

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

Thursday, February 24, 2022

12:30 PM – Videoconference – Room 308, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of

HB 1752, HD2

RELATING TO HOUSING

Honorable Chair Luke, and Members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning House Bill (HB) 1752,HD2, relating to housing.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) offers the following **comments** for HB 1752, HD2. This measure establishes the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program. Requires the Hawaii public housing authority to adopt rules without regard to chapter 91, HRS, to establish specified incentives for landlords who participate in the tenant-based assistance housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. Requires that the Hawaii Public Housing Authority adopt rules to establish a maximum of fifteen days after receipt of an owner's or landlord's inspection request as a reasonable time within which to inspect a dwelling unit for lease under the section 8 housing choice voucher program, so long as it does not adversely affect the Governor's Supplemental Budget.

One of the programs in which the HPHA assists our low-income families is through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, also known as "Section 8 HCV". The Section 8 HCV program is one of the federal government's major programs for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. This program currently brings \$44.70 million dollars a year primarily on the island of Oahu, supports over 3,200 families and over 11,200 individuals.

There are many landlords who are reluctant to lease their units to our section 8 voucher holders leaving many families with no choice but to return the voucher that they waited many years to

receive. Therefore, the proposed landlord incentives program will certainly make a difference in the lives of our most disadvantaged families by assisting them find suitable permanent housing.

In October of 2021, the HPHA applied for the last spot available nationwide for large public housing authorities to join the “Moving to Work” (MTW) Demonstration Program expansion – Landlord Incentives Cohort with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The MTW designation would allow the HPHA the flexibility to use its currently restrictive federal funding to increase economic self-sufficiency and prosperity, create innovative local solutions to address unique needs in Hawaii, and would increase housing choices for low-income families in Hawaii.

The HPHA’s application would seek to implement 3 landlord incentives:

1. Provide a landlord up to 1 month of contract rent as reimbursement for the time the unit spent vacant in between Section 8 participants.
2. Provide a landlord up to 1 month of contract rent as reimbursement for the time the unit spent vacant when the previous tenant was not a Section 8 participant.
3. Provide an incentive payment, or “signing bonus”, of up to 1 month of contract rent to incentivize landlords to join the Section 8 program.

On January 27, 2022, the HPHA received an award letter from HUD indicating that the HPHA was selected for admission to HUD’s Landlord Incentives Cohort of the MTW Demonstration Program. The HPHA believes that the proposed landlord incentives will be an extremely useful tool that will allow the HPHA to increase the effectiveness of administering the Section 8 program.

The HPHA accepted the designation and anticipates that it will take approximately 1 year to complete its MTW plan and officially roll out the landlord incentives. With the creation of these landlord incentives, combined with the needed positions to administer unit inspections within 15 days, the HPHA will be able to provide these landlord incentives right away, and then be able to use its federal funds to serve more families.

The Section 8 HCV program is an important part of the State’s efforts in addressing the affordable housing needs of our low-income families. All families go through a criminal background, sex offender and Homeland Security screenings before being given a voucher to pursue a rental unit, and the HPHA is willing to work and assist all landlords that would like to participate in the program.

We strongly believe that the original measure included language that would address rental discrimination and would complement these proposed landlord incentives. We would hope that the language could be re-inserted going forward.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the Committee with the HPHA’s testimony. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
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TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 24, 2022

The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-First Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Luke and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1752 HD2 Relating to Housing

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities offers comments on **HB1752 HD2** which establishes the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program. Requires the Hawaii public housing authority to adopt rules without regard to chapter 91, HRS, to establish specified incentives for landlords who participate in the tenant-based assistance housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. Requires that the Hawaii public housing authority adopt rules to establish a maximum of fifteen days after receipt of an owner's or landlord's inspection request as a reasonable time within which to inspect a dwelling unit for lease under the section 8 housing choice voucher program.

The Section-8 housing choice voucher program helps our individuals with developmental disabilities live independently. Currently, many Section-8 voucher holders wait a substantial amount of time to receive their voucher, only to not use their voucher due to discrimination or stigma against the Section-8 program. We support this measure as it seeks to add securities and incentives to homeowners willing to rent to Section-8 participants.

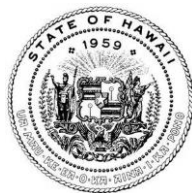
Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding **HB1752 HD2**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

February 24, 2022

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

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

SUBJECT: HB 1752 HD2 – RELATING TO HOUSING.

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2022, 12:30 p.m.
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

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

The Coordinator appreciates the amendments made earlier by the House Committee on Housing to delete provisions that prohibited negative advertising relating to source of income for available rental or lease dwelling units. By addressing only the negative advertising aspect of rental discrimination based on source of income, the prior version of this bill may have had unintended adverse impacts and placed greater hardship on individuals seeking rental housing.

PURPOSE: The purpose of Part I of this bill is to establish the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program within the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA); require HPHA to adopt rules without regard to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to establish specified incentives for landlords who participate in the tenant-based assistance housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. In addition, Part II requires the HPHA to adopt rules to establish a maximum of fifteen days after receipt of an owner's or landlord's inspection request as a reasonable time within which to inspect a dwelling unit for lease under the section 8 housing choice voucher program. The bill also makes appropriations for both parts.

Providing targeted incentives for landlords and shortening the periods for unit inspection will encourage increased landlord participation and acceptance of Section 8 housing assistance. Notably, other housing programs, such as the State and City Housing First programs and Partners in Care's Oahu Housing Now (OHN) program, include similar incentives that positively impact landlord engagement. For example, the State and City Housing First programs include damage mitigation payments for landlords. Also, the Partners in Care OHN program offers additional incentives, such as a 24-hour landlord support line, a two-month lease bonus, and up to \$3,000 for damage mitigation. The inclusion of landlord incentives in the OHN program contributed to the program housing over 292 households (759 individuals) since April 2021.

Increased landlord participation in housing assistance programs is critical given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on low-income households. In January 2021, the Economic Roundtable released a report projecting the pandemic recession would increase chronic homelessness in the United States by 49% over the next four years. Similarly, historical data for the statewide homeless Point in Time (PIT) count also indicates that demand for homeless services is likely to increase in the wake of the current economic recession. Following the last significant downturn in 2009, the statewide PIT count increased 37% between 2009 and 2016. By incentivizing landlord participation in the HPHA Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, this bill effectively reduces upfront barriers prohibiting low-income families from accessing existing rental housing and housing assistance.

The Coordinator understands reducing upfront housing barriers is just one piece of a more comprehensive effort to address homelessness and housing instability. In addition, the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) – a 27-member advisory council chaired by the Coordinator - has prioritized low-income housing development for individuals transitioning out of homelessness, the scaling of shallow rental subsidies, and the expansion of programs that assist key homeless sub-populations (e.g., unsheltered youth, adults with severe mental illness, etc.). For more information about the 2022 HICH policy priorities, visit <https://homelessness.hawaii.gov/advocacy>.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
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EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1752, H.D. 2

February 24, 2022
12:30 p.m.
Room 308 and Videoconference

RELATING TO HOUSING

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1752, H.D. 2: 1) amends Chapter 356D, HRS, to require the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority (HPHA) to adopt rules to expand incentives for landlords participating in or initially joining the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program to include reimbursements for eligible unit vacancy periods and signing bonuses and to set requirements for reimbursements for tenant-caused property damage when the repair costs exceed the security deposit as authorized by Act 215, SLH 2019; 2) requires HPHA to adopt rules to establish that a reasonable time within which to inspect a Section 8 landlord's property after receiving a request for inspection will be a maximum of 15 days; 3) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds for HPHA in FY 23 to provide expanded incentives to Section 8 landlords; and 4) appropriates \$360,500 in general funds for HPHA in FY 23 to hire 2.00 permanent Housing Quality Standards Inspector II positions and 3.00 permanent Public Housing Specialist II positions to support the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriations in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1752, HD 2

TO: Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, & Committee Members

FROM: Nikos Leverenz
Grants & Advancement Manager

DATE: February 24, 2022 (12:30 PM)

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) **supports** HB 1752, HD 2, which establishes the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program.

Many low-income persons and families who obtain needed assistance have great difficulty in finding and securing rentals in a perennially high-cost, low-supply housing landscape. This includes people living with HIV who receive federal housing assistance and are provided medical case management services by HHRC staff. This program would encourage more properties to extend rental units to those with Section 8 vouchers.

HHRC Executive Director Heather Lusk currently serves as Board Chair of [Partners in Care O'ahu](#), a planning, coordinating, and advocacy alliance that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill needs within O'ahu's continuum of care for homeless persons. HHRC provides homeless outreach and housing placement navigation services in urban Honolulu and the Upper Windward Coast, including North Shore.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

COMMENTS on HB 1752 HD2: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: House Committee on Finance
FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: Thursday, 2/24/22; 12:30 PM; via videoconference

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **Comments on HB 1752, HD2**, which would establish the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program, and require the Hawaii Public Housing Authority to adopt rules to establish a maximum period of 15 days for unit inspections for the Section 8 program. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i. We are also a member of Partners In Care (PIC).

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of working in the areas of affordable housing and homelessness.

We support addressing issues raised by landlords for the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program. This federal program brings tens of millions of dollars into Hawaii to make rents affordable. We recognize that we must support landlords as well as tenants in this program. Adding incentives to reduce the burden that inspections or other program requirements may place on landlords would be helpful to increase the inventory of Section 8 units.

However, we also feel that there needs to be a balance between addressing landlord concerns and the concerns of tenants who need housing and can pay stable rent with a voucher. **Catholic Charities Hawai'i urges that there needs to be a strong prohibition of source of income discrimination to really address the root problem of the lack of rentals available to people who absolutely need some government rental assistance to obtain and become stable in housing. We respectfully urge your Committee to add language to prohibit this discrimination.** We suggest that language from HB 981 (2021) be added to this bill. This would create a balanced approach to this critical issue.

As long as landlords can legally discriminate against persons with housing subsidies, they often do an automatic screening out. The prohibition of this discrimination gives the opportunity for people with rental subsidies to be considered the same as others in the community. It would provide an opportunity for elders to show they would be good tenants with stable rent payments. There are working families who could move away from the edge of homelessness and be good tenants. Landlords could continue to evaluate all applicants on their ability to pay rent, credit worthiness, etc. And now they could hear of the benefits of incentives, such as in this bill, along with the stable monthly payments that vouchers provide.



Honolulu is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the US that does not prohibit this practice. With Hawaii's severe housing crunch and high rate of homelessness, it is time to establish a strong prohibition of discrimination only because someone has a rent subsidy.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i is very concerned about our Kupuna. Our Kupuna have worked long and hard to make Hawai'i the special place it now is. They and the many others faced with discrimination deserve a chance to be considered just as any other applicant. We are very concerned about housing single parents, especially the many lower income women with children. Source of income discrimination is sometimes a veiled form of sex and family/children discrimination.

CCH's Housing Assistance Program currently has 53 seniors who are over 62 on our urgent waitlist. The average age is 75 years old! They are often long term renters who have been displaced. K. cannot afford an increase in rent (\$1,200/month) and is afraid of becoming homeless. D's lease ended and could not afford a new rental due to low income, so is living in a van. C's brother died and the heirs want her out in a few months. These sad stories go on and on. **Their only hope is to utilize ongoing rental assistance programs. Please give them hope.** Please do not allow discrimination to continue to make so many elders face homelessness, when they have a solution in hand—stable rental assistance.

In areas that prohibit this type of discrimination, renters with housing vouchers are 12% more likely to obtain housing than in areas that do not prohibit this discrimination. Hawai'i needs all the help it can get to stably house our lower income families and to end homelessness! Hawai'i residents must not be shut off from using these extremely valuable resources.

Please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 373-0356 or alohabettylou@hotmail.com if you have any questions.

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.

COMMENTS ON HB 1752 HD2: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: House Committee on Finance
FROM: Partners In Care (PIC)
Hearing: **Thursday, 2/24/22; 12:30 PM; via videoconference**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **Comments on HB 1752 HD2**, which would create a landlord incentive program for Section 8, and require the Hawaii Public Housing Authority to adopt rules to complete the housing inspection within 15 days. Partners In Care (PIC), a coalition of more than 60 non-profit homelessness providers and concerned organizations, works on Oahu to end homelessness.

Partners In Care works with landlords in our Oahu Housing Now program. We have successfully placed 286 families, as of January 2022, into permanent housing, many utilizing rental assistance programs. We have seen that the incentives that we can offer to landlords work. We have seen the benefits both to stabilize rents for the formerly homeless tenants and the landlords. However, our effectiveness is hampered due to the lack of landlords who will consider this valuable resource. For example, one homeless individual was issued a voucher in February 2021, and although they received multiple extensions and submitted multiple applications each week, were still unable to find a landlord willing to consider the housing voucher as of November 2021.

While supporting incentives, Partners In Care also respectfully urges you to **amend this bill to include a strong prohibition of source of income discrimination. We respectfully suggest that the language from HB 981 (2021) be added to this bill.** Our community can work on landlord concerns like the time for inspections, etc. but we also need a level playing field for voucher holders to access available rentals.

Honolulu remains one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States that does not have a state or local prohibition on this practice, which may inadvertently be contributing to our high levels of housing insecurity. A high percentage of Section 8 participants are single women with children. Allowing source of income discrimination may sometimes result in sex or family/children discrimination.

During the pandemic, more and more people have sought housing assistance and the tens of millions of Section 8 dollars and other subsidies have also supported landlords. The federal government responded to the pandemic by allocating hundreds of new Section 8 vouchers to the counties and state. Recently, Hawai'i received 700 new Housing Vouchers. If Hawai'i cannot use these vouchers, this valuable resource may be lost. Hawai'i needs to protect households with housing assistance from discrimination, allowing them to apply and be judged on the same tenancy qualifications as other applicants instead of being judged only on their participation in an assistance program. It would not change the current standards of the industry and would allow landlords to

verify income sources and evaluate prospective tenants like they would other tenants, including based on creditworthiness.

Year after year, our housing crisis has worsened, and homelessness increased. The pandemic has revealed that housing stability is key for the future of our State. The State must encourage greater participation in comprehensive housing programs that stabilize our local families, help them compete with out-of-state renters, help sustain Hawai'i's middle class, and increase upward social mobility, while directly addressing Hawai'i's housing and homelessness challenges.

We urge your support for a balanced approach that prohibits discrimination based on an applicant participating in government rental assistance programs, as well as providing incentives to landlords to address concerns about timeliness, loss of income, damages, etc..

Mahalo.



Committee on Finance
Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita

Thursday 2/24/22, 12:30 pm, Videoconference
HB1752 HD2 — RELATING TO HOUSING

TESTIMONY

Beppie Shapiro, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports HB1752 HD2 which establishes the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program; requires the Hawaii public housing authority to adopt rules to establish specified incentives for landlords who participate in the tenant-based assistance housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937; requires that the Hawaii public housing authority adopt rules to establish a maximum of fifteen days after receipt of an owner's or landlord's inspection request as a reasonable time within which to inspect a dwelling unit for lease under the section 8 housing choice voucher program; and appropriates funds.

The League of Women Voters supports legislation addressing the housing crisis that confronts very low- and extremely low-income families. The effects of this crisis are seen in almost every community in Hawaii. HB1752 HD2 takes steps to increase the availability of Section 8 housing units, a critical unmet need.

We hope to see the implementation of this legislation as soon as possible – every year before its implementation will see more people unable to access housing through the Section 8 vouchers which are their only hope for affordable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

League of Women Voters of Hawaii
P.O. Box 235026 ♦ Honolulu, HI 96823
Voicemail 808.377.6727 ♦ my.lww.org/hawaii ♦ voters@lwwhi.org

League of Women Voters of Hawaii
P.O. Box 235026 ♦ Honolulu, HI 96823
Voicemail 808.377.6727 ♦ my.lwv.org/hawaii ♦ voters@lwvhi.org

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair

House Committee on Finance

Via Videoconference

RE: H.B. 1752, HD2, Relating to Housing

HEARING: Friday, February 24, 2022, at 12:30 p.m.

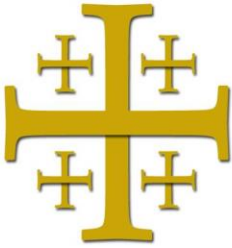
Aloha Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Members of the Committee,

I am Ken Hiraki, Director of Government Affairs, testifying on behalf of the Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® ("HAR"), the voice of real estate in Hawai'i, and its over 11,000 members. HAR **supports the intent** of House Bill 1752, HD2, which establishes the housing choice voucher landlord incentive program. Requires the Hawaii Public Housing Authority ("HPHA") to adopt rules without regard to chapter 91, HRS, to establish specified incentives for landlords who participate in the tenant-based assistance housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. Requires that the HPHA adopt rules to establish a maximum of fifteen days after receipt of an owner's or landlord's inspection request as a reasonable time within which to inspect a dwelling unit for lease under the section 8 housing choice voucher program. Appropriates funds.

HAR believes that government subsidized housing assistance programs, such as Section 8, are an important part of our community's social safety net. However, the section 8 process mandates additional paperwork, inspections and processes, which is not required by other applicants. As a result, housing providers participating in section 8 often forfeit their first month's rent in addition to having to wait 3 months or longer for a subsequent rental check. While property managers may possess the experience and knowledge necessary to navigate safely through this process, it is often too complex, expensive and time consuming for a mom-and-pop housing provider. As such, the amount of red tape within the process disadvantages both a housing provider and a tenant.

HAR respectfully requests that the inspection time be reduced from 15 days to 7 days as a reasonable time to inspect a dwelling unit. The more we make the process competitive and similar in timeframes to market rentals, the more housing providers would be willing to participate and the quicker tenants will be able to move in to a place to call home.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL CHURCH

75-5769 Ali'i Drive • Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 96740
PH: (808) 326-7771 • Email: stmichaelarchangel@rcchawaii.org
Website: stmichaelparishkona.org

February 22, 2022

Aloha Committee Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Yamashita and Members.

RE: HB1752 HD2 Support

This bill gives incentives to landlords who participate in the Section 8 housing voucher program to cover repair costs.

We all know there is a shortage of affordable housing throughout our state. Landlords have a multitude of applicants for available rentals. Section 8 housing voucher holders end up at the end of the line or are not even considered. Adding incentives to landlords like covering the repair costs above the security deposit would make the section 8 program more attractive and financially possible.

Humbly,

Shirley David

Shirley David, Pastoral Council Chair
St. Michael the Archangel Church



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2233: RELATING TO TANF

TO: Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Members
FROM: Brandee Menino, CEO, Hope Services Hawai'i, Inc.
Hearing: FIN on Thursday, 02-24-22 12:30PM

Aloha,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide strong support for HB 2233, which would authorize the Department of Human Services to provide housing assistance subsidies of up to \$500 per month to TANF and TAONF program participants who are participating in the first-to-work program.


As Hawai'i Island's largest homeless services provider, a significant portion of HOPE Services' work is dedicated to Diversion and Prevention—keeping people from entering homelessness, and helping them find alternative living arrangements so they do not enter the system. We also devote a substantial amount of energy to helping recently housed people build and budget their incomes; however, with low wages and high housing costs, they often simply do not have enough money for necessities like food, transportation, and cleaning supplies, after paying the rent. With nearly half our state struggling below the ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) threshold, we need your help to leverage all available resources to help families in Hawai'i work towards building their capacity to not only survive, but thrive.

My colleague Dale Roskamp, who is a Housing First Case Manager in Hilo, shared the story of "Annette," a single mother of two teenagers. Annette and her family are part of the **41% of the households we served** last year who received TANF payments, and who would benefit from an expansion of benefits. Annette receives general assistance payments and SNAP benefits, but her total income is still too low to afford the cost of living. Dale shared that he has taken money out of his own pocket to buy bleach and cleaning supplies to help her out. "She never asks for anything else," Dale says. "How could I turn her down?"

One way we can immediately help families like Annette's is to tap into our reserve of federal TANF funds and expand benefits that would help **keep families like hers stabilized in housing**. We also respectfully request that you consider increasing the number of eligible families and raising the maximum benefit amount, which has not been updated in over a decade.

Mahalo nui for considering our testimony in support of HB2233.

Sincerely,


Brandee Menino,
Chief Executive Officer





COMMENTS ON HB1752: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Members
FROM: Brandee Menino, CEO, Hope Services Hawai'i, Inc.
Hearing: FIN, 2-24-22 at 12:30

Aloha,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB1752 HD2, which would provide incentives for landlords who rent residential units to tenants who utilize housing vouchers. We support these incentives, and respectfully request the following **amendments**:

- 1) The full prohibition of discrimination based on a renter's housing voucher status and,
- 2) the enforcement of the prohibition of this practice through private civil action in court with damages that are high enough to dissuade the practice.

As the CEO of Hawai'i Island's largest homeless service provider, I cannot emphasize enough how desperately we need to end rental income discrimination. **However, HB1752 HD2 would not prohibit actual discrimination.** Although a bill providing landlord incentives may encourage some landlords to rent to our neighbors utilizing vouchers, it likely will not be enough to make a dent in the overwhelming need for units available to voucher holders. We need swift, decisive action to from the state to send the message that discriminating against people because they cannot afford housing without a voucher is a prejudiced and intolerant practice that causes: 1) the expiration of vouchers before they can be utilized, 2) the extension of time that housing-ready people spend in congregate shelter, and 3) increased rates of homelessness.

Last year our housing team sounded the alarm that **rental housing discrimination is making it impossible to find housing for tenants who are employed, have a deposit, and are prepared to take care of their new home.** The team asked for help in educating landlords about renting to tenants on vouchers, in order to dispel pervasive myths, such as tenants on vouchers being destructive, and inspections being unreasonably difficult. Of course, we can (and do) share information to counter this narrative, such as recommendations from landlords we work with, and the entirely reasonable section 8 inspection checklist. But the reality is that **we cannot fix this problem on our own.** Many of the rental properties are owned by out-of-state landlords or Real Estate Investment Trusts, who'd be difficult, if not impossible, to persuade. The effort expended by our housing team in searching through ad after ad, only to find that the family they're working with won't even be given a chance to apply, is frustrating, demoralizing, and wasteful. It means that when our team could be taking their clients to view apartments, they are combing through Craigslist ads, only to find "No Hope Services" at the bottom of an otherwise promising listing. Instead of helping a family move into their permanent home, our team is calling a long list of realtors, begging them to make an exception. Instead of welcoming a disabled kūpuna living in a tent

into a room in our emergency shelter, our team is pleading with property management companies, only to be told “the owner will not accept section 8.”

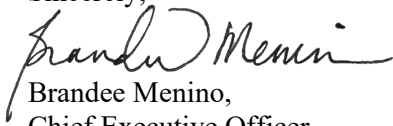
As long as rental income discrimination remains legal, there will be a perception that it is acceptable, and no amount of education will change that. What’s more, **taxpayers are subsidizing this discrimination** through the cost of government contracts that pay for the extra nights housing-ready families spend in shelters, and the extra labor our team does as they search for landlords willing to give our tenants a chance. With the rise in property purchases by out-of-state landlords paying above market value, what should be a simple task has become a monumental challenge.

It’s important to note that homelessness doesn’t cut across society equally. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted, as are single mothers and others who are marginalized in society. As our Housing Locator, Matthew Ua, testified last year, “We all know that discrimination occurs based on an applicant’s race, gender, disability, age, and religious beliefs, but it is my opinion, that what I’ve witnessed is discrimination based on a piece of paper that covers all the aforementioned categories.”

Real estate in Hawai’i is like a pie--when a person owns a slice (or two or three slices) it means there is less available for everyone else. The very least we should be asking of landlords is to equally consider applicants who have the ability to pay the rent--whether they need a government subsidy or not. Therefore, **we respectfully request that you support HB1752 HD 2 with amendments.**

Mahalo nui for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brandee Menino".

Brandee Menino,
Chief Executive Officer



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2512: RELATING TO ‘OHANA ZONES.

TO: Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Members
FROM: Brandee Menino, CEO, Hope Services Hawai‘i, Inc.
Hearing: FIN on Thursday, 02-24-22 at 2:00

Aloha,

My name is Brandee Menino and I am the CEO of Hope Services Hawai‘i. Our agency is Hawai‘i Island’s largest nonprofit homeless services provider, and has had success in serving our most vulnerable neighbors using ‘ohana zones funding. This could not have happened without our partnership with the governor's office, whose approval allowed us to expedite the process, and begin offering services as quickly as possible. We appreciate the legislature’s innovation in establishing the ‘ohana zones program, and commitment to its continued success.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in **support of HB 2512 HD1**, which would extend the sunset date for the ‘ohana zones pilot program to June 30, 2026, and appropriate funds to the governor for the ‘ohana zones pilot program, and which includes **the following exemptions (with highest priorities in bold)**, to ensure that construction can be completed in a timely manner:

- (1) **Chapter 6E, Hawaii Revised Statutes, historic preservation;**
- (5) **Chapter 46, Hawaii Revised Statutes, county organization and administration as any county ordinance, rule, regulation, law, or provision in any form applies to any county permitting, licensing, zoning, variance, processes, procedures, fees, or any other requirements that hinder, delay, or impede the purpose of this Act;**
- (11) Section 103-53 Hawaii Revised Statutes, contracts with the State or counties; tax clearances, assignments;
- (12) Section 103-55 Hawaii revised Statutes, wages, hours, and working conditions of employees of contractors performing services
- (13) **Chapter 103D Hawaii Revised Statutes, Hawaii public procurement code;**
- (14) Chapter 103F Hawaii Revised Statutes, purchases of health and human services;
- (15) **Chapter 104 Hawaii Revised Statutes, Wages and hours of employees on public works;**



- (18) Chapter 171 Hawaii Revised Statutes, public lands;
- (19) Chapter 205 Hawaii Revised Statutes, Land use commissions;
- (20) Chapter 205A Hawaii Revised Statutes, coastal zone management;
- (22) Chapter 343 Hawaii Revised Statutes, Environmental impact statements;
- (23) Chapter 346 Hawaii Revised Statutes, Social services;
- (24) Section 464-4 Hawaii Revised Statutes, public works required to be supervised by certain professionals;

Mahalo nui for considering our testimony **in support of HB2512 HD1 with the aforementioned exemptions.**

Sincerely,



Brandee Menino,
Chief Executive Officer

TO: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair, Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice-Chair, and Committee of Finance Members

RE: HB1752 HD2 - Relating to Housing

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 12:30 p.m. via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Yamashita, and committee members,

My name is Maya Vazquez and I work as a behavioral health case manager with Mental Health Kokua, however, this testimony is based on my personal opinion and does not represent Mental Health Kokua.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1752 HD2, which establishes the housing choice voucher incentive program and will require the Hawaii public housing authority to establish a maximum of fifteen days in which to inspect a dwelling unit under the section 8 housing choice voucher program.

Over the past year, at least three of my clients were blessed with the opportunity of receiving a HUD voucher, however, each of them was unable to secure a residence due to the competitiveness of the rental market and the lack of available HUD-approved housing on Maui. The clients I work with are diagnosed with at least one serious mental illness, and many of them struggle with some aspects of daily functioning, which can limit their ability to obtain and maintain full-time employment, keeping them at or below the state's poverty line. Some of these individuals are also supporting family members and children while attempting to maintain their mental health stability. Without this and other social safety nets, my clients would not be able to move forward in their recovery or treatment and would remain stagnant in their current states, or face homelessness. Offering incentives for landlords, and educating them on the housing choice voucher program would increase the number of units available to rent for individuals and families, helping them to progress with their lives. The section 8 program has been stereotyped and stigmatized to victimize landlords and portrays recipients as "bad" people who abuse

substances, and vandalize properties. The people in need are being hurt the most and punished for not having an elite status within the community.

Once again, I support HB1752 HD2 ask that this measure be approved and move forward. I urge you to consider how this measure will assist in prohibiting discrimination based on the applicants who apply for assistance, and how it may change the view of the housing choice voucher program and appeal to additional homeowners.

Mahalo Nui,

Maya Vazquez

House District: 13, Rep. Linda Clark

Senate District: 7, Sen. Lynn DeCoite

HB-1752-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/23/2022 9:42:01 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2022 12:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sterling Higa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

When our state can utilize federal money to solve local problems, we should do so. Section 8 vouchers go unused because there are few incentives in place for private landowners to accept them. This squanders the federal resources that would otherwise be available to help solve the housing crisis in our state. This program is a step in the right direction, and I urge you to support it.

HB-1752-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/23/2022 9:52:18 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2022 12:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Arjuna	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

We are one of the few states that do not prohibit SOI discrimination, this bill will prohibit SOI discrimination and incentivize landlords to accept vouchers--we should be doing all we can to ensure those who need assistance have equitable access to housing. The committee on Finance should pass HB1752.