

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



LEANNE GILLESPIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LUNA HO'OKELE

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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELawe KANAKA
OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES
KE'ENA LAWELawe 'ŌPIO
1010 Richards Street, Suite 314
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

March 31, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Leanne Gillespie, Executive Director

SUBJECT: HB 613 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH
Hearing: April 2, 2025, 10:01 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Office of Youth Services (OYS) strongly supports this bill and offers comments and requests appropriation.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to make permanent the Safe Spaces program within the Department of Human Services, Office of Youth Services.

The Department of Human Services, Office of Youth Services continue to work to expand and improve existing programs that provide shelter and programs to homeless youth. Act 130 (SLH 2022) Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program requires the Office of Youth Services to open youth homeless shelters in each county over a three-year period. This program is due to sunset 6/30/2025.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

During the three-year pilot project, the Office of Youth Services has worked with both government and community-based organizations to build a robust and comprehensive program plan for the Safe Spaces Program that expects to make meaningfully progress in reducing youth homelessness across the State.

The minimum cost to operate one emergency shelter, with the services listed above, is estimated at approximately \$800,000 annually. Variance in costs depends on location, facility expenses, staffing and services offered. With minor children not being allowed to shelter with young adults, Act 130 includes the requirement to open eight shelters, two in each County: Oahu, Hawaii, Maui and Kauai for a total estimated cost of \$6,400,000 not including staffing and administrative and program planning and implementation costs, estimated at an additional \$600,000.

OYS originally requested \$4,496,870 to fund two shelters on Oahu, and one on each of the islands of Maui, Hawaii and Kauai and support other programmatic and administrative costs including two positions. OYS received \$600,000 in FY23, FY24 \$868,556 in FY24, and \$871,016 in FY25.

During year one of the Safe Spaces Pilot Project, OYS gathered an inventory of shelter beds, conducted research, and gathered input from community organizations and the needs of homeless youth across the state. The OYS gathered state agencies together to further discuss the needs of youth and this program, including how to collect and share data for emergency shelters that would be opened under this program. With inadequate funding to procure a contract to open a new shelter, OYS increased several of its current residential Safe House and shelter contracts to quickly add bed space, in the form of available nights, to the then inventory.

During year two of this project, OYS developed a robust and comprehensive Safe Spaces program plan, contracted with the Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) to develop, and

implement the National Safe Place Network's Safe Places, as a component of Hawaii's Safe Spaces Pilot Project. In March 2024, HYSN in partnership with OYS and the National Safe Place Network, gathered stakeholders from around the state together to discuss the problems of, and solutions to, youth homelessness.

During year three, the final year of this project, HYSN received its Safe Place license and local sites were trained and certified as Safe Places to assist minors in need of help. Safe Spaces was officially launched in late Summer 2024 with a Press Release by the Department of Human Services, Office of Youth Services. This press release educated the community about the new Safe Place sites, indicated by a yellow sign, where youth could enter and receive immediate help. These sites included The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services shelter in Hilo and Hale Kipa shelter on Oahu. Phone numbers and a text option for 24/7 response were also activated and available for youth who need assistance. The TXT 4 HELP option is provided as part of the National Safe Place Network's national line. Local phone numbers are provided by subcontract to The Salvation Army on Hawaii Island and Hale Kipa on Oahu.

Safe Spaces Performance Deliverables	Number
Safe Place Site Recruitment/Training	12
Education & Outreach Presentations	164
Number of Youth Receiving Safe Place Text-4-Help cards	125
Media Coverage	1 press release, 2 live interviews
Website and Social Media	159 website hits, 1200 Facebook fans, 5 Instagram posts
Safe Place Encounters*	
Text4Help	25
Safe Place Sites	0

*Program has been expanding since inception and is in place to begin accepting youth at Safe Place access sites and Safe Space shelters.

OYS continues to contract with HYSN who continued to recruit additional Safe Place sites and provide education, training, and outreach to build and strengthen this program.

In 2021, prior to this project, OYS' budget was reduced. To cover this reduction, OYS was received \$832,500 in COVID-19 relief funds. In 2024, the legislature allocated non-reoccurring funding to cover the ending COVID-19 relief fundings and reinstate the 2021 budget loss. These funds give support for Safe House contracts, providing extended safe and secure housing for minors who are unable to return home. Safe Houses also receive Safe Spaces funding to provide emergency shelter for homeless youth. Both as non-reoccurring, these funds are due to end June 30, 2025. OYS may potentially have a \$1,632,500 budget reduction for youth homelessness effective FY26.

Estimated funding needed to fully implement Safe Spaces statewide:

Safe Spaces Program Activity	Annual Estimated Cost
Licensed Minor Shelter on Oahu and Kauai*	\$800,000 ea = \$1,600,000
Young Adult Shelter on Oahu, Hawaii, Maui, Kauai	\$800,000 ea = \$3,200,000
Safe Place 24/7 Response	Oahu = \$181,000 Hawaii, Maui, Kauai (\$85,000 ea) = \$255,000
Safe Place Administration Costs	\$100,000
OYS Children & Youth Program Specialist Position	\$71,016
Safe Houses emergency shelter beds	\$832,500
Total	\$6,239,516

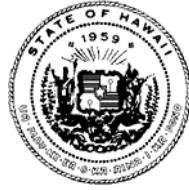
*In the last two years, a minor shelter was opened on Maui and Hawaii Island.

The OYS respectfully requests a general budget appropriation of \$1,691,516 for FY26 to maintain the current program services, including one program specialist position. These are not additional funds and maintain current funds and programs. OYS is further requesting \$6,239,516 effective FY27 to expand the program statewide. These services will be procured during FY26. In lieu of full funding beginning FY27, the OYS respectfully requests to maintain the FY26 project funding of \$1,691,516 through FY27.

OYS respectfully requests that any general fund appropriation not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executed budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and offer comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

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

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 31, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 613 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH.**

Hearing: April 2, 2025, 10:01 a.m.
Conference Room 211, & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, which is now like administration measure, HB1101. DHS defers to the Office of Youth Services regarding its resource needs and offers comments.

PURPOSE: This bill makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services. Requires the program to collaborate with all state and county departments that offer services for youth and young adults to coordinate the identification of youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and placement of these youth at a shelter for homeless youth or young adults. Authorizes the Office of Youth Services to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide shelters for homeless youth or young adults. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. (SD1)

DHS appreciates the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness' amendments:

- (1) Inserting language to make the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program a permanent program within the Office of Youth Services;
- (2) Replacing the appropriation to provide emergency shelter and services to unaccompanied homeless youth throughout the State with an appropriation to

fund the permanent Safe Spaces for Youth Program within the Office of Youth Services;

- (3) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Committee on Health and Human Services amended this measure by deleting its contents and inserting language from H.B. No. 1101, Regular Session of 2025, a substantively similar measure that:

- (1) Makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program a permanent program within the Office of Youth Services; and
- (2) Is effective upon its approval.

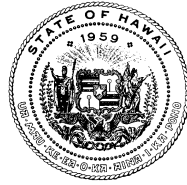
OYS is implementing the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program authorized by Act 130, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022 (Act 130). Act 130 will be repealed on June 30, 2025, and this measure codifies the Safe Spaces for Youth Program in Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Since Act 130 passed, OYS has moved forward with implementing the Safe Spaces for Youth program, which aims to establish Safe Spaces homeless youth shelters in each county and Safe Place Network access points. The Safe Spaces homeless shelters will collaborate with the Safe Place Network access points identified in the community, where youth and young adults up to the age of 24 can enter and request assistance. With additional funding, OYS is poised to collaborate with communities to establish additional shelters for minors, shelters for young adults aged 18-24, and Safe Place sites.

According to the National Network for Youth, communities with established Safe Spaces for homeless youth report higher success rates in terms of improved housing stability, increased school enrollment, and a reduction in risky behaviors. By making the Safe Spaces for Youth program permanent, Hawaii can continue to build upon the pilot's progress and ensure the safety and stability of at-risk youth.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII



KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.G.A., M.P.H.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0613 HD1 SD1
RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH.**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATOR SHARON Y. MORIWAKI, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: April 2, 2025

Room Number: 211

- 1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) Child and Adolescent Mental
- 2 Health Division supports making the Safe Spaces for Youth program a permanent part of the
- 3 Office of Youth Services.

- 4 Homelessness among youth is a crisis that puts them at greater risk for mental health struggles,
- 5 exploitation, and barriers to education and employment. Without intervention, these young
- 6 people often face significant challenges transitioning into adulthood. However, with the right
- 7 support – such as safe housing, behavioral health services, and job training – they can break the
- 8 cycle of homelessness and thrive.

- 9 Programs like this one that provide shelter and supportive services have been shown to reduce
- 10 homelessness, improve well-being and help young people become productive and self-sufficient
- 11 members of the community.

- 12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Hawai'i State Association of Counties (HSAC)

Counties of Kaua'i, Maui, Hawai'i, and City & County of Honolulu

Website: hawaiicounties.org | Email: hsac@hawaiicounties.org



Testimony of the Hawai'i State Association of Counties

H.B. No. 613 HD1 SD1 - Support

Relating to Homeless Youth

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Wednesday, April 2, 2025, 10:01 a.m.

The Hawai'i State Association of Counties (HSAC) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of HB 613 HD1 SD1, which seeks to make the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program a permanent program within the Office of Youth Services and provide necessary funding for shelter and support services for homeless youth.

HSAC is a nonprofit organization representing Hawai'i's four counties: Kaua'i, Maui, Hawai'i, and the City & County of Honolulu. HSAC's membership includes all county council members, who collaborate to advocate for policies that improve the quality of life for our residents.

Youth homelessness is a pressing issue across all of our counties, leaving many young people without stable housing, access to education, or the support systems needed. Without proper intervention, homeless youth are at risk of exploitation, physical harm, mental health challenges, and difficulty securing employment or continuing their education. Dedicated resources for unaccompanied minors and young adults is a much needed area of support.

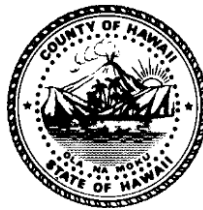
The Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program, established under Act 130 (SLH 2022), has made significant strides in providing shelter and critical services for vulnerable youth. HB 613 HD1 SD1 will ensure that this program continues permanently, allowing the Office of Youth Services to expand shelter capacity, strengthen partnerships with community organizations, and provide consistent, long-term support to youth in need.

By passing this measure, the Legislature will help ensure that youth experiencing homelessness have access to a safe, stable environment where they can receive the guidance and resources necessary to build a better future. Mahalo to the committee for hearing this measure.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor

William V. Brilhante Jr.
Managing Director

Merrick Nishimoto
Deputy Managing Director



Kehaulani M. Costa
Housing Administrator

Keiko M. Mercado
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
Kona: (808) 323-4300 • Fax (808) 323-4301

April 1, 2025

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 613, HD1, SD1
A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Rep. Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 10:01 AM

Place of Hearing: Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Aloha Honorable Chairs Dela Cruz and Moriwaki, and members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

On behalf of the County of Hawai'i Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), I am pleased to provide testimony in **support of House Bill 613, HD1, SD1**, which makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services (OYS).

Additionally, the measure requires collaboration among all State and County departments that offer services for youth and young adults to identify those experiencing homelessness and to place them in a shelter for homeless youth or young adults. Lastly, the bill authorizes OYS to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide these shelters.

Currently, many homeless youth — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face significant challenges, including mental health issues, lack of access to education, and risk of exploitation. The pilot program, established under Act 130, has already demonstrated success in improving housing stability, increasing school enrollment, and reducing risky behaviors. By making this program permanent, we can expand its reach and impact, ensuring that more youth receive the necessary support and services they need.

Mahalo,

Kehaulani M. Costa
Housing Administrator





Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus Commission

Advocating for the Hawai'i LGBTQIA+ Community



Mailing Address: LGBTQ+ Commission, c/o The Department of Human Services,
P.O. Box 339, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96809-0339

Email: hawaiistatelgbtqpluscommission@gmail.com
Web: <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/lgbtq-commission/>

March 27, 2025

Senate's Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 10:01 AM

RE: STRONG SUPPORT for House Bill 613 HD 1 SD 1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki and fellow committee members,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 613 on behalf of the Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus. (LGBTQ+) Commission, which was established by the 2022 Hawai'i State Legislature with the following purpose:

"...to improve the State's interface with members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus community; identify the short- and long-range needs of its members; and ensure that there is an effective means of researching, planning, and advocating for the equity of this population in all aspects of state government."

Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

A significant gap exists in our safety network and service delivery system for unaccompanied homeless youth in Hawai'i. While some programs serve at-risk youth already enrolled in state services—such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division, the Office of Youth Services for Juvenile Offenders, and Child Welfare Services—there are virtually no overnight emergency shelters for "non-system" unaccompanied youth.

Children under 18 who are kicked out, fleeing violence or abuse, or leaving homes unable to support them often end up on beaches, in parks, or on the streets. A lucky few may find temporary refuge by "couch surfing" with friends, but all remain vulnerable to assault, exploitation, trafficking, and theft. Their medical, mental health, educational, and social needs go unmet, putting them at high risk of falling into crime or long-term homelessness. Lacking life skills, job experience, and resources, many of these youth struggle to transition into stable adulthood. Currently, there are only four transitional beds statewide for unaccompanied minors. Early intervention can help break the cycle of homelessness and help address the long-term problems of our growing homeless population.

Older teenagers (18-19 years old) may be eligible for emergency shelters such as IHS, but these facilities are not designed to meet their needs, leaving them vulnerable to victimization by older, more experienced individuals on the streets. The Residential Youth Services and Empowerment (RYSE) program, operating on O'ahu's Windward side, is the only emergency shelter in the state serving youth ages 18-24, and it is frequently at capacity. No overnight emergency shelters exist for youth under 18.

Proudly established pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 369, as enacted through Act 41, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022

HI State LGBTQ+ Commission Testimony in Strong Support of HB 613 HD 1 SD 1

Widespread Community Support

Service providers—including RYSE, Hale Kipa, Maui Youth and Family Services, Hilo Salvation Army Family Intervention, Hale 'Opio Kaua'i, and Spill the Tea in Honolulu—offer daytime support and outreach but do not operate 24/7 shelters for youth under the age of 18. Both the Hawai'i Youth Services Network and Partners in Care have identified the urgent need for emergency shelters as a key component of the *Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness* since 2020.

Recent data underscores this crisis:

- The 2023 *Bridging the Gap Point-in-Time Count* (covering Maui, Kaua'i, and the Big Island) identified 55 homeless youth (ages 18-24) but lacked a method to count those under 18.
- The 2024 *O'ahu Continuum of Care Point-in-Time Count* found 122 unsheltered and unaccompanied youth (ages 18-19) and 12 unsheltered and unaccompanied minors under 17.

Service providers agree that these numbers likely under-represent the true scale of youth homelessness, as minors are often less visible during counts and many teens either do not meet emergency shelter criteria or fear seeking admission to adult shelters.

HB 613: Making Safe Spaces for Youth Permanent

HB 613 takes a critical step forward by making the *Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program* permanent within the Office of Youth Services. This ensures a long-term commitment to providing emergency shelter, outreach, and support services for unaccompanied homeless youth. Additionally, the bill appropriates necessary funds to sustain and expand these essential services.

For these reasons, the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission strongly urges your support for HB 613. By securing permanent funding and institutionalizing the Safe Spaces for Youth Program, we can provide the shelter and support needed to protect vulnerable youth and help them transition to stable futures.

Should you or any member of your staff have any questions regarding this testimony you can reach the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission at hawaiistatelgbtqpluscommission@gmail.com.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration,

Rick Velasquez, LCSW (he/him)
Commissioner
[Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission](#)



HAWAI'I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Vonnell Ramos, President
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer
Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Network Membership

Access to Independence
Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai'i
Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service HD1
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai'i
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.
Friends of the Children's Justice
Center of Maui
Get Ready Hawai'i
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kaua'i, Inc.
Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
Hawai'i Health & Harm
Reduction Center
Hawaii Island Community'
Health Center
Ho'ola Na Pua
Ho'okele Coalition of Kaua'i
Ka Hale Pomaika'i
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Kaua'i Planning and Action
Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED
Piha Wellness and Healing
Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

March 28, 2025

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
And members of the Committee on Ways and Means

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 613 HD1 SD1 RELATING TO **HOMELESS YOUTH**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, strongly supports HB 613 HD1 SD1 Relating to Homeless Youth.

Runaway and homeless youth are the most vulnerable segment of Hawaii's homeless population. They are children who have not completed their education, lack employment skills and experience, and need to learn the skills for adult living.

Young people run from abusive or neglectful families. They often have untreated mental health or substance abuse issues. And sometimes they are thrown out of their homes by the adults who are supposed to care for and protect them. Living on the street is difficult and dangerous and young people do not choose to do it for fun or adventure.

Homeless youth need street-based outreach, safe emergency shelter, family strengthening services to enable family reunifications, and transitional living services for youth and young adults who cannot be safely reunited with their families. Safe Spaces for Youth can ensure that short-term and longer-term safe and appropriate housing is available statewide.

One element of the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot project is the Safe Place Program. Any young person in crisis on Oahu or Hawaii Island can walk into a Safe Place site or text for help with 24-hour a day response. Hale Kipa, The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services, Parents and Children Together, Work Hawaii, the Hawaii State Library, Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawaii, and the Hawaii

County Rapid Transit System are among the organizations working together on this project. Without new funding from the legislature, 2 years of planning, training, and outreach will be lost if Safe Place ends on June 30th.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

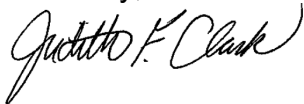
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith F. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judith" being the most prominent.

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith F. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judith" being the most prominent.

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



April 2, 2025

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

I write in support of HB613 HD1 SD1 relating to homeless youth and the appropriation of funds to provide emergency shelter and services for unaccompanied homeless youth and make the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services.

Homelessness among our youth is not just a statistic—it's a deeply personal and multifaceted crisis that touches the lives of real people in our community. Many of these young individuals find themselves without a safe place to call home due to circumstances beyond their control, such as family conflict, economic hardship, abuse, or neglect.

As director of the Lei Pua 'Ala Queer Histories of Hawai'i project, I have seen the ways in which the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ Māhū youth in particular, including hunger, violence, behavioral health, and housing instability, are far more severe than those faced by their heterosexual peers. The trauma they endure often leaves lasting scars, impacting their mental health and sense of self-worth. Without the stability of a home and the compassion of a caring community, these challenges can feel insurmountable, leading to isolation and vulnerability.

However, there is hope. Early and consistent support can transform lives. By offering understanding, resources, and a safe space, we can help these young people find their footing and build a brighter future.

Any effort to uplift community-based organizations working to end youth homelessness in Hawai'i is not just appreciated—it is truly needed. Your support can make a real difference, offering a lifeline to those who need it most.

Thank you for considering this support for this important cause. Together, we can create a world where every young person feels valued, supported, and safe.

Joe Wilson

Ahupua'a Kaunala
North Shore O'ahu
House D47 | Senate D23



HB613 HD1 SD1 Homeless Youth

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Apr 2, 2025: 10:01 Room 211 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB613 HD1 SD1:

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 understands that youth homelessness in Hawaii will most likely rise due to the lack of affordable housing, financial hardships, and the aftermath of the 2023 Maui wildfires. The pandemic worsened youth homelessness due to economic instability, school closures, and family stress. Especially noteworthy is that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are experiencing particularly high rates of unsheltered homelessness as people lost jobs, education support, or housing stability.

HSAC notes that the **federal government has allocated funding, including \$188 million** for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, which supports rapid rehousing and other services, of which the Hawaii's Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions **wants to secure funding and develop strategies** to combat the crisis.

1. **Rising Youth Homelessness** – Many young people face homelessness due to family conflict, abuse, financial hardship, or aging out of foster care. Without stable housing, they are at high risk of exploitation, crime, and mental health issues.
2. **Lack of Safe Alternatives** – Shelters for adults often do not accommodate youth-specific needs. Young people need spaces that provide safety, guidance, and appropriate age support.
3. **Education & Employment Barriers** – Homeless youth struggle to attend school or maintain jobs without stable housing. A shelter can provide stability, allowing them to pursue education and work opportunities.
4. **Mental & Physical Health Risks** – Many homeless youth suffer from untreated trauma, mental illness, or substance abuse. A shelter can offer access to healthcare, counseling, and rehabilitation services.
5. **Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness** – Providing safe housing and support can help youth transition into independent living and prevent chronic homelessness in adulthood.

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



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Chevelle Davis, MPH - Director of Early Childhood & Health Policy
Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 613, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 – Relating to Homeless Youth

Hearing: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 10:01 AM, Conference Room 211

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of H.B. No. 613, H.D. 1, S.D. 1**, which makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services. This bill is a critical step in ensuring that Hawai'i's most vulnerable youth—those experiencing homelessness—receive the coordinated care, shelter, and support they desperately need.

In addition to our existing housing crisis, Hawai'i faces a persistent crisis of youth homelessness, with hundreds of minors and young adults living without stable housing each night. These youth are at increased risk of exploitation, trafficking, mental health struggles, and difficulty accessing education and employment opportunities. The Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program has proven to be an effective model for addressing these urgent needs, and making it a permanent program is both a compassionate and practical solution.

By requiring collaboration among state and county agencies, HB 613 ensures that resources are maximized, services are streamlined, and youth are not left to fall through the cracks of an often-fragmented system. Additionally, allowing the Office of Youth Services to contract with nonprofit organizations will expand the availability of shelters and supportive services tailored to the unique needs of our young people.

The requirement for annual legislative reports will also provide much-needed transparency and accountability, ensuring the program continues to improve and meet the evolving needs of Hawai'i's youth.

Hawai'i's high cost of living makes it difficult for even grown adults to survive, and for too many of our young people, the challenges are even greater. If we want to ensure that our keiki and young adults can build a future here at home—instead of being forced to leave in search of stability elsewhere—we must invest in their safety and well-being now. We urge the Committee to pass HB 613, providing them with the essential support they need to meet their basic needs and thrive in Hawai'i.

We strongly urge the committee to pass **H.B. No. 613, H.D. 1, S.D. 1** for these reasons.

Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i

KAWAIILOA

April 2nd, 2025

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hearing Time: 10:01 AM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 221

Re: HB613 HD1 SD1, Relating to Homeless Youth

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we are writing in **support of HB613 HD1 SD1 Relating to Homeless Youth**. This bill makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services and appropriates funds for its function.

Prioritizing resources for homeless youth is essential to breaking the cycles of poverty, trauma, and recidivism that they often face. Youth homelessness is not merely the absence of shelter, it is frequently rooted in systemic issues such as family instability, mental health challenges, abuse, and a lack of access to vital services. Without consistent support, youth face severe barriers to education, employment, and emotional well-being. These unmet needs can significantly hinder a young person's ability to function and develop in a healthy way.

Increased funding for safe shelter, nutritious food, accessible healthcare, behavioral and mental health services, and supervised overnight lodging is critical. They offer vulnerable youth a protective environment, helping them avoid high-risk situations such as exploitation, violence, and substance abuse. They also reduce the likelihood of involvement with the justice system and help youth regain a sense of safety and autonomy.

By permanently establishing the Safe Spaces for Youth Program and ensuring collaboration with non-profit partners, the state is making a worthwhile investment in long-term stability and success for vulnerable young people. This program is not only about providing shelter, it is about creating pathways to healing and a renewed sense of self-worth. Through consistent, compassionate care and structured support, the Safe Spaces for Youth Program can offer homeless youth a strong foundation from which to rebuild their lives.

Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth homelessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

Please support HB613 HD1 SD1.

1099 Alakea Street, Suite 2530 | Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 | (808) 447-1840



TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB613 HD1 SD1, RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
April 2, 2025

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** HB613 HD1 SD1, RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH. Pursuant to the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, the Party believes housing is a human right. We believe that houselessness is the symptom of an inequitable economic system that creates generational poverty and hardship and believe this system must be changed.

HB 613 seeks to appropriate funding to the Department of Human Services to provide emergency shelter and services to unaccompanied homeless youth across the State of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i is facing a crisis in homelessness, with our youngest community members bearing hardship. In Hawai'i, one in ten young adults (ages 18-25) and one in thirty adolescents (ages 13-17) experiencing some form of homelessness without the support of a parent or guardian. These young individuals are among the most vulnerable members of our community, facing heightened risks of mental health struggles, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, physical violence, and disruptions in their education.

The data underscores the urgency of this issue:

- 69% of homeless youth report mental health challenges.
- 50% have been in the juvenile justice system, jail, or detention.
- LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness face disproportionately high rates of violence and victimization, with 62% reporting physical harm.

Despite these alarming statistics, existing outreach and shelter resources remain limited, leaving many unaccompanied youth without access to critical services. This bill directly addresses this gap by ensuring funding for emergency shelters and essential services across our islands.

By passing this bill, the Legislature will take a crucial step in breaking the cycle of youth homelessness and protecting Hawai'i's future generations. Providing stable shelter, food security, mental health support, and pathways to education and employment will empower these youth to build self-sufficient and productive lives.

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i urges the Committee to pass this measure to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth receive the care and support they desperately need.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB613 HD1 SD1, RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.



TESTIMONY FROM THE STONEWALL CAUCUS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
APRIL 1, 2025

Testimony in Strong Support of House Bill 613 HD1 SD1 RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed Members of the Committee:

My name is Abby Simmons, Chair of the Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, and I am testifying on behalf of our Caucus in strong support of HB613 HD1 SD1, which seeks to provide emergency shelter and services to unaccompanied homeless youth across the State of Hawai'i.

Why This Bill is Critical

Hawaii's youth homelessness crisis is a growing concern. Research indicates that 1 in 10 young adults (ages 18-25) and 1 in 30 adolescents (ages 13-17) experience some form of homelessness annually without the support of a parent or guardian. These young individuals are among the most vulnerable in our state, facing challenges such as:

- Lack of basic necessities (food, safe shelter, medical care)
- Higher rates of mental health struggles (69% report mental health challenges)
- A history of state involvement (33% have been in foster care, 50% have been in the juvenile justice system)
- Disproportionate risks for LGBTQ+ youth (62% report physical harm while homeless)

Without intervention, these youth are at heightened risk for exploitation, trafficking, untreated illness, substance abuse, and even suicide.

How HB613 HD1 SD1 Provides a Solution

By appropriating funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS), HB613 HD1 SD1 ensures that emergency shelters and essential services will be provided on all major Hawaiian islands— Hawai'i, Kauai, Lanai, Maui, Molokai, and Oahu. This measure will:

1. Expand Safe Housing Options – Youth who have nowhere else to turn will have access to stable, short-term emergency shelters.
2. Improve Access to Supportive Services – Mental health care, substance abuse treatment, case management, and job training will help youth transition out of homelessness.
3. Prevent Further Harm – Providing structured support prevents young people from falling into dangerous situations, such as trafficking or crime.

A Moral and Economic Imperative

Investing in youth now prevents long-term societal costs, such as emergency medical expenses, law enforcement interventions, and chronic homelessness in adulthood. Studies show that for every \$1 spent on homeless prevention services, communities save \$3 to \$6 in future costs. HB613 HD1 SD1 is both the right and smart thing to do.

Every child deserves a safe place to sleep and a chance at a better future. By passing HB613 HD1 SD1, we take a vital step toward protecting Hawaii's unaccompanied homeless youth and providing them with the support they need to thrive.

I urge you to pass HB613 HD1 SD1 and ensure that no child in our state is left without shelter or hope.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Abby Simmons (she/her)
Chair & SCC Representative
Stonewall Caucus
Democratic Party of Hawai'i
<https://linktr.ee/stonewalldph>

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 12:59:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tara Nash	Testifying for Indivisible Leeward Oahu	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We believe that the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program should be made permanent within the Office of Youth Services. Passing this bill will increase organization and communication with stakeholders. Please help to protect the vulnerable populations here in Hawai'i!

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 3:24:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB613. Please pass this bill.

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 3:33:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Celine Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: STRONG SUPPORT

I am writing in strong support of HB 613, which seeks to make the Safe Spaces for Youth pilot program permanent within the Office of Youth Services and appropriates necessary funds to ensure its success. As a community, we are deeply invested in the well-being and future of our youth, and this bill represents an essential step toward ensuring that our young people have the support and resources they need to thrive.

The Safe Spaces for Youth program has already demonstrated its vital importance to the youth of Hawai'i by providing a safe, supportive environment for young people to receive guidance, counseling, and peer support, especially those facing challenges like homelessness, mental health issues, and difficult family situations. In particular, the program has proven to be a lifeline for at-risk youth, giving them access to resources that empower them to make positive life choices and feel safe during critical years of their development.

The extension and expansion of this program will provide long-term, sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by our youth. By establishing the program permanently within the Office of Youth Services, we ensure that it will continue to operate effectively, with the infrastructure and support needed to adapt to the changing needs of our young people. Additionally, the appropriated funds will allow for more outreach, more locations, and more services for the youth of Hawai'i.

Youth are our future, and investing in their safety and well-being is an investment in the future of our state. By passing HB 613, we can ensure that the Safe Spaces for Youth program remains a constant, reliable resource for young people who need it the most.

I urge you to support HB 613 and ensure that this critical program continues to provide the help and hope that so many of our youth rely on.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:15:52 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hanna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee

From: Hanna Jerome

Re: Testimony in support of HB613 relating to homeless youth

I support HB613 relating to homeless youth, which makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services.

As a social work student, I am completing my practicum requirements at a youth homeless shelter as an outreach worker. I have seen firsthand the increase in youth experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the shelters are at capacity and youth can be on the waitlists for months at a time. With more shelter and outreach options, homeless youth can get hot meals, showers, lodging, education, employment, and support. The passing of HB613 will fund more safe spaces that offer these resources, which allow youth to reintegrate back into society successfully.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of this measure.

Hanna Jerome, Honolulu

Testimony in Strong Support of Bill Relating to Homeless Youth

Committee on Ways and Means
Hawaii State Legislature
March 29, 2025

Dear Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Dr. Kathleen O'Dell, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of the bill relating to homeless youth. As a researcher and advocate for vulnerable populations, I have spent much of my career studying youth homelessness, its causes, and the profound impacts it has on young people's lives. The data presented in the bill reflects a deeply concerning crisis, one that requires immediate and sustained attention from our policymakers.

Youth homelessness is an urgent issue that disproportionately affects young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, with at least 10% of this age group experiencing some form of homelessness each year. For adolescents aged 13 to 17, this number is even more alarming, with 1 in 30 young people facing homelessness without a parent or guardian. These numbers highlight a population that is often overlooked and underfunded in terms of resources and support.

The mental health challenges faced by homeless youth are severe and widespread. As noted in the bill, 69% of homeless youth report mental health problems, which is far higher than the general youth population. Many of these young people are also survivors of abuse, neglect, and trauma, making their vulnerability even greater. Providing safe spaces for these youth is critical, not only to address immediate physical needs like food, shelter, and safety, but also to support their mental and emotional well-being. The current pilot program established by Act 130 has shown significant promise, with communities reporting improved housing stability, better educational outcomes, and reductions in risky behaviors among youth who participate in the program. This is why it is crucial to make the program permanent.

The Safe Spaces for Youth program offers an essential lifeline for young people who are in danger of falling through the cracks. The collaboration between multiple state departments and local agencies ensures that homeless youth have access to the comprehensive support they need. From educational opportunities and employment support to behavioral health services, this program provides an integrated response to the complex and multifaceted issue of youth homelessness.

In addition, the bill's provision to allow shelters to admit youth for up to 90 days without parental consent is a necessary step in recognizing that these youth may have been abandoned, neglected, or subjected to abuse. For these young people, immediate intervention can save lives and provide a pathway to a better future.

As a professional in the field of higher education, I urge you to support this bill, which will make a lasting difference in the lives of vulnerable young people in Hawaii. The challenges they face are enormous, but with your leadership, we can provide them with the support they need to build a brighter future.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,
Kathleen O'Dell, PhD

Jordan Harden
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96816

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
2 April, 2025
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB613 - RELATING TO HOMELESS YOUTH

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the Committees:

I am writing to express my support for HB613. As a resident of Hawai'i, a social worker, and a mental healthcare provider to youth throughout Honolulu, I believe that this bill is crucial because it offers necessary protection for the doubly vulnerable population of houseless youth.

In comparison with their housed peers, unhoused youth are more likely to have been exposed to acts of violence, abuse, and neglect¹ prior to becoming unhoused. Youth experiencing houselessness may be attempting to escape from an environment that has exposed them to adverse experiences. Increased exposure to such experiences is highly correlated with mental health issues, physical health issues, and risky behaviors, including early drug use. Because of this correlation, youth experiencing houselessness demonstrate an increased need for social supports including but not limited to: shelter, physical and mental healthcare, access to food and water, and access to hygiene products. The state should fund the emergency shelter and care of unaccompanied houseless youth in order to create areas of refuge wherein unhoused youth are supported in the fulfillment of their unmet needs. Additionally, the shelter and provision of unhoused youth would help to prevent or otherwise minimize their exposure to further adverse experiences that they are likely to face while unhoused and without supportive intervention.

Additionally, allocating funding to the emergency shelter and care of unaccompanied, houseless youth would be a practical investment in the state's existing resources. That is, emergent services are frequently utilized by individuals seeking shelter and/or experiencing mental health crises.² Police, hospital, or ambulatory services are not always the most appropriate means to respond to an individual who is seeking shelter or requiring de-escalating mental healthcare. An allocation of funding to focus on the protection, shelter, and care of houseless youth would support the more cost-effective utilization of essential emergent services across Hawai'i. Not only would this benefit unhoused youth, but it would also benefit overworked healthcare providers, individuals appropriately seeking emergent care services, and financial stakeholders invested in the state's healthcare and social service institutions.

I respectfully urge you to support HB613 and to ensure its passage. Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,
Jordan Harden
Honolulu, HI

¹ Edidin, J. P., Ganim, Z., Hunter, S. J., & Karnik, N. S. (2012). The mental and physical health of homeless youth: A literature review. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 43, 354-375.

² Ku, B. S., Fields, J. M., Santana, A., Wasserman, D., Borman, L., & Scott, K. C. (2014). The urban homeless: super-users of the emergency department. *Population health management*, 17(6), 366-371.

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 10:42:52 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anthony Makana Paris	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB613

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to share my wholehearted support for HB613, a bill that seeks to make the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent, ensuring continued access to safe housing, mental health treatment, and essential support services for vulnerable youth throughout our state.

As someone who was homeless at the age of 15, I can speak personally to the profound challenges faced by young people who find themselves without a home or a guardian to turn to. At that time, I struggled with feelings of fear and uncertainty. The weight of needing to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety while also trying to make sense of my situation was overwhelming. It was a very difficult time in my life. Thankfully, I was able to receive help from programs offered by Kamehameha Schools, which provided shelter, emotional support, and critical services to help me navigate this challenging time. Without these programs, I honestly don't know where I would be today. The guidance and care I received gave me a chance to rebuild my life and move forward with hope and direction. I am deeply grateful for this support, and I recognize how transformative it was for me. Unfortunately, not every young person facing homelessness has access to such life-changing resources.

This is why I strongly believe it is so important to make the Safe Spaces for Youth Program permanent. It would ensure that other young people in Hawaii who are experiencing homelessness can receive the same type of support that was so critical for me. These programs offer more than just shelter—they provide the tools and opportunities for healing, growth, and ultimately a brighter future.

The statistics regarding youth homelessness are concerning, with one in ten young adults and one in thirty adolescents facing homelessness each year. Many of these youth struggle with mental health issues, substance use, and physical harm, making the need for supportive programs like this even more urgent. LGBTQ+ youth are particularly vulnerable, with many facing physical harm while homeless. These young people deserve our support and compassion.

I humbly ask that you consider the immense difference this bill can make in the lives of vulnerable youth across Hawaii. By making the Safe Spaces for Youth Program permanent, we can ensure that more young people are given the opportunity to heal, succeed, and find safety. It is not just about providing shelter; it is about giving them the chance to rebuild their futures with the proper care and support.

Mahalo for taking the time to consider this important legislation. I sincerely hope you will support HB613 and make a lasting, positive difference in the lives of Hawaii's vulnerable youth.

Me ke aloha,

Anthony Makana Paris

Kapolei, Hawaii

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 8:40:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and WAM Committee Members,

As a public health profession in Hawai'i, I write in strong support of HB613 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to provide emergency shelter and services to unaccompanied homeless youth.

The needs of unaccompanied houseless youth in our state is great, but the resources are few, especially keeping mind:

- Hawai'i has the third highest rate of homeless keiki in the U.S.
- There are no services for homeless keiki on our neighbor islands.
- There are no state general funds dedicated to homeless keiki.
- The Homeless Programs office offers no monies for this young population.

Shelter and related supports can make the difference between robust health and irreparable harm for our local keiki and their 'ohana. Please support this bill.

Mahalo,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

Makiki, HI

March 31, 2025

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair,
And Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 613 Relating to Homeless Youth

As a public health professional, a concerned citizen, and a person with lived experience of homelessness, I urge your support for HB 613 Relating to Homeless Youth.

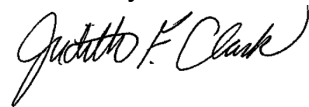
I was 20 years old when I experienced homelessness. I was vulnerable and terrified. I had not completed my education and had minimal work experience. While homeless, I was sexually exploited, and I was hungry.

No one – and especially our children and youth – should have to experience what I went through.

Safe Spaces for Youth will provide an array of services that will help the most vulnerable segment of our homeless population.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith F. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judith" being more prominent.

Judith F. Clark, MPH4
48-218 Kamehameha Hwy.
Kaneohe, HI 96744
808-499-9966

HB-613-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 2:51:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Kerber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

As Act 130 is repealed in June, I would like to voice my support for HB613 in regards to ensuring that homeless youth have resources to turn toward in a time of crisis. It is our civic duty to protect children and minors on their journey to adulthood and keeping the Safe Spaces for Youth program permanently would be an excellent use of taxpayer money.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Kerber



Residential Youth Services & Empowerment

PO Box 11662 Honolulu, HI 96828

LATE

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, April 2th, 2024, 10:01am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

HB 613, HD1, SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Committee:

We are in support HB 613, HD1, SD1 relating to youth experiencing homelessness.

Since opening our youth emergency shelter and drop-in access center for youth experiencing homelessness in 2018, RYSE has provided a safe space and age-appropriate support for hundreds of youth ages, 14-24.

Under the watchful eye of DHS and the Office of Youth Services, RYSE and its Kawaihoa Youth and Family Wellness Center partners provide education and employment services, medical and behavioral health connections, and the support system needed to move out of unsheltered homelessness or beyond the criminal justice system.

In 2024, 52% of the young adults served by RYSE had previous child welfare involvement and 57% had experienced homelessness under the age of 18. We appreciate the legislative efforts to solidify the state's support of youth who are often aging out of systems of care.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.
With aloha,

Carla J. Houser!

Carla Houser
Executive Director