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**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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**Testimony of
DAWN N.S. CHANG
Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on
HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS**

**Thursday, February 6, 2025
10:00 AM
State Capitol Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**In Consideration of
HOUSE BILL 212
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

House Bill 212 creates a return to home program with the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

The Department supports the program being permanent and receiving regular funding. The Department also supports the many partnerships that are encouraged in the bill, many of which already exist. In particular, the Institute for Human Services has an airline relocation program with protocols in place, including ensuring there is a safety net of family and services at their destination, and requiring that the client pay half the fare back to a home state or island.

To maximize the effectiveness of funding, the Department suggests that funds appropriated under this bill be administered as a grant or funding to a non-government organization.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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TESTIMONY
OF
BONNIE KAHAKUI, ADMINISTRATOR
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE

TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS
FEBRUARY 6, 2025, 10:00 AM

HOUSE BILL 212
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 212, which requires the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions to establish a permanent Return-to-Home program to return homeless individuals in the State to families and relatives in their home states, requires the Office to report to the Legislature, and appropriates funds. The State Procurement Office (SPO) appreciates the intent and provides comments on this bill to ensure the success of this important program.

If the intent of the bill is to allow contracting with nonprofit, for-profit, or foundations, the SPO recommends that procurements for this program follow a competitive process, to ensure that all persons are afforded an equal opportunity to compete in a fair and open environment.

SPO suggests revising the proposed exemption language in SECTION 2, page 2, lines 2 through 6, as presented below.

SECTION 2. The office shall establish a public-private partnership by contracting with eligible nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, or foundations to administer the program in compliance with ~~without regard to~~ chapters 103D and 103F.

The bill does not cite a justification for exempting the program from Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapters 103D and 103F, the Hawaii Public Procurement Code (Code). The SPO recommends including a compelling rationale for this exemption; otherwise, the program should adhere to the Code to ensure transparency, fairness, and accountability in procurement.

Chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, Hawaii Public Procurement Code, is the State's single source of public procurement policy to be applied equally and uniformly, while providing fairness, open competition, a level playing field, government disclosure, and transparency in the procurement and contracting process vital to good government.

Public procurement's primary objective is to provide everyone equal opportunity to compete for government contracts, to prevent favoritism, collusion, or fraud in awarding of contracts. To legislate that any one entity should be exempt from compliance with both Chapters 103D and 103F, HRS, conveys a sense of disproportionate equality in the law's application.

Exemptions to the Code mean that all procurements made with taxpayer monies will not have the same oversight, accountability and transparency requirements mandated by those procurements processes provided in the code. It means that there is no requirement for due diligence, proper planning, or consideration of protections for the state in contract terms and conditions, nor are there any set requirements to conduct cost and price analysis and market research or post-award contract management. As such, agencies can choose whether to compete any procurement or go directly to one contractor. As a result, leveraging economies of scale and cost savings efficiencies found in the consistent application of the procurement code are lost. It also means agencies are not required to adhere to the code's procurement integrity laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony 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. 212
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

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

First, I wanted to thank Representative Adrian Tam for introducing **House Bill (HB) 212, Relating to Homelessness.**

I am writing to strongly support **HB 212**. This bill will: 1) Repeal the return-to-home pilot program established in Act 94, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023; 2) establish a permanent Return-to-Home program in the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions; and 3) appropriate funds for the Operation costs and other current expenses relating to the program, including one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to assist and supervise the program.

Foundation of the kauhale Initiative

Homelessness in Hawaii is not just a statistic; it's a pressing issue that demands our immediate attention. For over a decade, our state has consistently ranked among the top five in rates of per capita homelessness. The most recent Point in Time Count (PIT Count) in January 2024 revealed that 6,389 people in our state were experiencing homelessness, with the majority on Oahu. These numbers are not just figures. They represent individuals and families in desperate need of our help.

While the issue of homelessness remains, Hawaii has made significant strides. In 2024, SOHHS set new priorities, including the ambitious goal of halving unsheltered homelessness during Governor Green's Administration's first term (by November 2026). This would mean transitioning approximately 2,200 (chronically homeless) people from the streets or remote areas to a home. Several of SOHHS's priorities focus on expanding the deeply affordable

housing inventory for houseless individuals as well as affordable rental units for individuals, couples, and families who are not homeless, but are facing housing instability (potentially becoming homeless) due to the high costs of living in Hawaii.

The kauhale initiative will strive to demonstrate new, cost-effective models of housing and healing that come from building a sense of community and responsibility among residents. Kauhale includes many housing types and is sometimes envisioned as tiny homes with shared bathrooms, dining, and cooking facilities. However, kauhale could also be created in repurposed hotels, offices, buildings, dormitories, condominiums, or apartment buildings. As long as deep affordability extends from communal responsibility (kuleana) and ownership is built into the design and program plan, any space could be adapted as a kauhale. This is what makes Hawaii and our kauhale initiative different and special.

In 2024, SOHHS established seventeen Kauhale projects, and we recently added the Kulia kauhale in Waianae in 2025, bringing the total to 18. We just completed our 19th kauhale, Fernhurst YWCA, a kauhale for women coming out of the corrections system. The YWCA kauhale will provide residents with housing, meals, education, and job training. The YWCA kauhale is set to officially open this month (February 2025).

Our goal is to build at least thirty (30) Kauhale by November 2026, with at least three on each Neighbor Island. This ambitious plan is not just a government initiative but a collaborative effort that involves the Governor, the Legislature, counties, Mayors, county councils, private businesses, faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, service providers, and the community.

Support for HB 212

The Return-to-Home program has sent 137 mainland homeless people back to their families on the mainland. Potentially saving Hawaii taxpayers \$11.2 million (Governor Green's State of the State addresses the cost to care for a homeless person not in stable housing, which is an average of \$82,000 per person per year not in stable housing).

We strongly support this bill to establish a permanent Return-to-Home program in the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions and to establish, within the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions, one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Return to Home Homelessness Assistant to help with the administration of the Return to Home Program statewide (expanding our coverage from Honolulu to all neighbor Islands), along with being the main resource position to provide timely information on all contracts and services under our office to the Legislature, media, and the public and to timely assist with homeless outreach services to match homeless with a shelter or kauhale. Our office has received several UIPA requests. Having a dedicated person with all relevant information ready to provide such documentation will greatly save our office significant time and work.

Minor Amendments

We respectfully request two friendly amendments, adding the following requirements which our office currently applies to Return-to-Home applicants:

- 1). The first requirement is that our office and/or the agency contracted for such services contact the family or support group and that the family or support group confirms their acceptance of the person or family members returning to their home.
- 2). The second requirement is that the family or support group will pay for half the flight cost for the returning person, unless the individual is indigent and lacks the financial resources, along with confirmation that the family or support group also lacks the resources necessary to cover half the travel cost for the participant. The SOHHS and/or the agency contracted for such services shall verify the family or support group's lack of resources before covering the entire flight cost.

Thank you, Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members, for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of **House Bill 212**. I am grateful for your consideration in passing this important measure and look forward to its potential positive impact on our community while reuniting the homeless with their families on the mainland and saving Hawaii taxpayers millions of dollars.

Mahalo,

John Mizuno
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness and Housing Solutions

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HB212 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.

For individuals who request to participate in this program and have ongoing hearings before the court, it will be necessary to coordinate information between the office of homelessness and the OPD.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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 212 - RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

DATE: February 3, 2025

POSITION: IHS supports the passing of HB 212.

IHS, The Institute for Human Services, has been operating a homeless relocation program since 2015. The pilot program originated with seed funds from the Hawaii Tourism and Lodging Association to address the many transient homeless encountered in Waikiki. And was awarded the contract for OHHS's Return to Home Statewide Program.

We support the passing of HB212, which not only makes the program a permanent and expected cost of OHHS but also includes the provision for 1 FTE position, which is critical in the continued success and growth of this program. From the start of the Statewide contract, February 1, 2024 to the end of Jan. 2025 with a staff member splitting time between Return to Home and general outreach duties, 137 individuals were reunited with loved ones and programs to further them in their pursuit of stable, permanent housing outside of Hawai'i.

Over the years, we have seen an uptick in the number of out-of-state visitors in our outreach and shelter programs and this would save our State much more in benefit and healthcare dollars. Currently, over 60% of new intakes at our men's shelter are recent arrivals from out-of-state. Moreover, over the past year, we've seen an increase in demand for relocation services for individuals receiving care at behavioral health crisis centers and our own triage and treatment center, individuals voluntarily wishing to participate in in-patient programs in the mainland. A partnership with Waikiki community partners has also helped identify more candidates for this program more efficiently.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-212

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 2:21:07 PM

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

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

Comments:

February 5, 2025

To: Chair Marten, and members of the Human Services and Homelessness Committee

From: Hanna Jerome

Re: Testimony in support of HB212 relating to homelessness

I support HB212 relating to homelessness, which addresses the need to establish a permanent return-to-home program to return homeless individuals in the state to families and relatives in their home state.

As a social work student who works as part of an outreach team, I have had the opportunity to see homelessness challenges firsthand. Homelessness is a pervasive issue that affects a significant number of individuals in Oahu. Individuals who are not local to Oahu may lack the resources and support to help them in their time of need. I have encountered clients who ventured to Oahu from the mainland with hopes of success and starting a new life, just to find themselves with no money left in the bank and a new dream of simply surviving. With the passing of this bill, individuals would be able to reconnect with relatives who can provide housing and emotional support for them which increases the chance of successfully reintegrating into society.