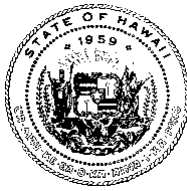


JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA
MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII



KATHERINE AUMER, PhD
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON
LUNA HO'OMALU O KA PAPA

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378**

**STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Commenting on HD 212 HD2
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS
April 2, 2025 10:01 a.m., Room 311 and Video**

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Kathleen Merriam, LCSW CSAC

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Forrest Wells, MSCP, LMHC
Kristin Will, MACL, CSAC

EX-OFFICIO:
Marian Tsuji, Deputy Director
Behavioral Health Administration

WEBSITE:
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EMAIL ADDRESS:
[doh.scmhchairperson@
doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:doh.scmhchairperson@doh.hawaii.gov)

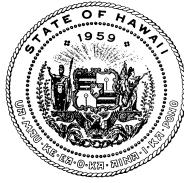
Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Hawai'i law, HRS §334-10, established the State Council on Mental Health as a 21-member body to advise on the allocation of resources, statewide needs, and programs affecting more than one county as well as to advocate for adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbances, individuals with mental illness or emotional problems, including those with co-occurring substance abuse disorders. Members are residents from diverse backgrounds representing mental health service providers and recipients, students and youth, parents, and family members. Members include representatives of state agencies on mental health, criminal justice, housing, Medicaid/MedQUEST, social services, vocational rehabilitation, and education. Members include representatives from the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances and county service area boards on mental health and substance abuse.

The Council supports HB943 HD1 SD1, which takes a proactive approach to addressing homelessness, substance use disorders, and mental illness through appropriate triaging and intervention. The Council recognizes that timely and effective triaging is essential to preventing the escalation of health conditions that may require higher levels of care. Individuals experiencing homelessness or at high risk of becoming homeless often face compounding challenges that make access to care difficult. By implementing structured triage and treatment, this measure helps ensure that individuals receive the appropriate level of care before crises escalate.

The 'Imi Ola Piha homeless triage and treatment program, introduced as a pilot, has demonstrated promising results. Its integrated approach highlights the importance of early intervention and comprehensive support in reducing unnecessary hospitalizations, emergency interventions, and long-term system strain. Expanding and institutionalizing such a program aligns with best practices in mental health and substance use treatment. For these reasons, the Council supports the passage of this measure and appreciates the Legislature's commitment to addressing these critical issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please contact us at doh.scmhchairperson@doh.hawaii.gov.



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

WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0943 SD1
RELATNG TO HOMELESSNESS**

SENATOR DONOVAN DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

April 2, 2025, 10:01AM, Room 211

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

4 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and proposes an amendment.

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

7 The measure requires the ADAD to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program
8 with a blank appropriation. Approximately \$5,900,000 is estimated to implement the measure
9 which consist of (1) substance use detox and behavioral health services (\$2,400,000 recurring
10 annually) and (2) facility acquisition and renovation for a new facility (\$3,500,000 one-time start
11 up).

12 The measure also amends the crisis intervention and diversion services program established by
13 HRS 334-171 to (1) redirect certain homeless persons to the appropriate health care system and
14 services, (2) authorizes the use of intensive mobile outreach services, and (3) requires that
15 appropriations be used only for services contracted directly between the Department and the
16 service provider. These amendments provide clarity for program implementation.

1 The National Institute for Mental Health recommends the use of therapeutic models such as
2 cognitive behavioral therapy combined with medications to manage substance and mental health
3 (or dual) diagnoses.

4 The Department welcomes discussion with local hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, law
5 enforcement agencies, and service providers to gain further clarity on delivery of the services
6 addressed in this measure.

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

13 **Offered Amendment:** Section 3 is amended to read:

14 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$5,900,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
17 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
18 2026-2027 to implement this Act.

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

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:54:15 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jillian Anderson	Testifying for Waikiki Neighborhood Board	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Waikiki Neighborhood Board stands in **support** of HB943 HD1 SD1.

With a high percentage of our homeless population experiencing mental illness and substance abuse, it is imperative that these behavioral health conditions are addressed in a dedicated setting. Presently, emergency medical services bear the brunt of treatment, which oftentimes does not provide long-lasting results while at the same time being extremely costly to the state. This gap in our continuum of care is a large contributor to our high rate of chronic homelessness and HB943 HD1 SD1 would serve as a way to ensure more individuals receive the behavioral healthcare interventions they require.

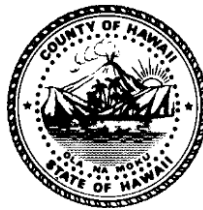
The establishment of a homelessness triage and treatment center program would aid in reducing the number of chronically homeless individuals in Waikiki and in communities statewide. Our goal should be to create lasting outcomes instead of continuing to invest in piecemeal, band-aid fixes that do not always address an individual's root conditions. The establishment of this treatment program would work to do just that.

The Waikiki Neighborhood Board asks for your continued support of this measure which would greatly benefit those in need in our community.

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 943, HD1, SD1
A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS
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, I am pleased to provide testimony in **support of House Bill 943, HD1, SD1**, which expands existing crisis intervention programs by requiring, and appropriating funds for, the Department of Health to establish a Homeless Triage and Treatment Center Program within its Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division to serve homeless individuals and individuals at risk of homelessness with substance abuse issues or mental illness.

Funding this measure is crucial for addressing the complex needs of homeless individuals, especially those struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues. By establishing a Homeless Triage and Treatment Center Program, the state will create a dedicated resource that provides immediate access to emergency shelter, food, and essential services while also offering specialized treatment for substance abuse and behavioral health.

As suggested by the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, an appropriation of \$5,900,000 is requested to implement the measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 943, HD1, SD1.

Mahalo,

Kehaulani M. Costa
Housing Administrator





HB943 HD1 SD1 Homeless Triage and Treatment Center

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** HB943 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 recommends that DOH develop a higher level 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 that are just for methamphetamine, detox would include milder detoxification and initiating psychiatric medication.

HSAC appreciates the amendment to add intensive mobile outreach services and to redirect certain homeless people to the **appropriate health care system and services. Treatment for co-occurring disorders** (mental health and substance use disorders) are available for residential and intensive outpatient to provide lasting recovery and a movement towards self-sufficiency.

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 as well as severe mental illness and chronic substance abuse.

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.



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

P.O. Box 833
Honolulu, HI 96808

www.hawaii psychology.org

Phone: (808) 521-8995

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

April 2, 2025 10:01 A.M. - VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE – ROOM 211
TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 943 HD1 SD1, RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS

The Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) strongly supports HB 943, HB1, SD1 which requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Health to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program. This legislation is needed to adequately serve individuals experiencing homelessness in our state, particularly those with substance abuse issues and mental illness.

Triage services play a vital role in stabilizing individuals who are experiencing homelessness, particularly those who have been homeless for extended periods of time, by addressing untreated medical conditions and other immediate needs. These services also provide diversion from emergency departments and jails for frontline response to homeless individuals, many of whom continuously cycle between the streets, criminal justice system, and emergency services.

HB 943 recognizes the intersections between homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness and highlights the need for community-based care for this vulnerable population. The findings listed in this bill indicate that homeless triage and treatment center programs, like 'Imi Ola Piha, make a notable difference in helping homeless individuals who suffer from behavioral health conditions receive the care that they need, such as medically assisted withdrawal management and psychiatric stabilization. Addressing behavioral health issues that underlie and maintain homelessness will better equip them for reintegration into the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this very important bill.

Sincerely,

Alex Lichton, Ph.D.,
Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee



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

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, 10:01 a.m., Conference Room 211

RE: **HB943 HD1 SD1 Relating to Homelessness**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of the **HB943 HD1 SD1**. This measure requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Health to expand existing crisis intervention programs by establishing a homeless triage and treatment center program to serve homeless individuals and individuals at risk of homelessness with substance abuse issues or mental illness.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare appreciates the whole-person care approach of this measure, acknowledging persons experiencing mental health issues, substance use disorders, or homelessness require a compassionate and holistic approach. We are hopeful that the proposed establishment of the homeless triage and treatment center program will be critical to the crisis continuum to provide rapid access to appropriate care and support for persons who might otherwise matriculate through hospitals, the criminal justice system, or our state's shelters and streets, all of which are not equipped to address these needs. By redirecting these individuals, we anticipate significant reductions in homelessness, unnecessary criminalization, law enforcement involvement, emergency room visits, and the utilization of acute care facility resources. Furthermore, the implementation of this measure is vital to better serve our community and improve the quality of life for many of Hawai'i's residents.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of the **HB943 HD1 SD1**.



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

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

Honorable Senator Sharon Moriwaki
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Angie Knight, Community Relations Manager
IHS, Institute for Human Services, Inc.
RE: HB943 HD1 SD1 - RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS
DATE: April 1, 2025
POSITION: IHS supports the passing of HB943 HD1 SD1

IHS, The Institute for Human Services strongly supports the passing of HB943 HD1 SD1.

According to a recent Point-in-Time Count, approximately 1 in 7 persons experiencing homelessness on O'ahu self-reported problematic substance use as a cause of homelessness. While there are various social detox centers, there are limited options for those requiring medicated-assisted treatment. When it was first established in 2023, '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 services as a Homeless Triage and Treatment Center.

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 (HTC) 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 HTC clients receive concurrent psychiatric stabilization with their detox due to having co-occurring conditions.

By having HTCs funded and monitored by the Department of Health, it 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. Moreover, it would allow for creation of other HTC sites. The current HTC serves individuals originating from all counties working with insurance and service providers to transport clients to/from O'ahu to receive initial detox withdrawal management and/or stabilization.

The need for a community-based, mediated-assisted detox treatment center is great; HTCs effectively address and serve many of the chronically homeless individuals in our community, who are high utilizers of emergency services. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 3:13:32 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise Boisvert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I FULLY SUPPORT this much needed bill.

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 3:16:08 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Jorgensen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT this bill.

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:36:07 PM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I am glad to see this bill continue to advance through the legislative process. Homelessness is an enduring challenge Hawaii faces. We must do more to humanely tackle this issue. I believe this bill moves us in the right direction. It can help us make progress. I urge the Committee to SUPPORT this bill!

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 12:44:50 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Deutzman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha All,

As a person who has studied and tracked arrests in my area of Waikiki for three years , I can say its become crystal clear that the underlying reasons people live in the streets are severe mental health disorders and/or addicitons . Any effort to treat the undrlying cause should be top priority.

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:16:55 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jean Shimabuku	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB943 to help the homeless.

It's all around my area (Kapahulu/Moiliili)

They go through trash and take what they want and leave the trash on the ground.

Can't they just throw the trash back in trash bin/can?

I guess that's where the mental illness comes in.

There needs to be stricter laws to enforce and protect the citizens.

ie: There's a homeless man on the corner of Date/Kapiolani and does his business and cleans it his hands and wipes it on the wall behind him. He throws his trash right near

him and leaves it there. There's a trash can right near the bus stop! This a main intersection to Waikiki and many people walk the area.

Please help them so they won't be on our streets.

Thank you and God bless you.

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:43:57 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Betsy Kawamura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have been active on dealing with homelessness issues in my neighborhood of McCully Moiliili and often found that CORE unfortunately did not have the capacity to reach out to all the individuals I pointed out to in our immediate area which is immensely frustrating. If the numbers of homeless are supposed to decrease it's critical to have additional mental health facilities built up. Core alone doesn't have the capacity and they told me this several times. We need this additional service now

LATE

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 12:08:30 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melinda Yamaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I support this measure requiring and appropriating funds to expand existing crisis intervention programs and establishing a Homeless Triage and Treatment Center Program. The homelessness rate in Hawai'i is amongst the highest in the nation. Our community's heavily reliance on hospital emergency rooms and county correctional facilities is inadequate in that it does nothing to address the underlying causes of homelessness. Implementing a targeted approach with appropriate funding should be a priority for this legislature in its endeavor to uplift the quality of life for all in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

Melinda Yamaga

LATE

HB-943-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:34:15 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jo Ann Ochi	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am not sure by providing services to unwilling participants is going to work. If you are making this a choice, but not a requirement as a form of sentencing for those taking illegal drugs and a mandatory 1-2 year program or whatever it takes to rehabilitate at an institution where they are not able to leave it will not work. Most of these drug addicts if given the choice will not make this commitment unless it's mandatory.

You first need to make taking and being in possession of illegal drugs a felony and that is not what is happening in many States.

Also, unless you start to improve our schools and include vocational learning and not just academic learning you will have people not educated or skilled enough to be able to support themselves. Poverty, poor parenting, lack of mentors and good schools are some reasons I think people take drugs.

Start with fixing the system then it may help to fix the problem of homelessness!