

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



PANKAJ BHANOT  
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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 19, 2019

TO: The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 1395 SD 1 HD 1 – RELATING TO HOUSING**

Hearing: April 3, 2019, 2:30 p.m.  
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill as the State Rent Supplement program provides rental assistance for working families who are struggling to meet their rent. Housing stability promotes employment, educational success, and supports good health outcomes.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to make an appropriation for the state rent supplement program.

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

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



HAKIM OUANSAFI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BARBARA E. ARASHIRO  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY  
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 17907  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

Statement of  
**Hakim Ouansafi**  
Hawaii Public Housing Authority  
Before the

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**Wednesday, April 3, 2019**  
**2:30 PM - Room 308, Hawaii State Capitol**

In consideration of  
**SB 1395, SD1, HD1**  
**RELATING TO HOUSING**

Honorable Chair Luke, and Members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning Senate Bill (SB) 1395, SD1, HD1, relating to housing.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) **strongly supports** the enactment of SB 1395, SD1, HD1, which appropriates funds to support the state rent supplement program (RSP).

The RSP is a State funded program that was originally set up to assist middle-income families, who were not threatened by poverty, but were not economically sound to afford the high cost of living in Hawaii. The program was originally designed to assist teachers, policemen, and firemen. The program was later extended to include the general-public and has a maximum rental subsidy of \$500.

The bill currently appropriates \$2,500,000, which would go a long way to provide rental assistance for our very-low income families who are at the 50% Area Median Income (AMI) level. The RSP program is currently serving 381 families and is facing a deficit of approximately \$1,000,000 for the upcoming fiscal year. Please know that for every \$100,000, an average of 20 of the most vulnerable families will be able to keep their rental housing for a year. The HPHA hopes that the Legislature can provide the funding needed to assist these families who are using this financial support to avoid homelessness.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the Committee with the HPHA's testimony regarding SB 1395, SD1, HD1. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.

**SB-1395-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2019 3:42:13 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/3/2019 2:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Mike Goodman	Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force	Support	Yes

Comments:

<b>TO:</b>	The House Committee on Finance
<b>FROM:</b>	Mike Goodman, Director of the Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force & Member of the Partners In Care Advocacy Committee.
<b>RE:</b>	SB1395 SD1, HD1
<b>HEARING:</b>	Wednesday April 3, 2019 at 2:30 p.m. Conference Room 308

Dear Representative Like, Chair and Representative Cullen, Vice Chair, and all Members of the House Committee on Finance; Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB1395

This program serves families who barely make ends meet and require either temporary or permanent financial assistance to prevent them from becoming homeless.

This funding would continue rental subsidies to homeless families and others added to the Rent Supplement Program at the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA), as well as enable more families to receive benefits. Three years ago, with only a one year allocation from the Legislature, Catholic Charities Hawai'i successfully worked with HPHA to assist 85 homeless families.

Hawai'i residents are severely housing cost-burdened. Half of isle households do not earn enough to cover basic needs, much less save anything for an emergency, and can easily fall into homelessness. Many jobs do not pay enough for families to afford the astronomical housing costs in Hawaii. Rental subsidies address this compelling need to create options for more affordable housing.

It's also far more cost effective (not to mention humane) to prevent families from becoming homeless than it does to rebuild their lives and rehouse them after they become homeless.

*Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.*





**EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS**  
HONOLULU

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
GOVERNOR

April 3, 2019

**TO:** The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

**FROM:** Scott Morishige, MSW, Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

**SUBJECT: SB 1395 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO HOUSING**

Hearing: Wednesday, April 3, 2019, 2:30 p.m.  
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

**POSITION:** The Governor's Coordinator supports this measure, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the executive budget request.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to make an appropriation for the state rent supplement program.

Homelessness remains one of the most pressing challenges facing Hawaii, and the State has adopted a comprehensive framework to address homelessness that focuses on three primary leverage points – affordable housing, health and human services, and public safety. The Coordinator works closely with multiple state agencies and homeless service providers to implement this framework through the delivery of housing-focused services like Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing, as well as outreach and treatment services for unsheltered homeless individuals experiencing severe mental illness and/or addiction. The coordinated efforts to implement the State's framework to address homelessness have made progress in reducing the number of homeless individuals statewide. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of homeless individuals in Hawaii decreased by 690 individuals (9.6%). The decrease was one of the largest numeric decreases in homelessness in the country, only exceeded by decreases in California, Florida and Michigan.

The Coordinator notes that the state rent supplement program is an effective tool in reducing and preventing homelessness. The program provides a shallow rent subsidy for households that are low-income and would not otherwise be able to cover the full cost of rent on their own. Because the level of funding for the state rent supplement program is capped at a maximum of \$500 per month per household, the program has the ability to address a large number of households and is one of the more cost-effective programs to address homelessness. In addition to directly assisting homeless individuals and families to access housing, the state rent supplement program prevents homelessness for households that – but for the additional funding provided by the program – find themselves at imminent risk of homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1395, SD1 HD1: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair; Representative Ty Cullen, Vice Chair; and Members, Committee on Finance

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawaii

**Hearing: Wednesday, 4/3/19; 2:30 PM; Conference Room 308**

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and Members, Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of SB 1395, SD1HD1**, which appropriates funds to the State Rent Supplement Program. I am Betty Lou Larson, with Catholic Charities Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 70 years. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawaii.

This funding would continue rental subsidies to homeless families and others added to the Rent Supplement Program at the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA), as well as enable more new families to receive this valuable rental help. Three years ago, with a one year allocation from the legislature, Catholic Charities Hawaii very successfully worked with HPHA to assist 85 homeless families, statewide, to find housing utilizing the State Rent Supplement Program. Over the years, Catholic Charities Hawaii has worked with the elderly, homeless, disabled, and others to link them to this program. It is straight forward and user friendly to both landlords and applicants, and a godsend to most to keep them out of homelessness.

We support pathways like the Rent Supplement Program, which enable families and elders to become housed and remain housed. Hawaii residents continue to be severely housing cost-burdened. Half of isle households do not earn enough to cover basic needs, much less save anything for an emergency, and can easily fall into homelessness (per January 2018 ALICE report by Aloha United Way). Many jobs do not pay enough to enable families to afford the astronomical housing costs in Hawaii. Rental subsidies addresses this compelling need to create options for more affordable housing.

Many families and elders simply need financial relief to get into housing, or be prevented from falling out of housing in the first place. This bill can provide relief to help slow down homelessness.

Please contact me at 373-0356 or [bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org), if you have any questions.



SB 1395 RELATING TO HOUSING

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Conference Room 308

Testifier: Thomas Flores/Recipient

To: Committee on Finance

Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2019 at 2:30 P.M.

Conference Room 308

SB 1395

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

SB 1395 RELATING TO HOUSING

Aloha, Committee on Finance:

I am writing to inform you, that I am a current recipient of the Rent Supplement Program pertaining to SB1395. My name is Thomas Flores, and I would love the opportunity to share my point of view in regard to the Rent Supplement Program. I arrived in Honolulu Hawaii in 2016, with a sack clothes and very little financial resources. During the first week of living in Honolulu, HI, I submitted job applications and lived out of a hostel on a day by day basis. By the second week, I received a call for an interview at CJ's New York Style and Deli located inside the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Thankfully, I was hired on the spot for the Dishwasher position, and looked forward to receiving my next pay check and an employee meal.

As my financial resources depleted, I submitted an application at Next Step Homeless Shelter, located in the Kakaako area. After one month of being wait listed, I was accepted into Next Step Homeless Shelter and assigned to Case Worker, Garret Koshiba. I lived at Next Step Homeless Shelter for about a year and experienced challenges that helped me grow as an



individual. As I was living at Next Step Homeless Shelter my life began to change in a positive direction. Next Step Homeless Shelter offered the Go Cook and Go Bake Programs held at Kapiolani Community College. Each program was three months long and paid each participant \$50 per day. I gladly accepted this opportunity and earned my basic cooking and baking certification within six months.

A week after completing the Go Cook and Go Bake programs. I updated my resume from Dishwasher to Cook and Baking Apprentice and submitted applications to several businesses in search of employment. About two weeks later, I received a call from Safeway for an interview. I attended the interview for the Baker position and was hired immediately, due to my Go Bake certification.

Next Step Case Worker, Garret Koshiba, explained, since I was generating income; I would be able to qualify for the Rent Supplement Program operated by Catholic Charities. We submitted an application to Catholic Charities, which got accepted. Next, Catholic Charities Administrative Program Manager Dani Gella constantly searched to assist me in finding housing before the deadline. Ms. Gella and Garret Koshiba would communicate with me on their days off to discuss my housing situation. After months of searching for a Landlord who would accept the Rent Supplement Agreement; Case Worker, Garret Koshiba and Program Manager Dani Gella found me a place to live, and now I live in a small studio with a bed to sleep in, which is a dream come true. Furthermore, since the supervision of the Rent Supplement Program has transferred from Catholic Charities to Hawaii Public Housing; Public Housing Specialist II, Mr. D Malachi has done an exceptional job in ensuring that I have a place to live through his professional communication and passion for helping others in need.

Furthermore, the Go Cook and Go Bake programs inspired me to continue my education at Kapiolani Community College. I am one semester from obtaining my AS in Pastry Arts and would like to continue my education by earning an AS Culinary Arts as well. I believe this education will give me a competitive advantage in the food industry and most importantly, I will never go hungry.

I understand the Rent Supplement Program may cease to exist or endure changes. Therefore, I am asking the Committee on Finance to allow the Rent Supplement Program to continue, so it may change people's lives for the better. I would like to continue to better myself

as a person, so I may reach my full potential. However, it would be extremely difficult for me to survive without the Rent Supplement Program. For the reason being, I have no family in Hawaii. So I consider The Rent Supplement Program, Hawaii Public Housing and Catholic Charities as families.

I understand cost, expenses, and return on investment are important factors when it comes to making a decision in regard to SB1395. However, I ask the Committee on Finance to take into account the intangible value involved. For instance, I am proud to be a resident of Hawaii. Moreover, Hawaii's cultural values have affected me for the better. For instance, I leaned to help others, regardless if I enjoy their company or not, because it is the right thing to do. With that said, I believe investing in the Rent Supplement Program is the right decision, because some recipients will grow exponentially and teach others to grow exponentially as well as give back to the community.

Lastly, the Rent Supplement Program has opened many doors for myself. For instance, Kapiolani Community College, Frolic Hawaii, and a branch within City of Honolulu have asked me to conduct interviews, because they consider myself a success story. Kapiolani Community College is creating a poster with me on it, that will encourage students to join the Go Cook program. The interview and photos will be sent to Frolic Hawaii. The City of Honolulu would like to conduct the interview for the purpose of raising funds for the Go Cook Program. Furthermore, on September 26, 2018, I was blessed with the opportunity to bake for Governor David Ige and his guest at Kapiolani Community College.

Believe me, I am not much of a talker, because I prefer to work. Therefore, I share these blessings in this testimony, because without the Rent Supplement Program none of the interviews in regard to our success would be possible. However, my counselors, who I consider family have asked me to conduct the interviews, so I will. Furthermore, I respect Hawaii Public Housing and will continue to support SB1395. Mahalo for your valuable time and consideration. I wish the Committee on Housing the best with the decision-making process.

Mahalo,

Thomas Flores

\*(Attached is Linda Ford's Testimony. Ms. Ford does not have an email address to submit her testimony, therefore, with her permission I have included her testimony below:)

State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Conference Room 308

Testifier: Linda Ford/ Recipient  
To: Committee on Finance  
Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2019 at 2:30 P.M.  
Conference Room 308  
SB 1395

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

RE: Senate Bill 1395

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Linda Ford and in less than six months I will be 70 years old. I am also disabled and require a walker or rollator to help with my balance to be able to walk. I live by myself with a little bird as my companion. With Rent Subsidy, I have a better quality of life. I have a reason and hope to wake up every morning. I am very thankful for the rent subsidy that I receive. I am grateful and appreciate all the help that you have given me. Yet I have a fear that I will become a statistic of being lost and forgotten, living with hopelessness and despair, becoming homeless, so I implore you, please continue the Rent Subsidy Program.

Thank you and May God Bless You All,

Linda Ford



# PARTNERS IN CARE

Oahu's Continuum of Care

*Our mission is to eliminate homelessness through open and inclusive participation and the coordination of integrated responses.*

## Testimony in Support of SB 1395, SD1 HD1: Relating to Housing

TO: Committee on Finance  
FROM: Partners in Care (PIC)  
HEARING: Wednesday, 4/3/19; 2:30 pm; Conference Room 308

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **testimony in support** of SB 1395, SD1 HD1, which makes an appropriation to the State Rent Supplement Program (RS). Partners in Care (PIC), a coalition of more than 50 non-profit homelessness providers, supports this bill.

The strength and health of Hawai'i's people and communities depend on all of us coming together to turn around a housing and homelessness problem that's been growing for decades. In 1970, the state of Hawai'i issued a report declaring a "housing crisis" in Hawai'i. Year after year it's gotten worse as increases in housing costs have outpaced increases in wages. In Honolulu, for example, in 1968, 23 percent of renters were cost-burdened, meaning they were paying more than 30 percent of their income for rent. By 2016, the percentage of cost-burdened renters had **more than doubled to 54 percent**. More and more families are unable to afford housing and still have enough left for food and basic necessities.

The plight of elderly renters is particularly severe with Hawaii's skyrocketing rents. A recent report from UC San Francisco projected that **"the elderly homeless population will nearly triple over the next decade"**. Even more shocking, the researcher found that "Homeless people in their 50's generally display the geriatric difficulties of people age 70 or 80...caring for the coming boom in older street people will be expensive...with more intensive medical care" needed.

We need to act now to prevent more elderly and family renters from becoming homelessness. The Rent Supplement Program is an effective solution. It efficiently assists lower-income households to obtain and maintain housing. The maximum \$500/month rent subsidy can fill the gap between a senior's SSI income or a family's work income and the rent they must pay to be permanently housed. Additional funding to the Rent Supplement Program would be an important step forward in the fight against homelessness, as it can prevent many households from falling into homelessness.

Turning around a housing and homelessness crisis that's been growing for 50 years will be difficult, but not impossible. It will require coming together around a shared vision and taking bold action to target more resources to stop the flow of families into homelessness.

We urge you to pass SB 1395, SD1HD1 to increase funding to the State Rent Supplement Program. Thank you for your consideration of this very important bill.