cannot care for themselves. Mahalo, Steven P. Katz HI License MFT-376.

**HB-943**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:09:29 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

We have to take more urgent and serious measures to tackle the homelessness issue. It is not right that so many are left out on the streets and unable to acquire proper shelter. This harms homeless people as individuals and it harms communities impacted by homeless camps. I urge this Committee to **SUPPORT** this bill!

**HB-943**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 6:41:10 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I SUPPORT HB 943 which requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Health to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program to serve homeless individuals and individuals at risk of homelessness with substance abuse issues or mental illness.

These services have been long needed on a consistent basis. It is essential that establish this program and fund it appropriately. Living in downtown, it is possible to witness many folks who could use help at some point. We have some great, caring people who are out in the field but it is not enough. Today, just across from Queen's, we witnessed 3 people needing assistance and thankfully getting it but we need more. This affects everyone in our communities and it is so important that this bill gets our support.

C. Burghardt

Kou, Oahu

**HB-943**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 12:59:18 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karlen Ross	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 943 and companion Bill SB 1628.

Homelessness is caused by a myriad of factors, but a person with untreated issues of mental health and substance abuse will not be able to transition out of it. Having the DOH focus on the underlying issue or issues a person has will create better outcomes for them to reintegrate back into the community.