

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR



CHAD K. TANIGUCHI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY  
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 17907  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Statement of  
**Chad K. Taniguchi**  
Hawaii Public Housing Authority  
Before the

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**

February 4, 2009 9:00 a.m.  
Room 325, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of  
**H.B. 1694**  
**RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING**

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) supports the intent of H.B. 1694, which would 1) establish a minimum rent amount of \$250 for tenants in state public housing and \$50 for federal public housing, 2) require HPHA to seek full reimbursement for tenant-caused damages in federal public housing, and 3) prohibit the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) from establishing preferences in tenant selection, other than veteran preferences, in state public housing.

- 1) **Minimum Rents.**
  - a. **State public housing.** HPHA agrees with the concept of a minimum contribution by all tenants. The current minimum rent structure by bedroom size is attached for the 288 state family units and 576 state elderly units. HPHA is required by statute (HRS 356D-43(a)) to have the rents pay for all expenses of the state family and state elderly housing. HPHA has not raised the minimum rents since 2001 for state family units and since 2005 for state elderly units. HPHA intends to raise the minimum rents and will provide a proposal by February 27, 2009. The minimum rents should be by bedroom sizes and there should be an ongoing process to raise the rents to meet expenses as they rise.
  - b. **Federal public housing.** The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) currently allows a minimum rent of up to \$50. HPHA currently has zero minimum rent, and intends to raise it to \$50. HUD requires public housing authorities to grant hardship waivers for temporary losses of income where the minimum rent cannot be paid.
- 2) **Full Reimbursement.** HPHA currently seeks reimbursement for tenant-caused damages and needs to increase the labor rate from \$11 per hour to \$35 per hour.
- 3) **No Preferences, other than veterans.** The Legislature or the HPHA Board can make a determination on preferences. HUD allows preferences but does not require any.

EXHIBIT C

MINIMUM RENTS FOR  
STATE-AIDED FAMILY PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS  
(Effective DEC 13 2001)

The Minimum Monthly rents for all tenants of State-aided family public housing projects are as follows:

No. of Bedrooms	Monthly Minimum Rent
1	\$108
2	128
3	152
4	180
5	212

Exhibit 4

MINIMUM RENTS FOR STATE-AIDED ELDERLY PROJECTS

Effective February 1, 2004

The minimum monthly rents for all tenants of State-aided elderly projects are as follows:

Bedroom Size	Minimum Rent
0 BR	\$160
1 BR	185

Effective February 1, 2005

The minimum monthly rents for all tenants of State-aided elderly projects are as follows:

Bedroom Size	Minimum Rent
0 BR	\$170
1 BR	195

**A JOINT LEGISLATIVE EFFORT**

E-Mail: [HSGtestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:HSGtestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov)  
Regarding: House HSG Committee  
Hearing on: February 4, 2009 @ 9:00 a.m. in room #325  
Copies Necessary: 5 copies

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Yoshimitsu, Walter

**Date:** February 2, 2009  
**To:** House Committee on Housing  
Rep. Rida Cabanilla, Chair  
Rep. Pono Chong, Vice Chair  
**From:** Walter Yoshimitsu  
Lobbyist, Hawaii Catholic Conference  
**Re:** **COMMENTS on HB 1694 Relating to Public Housing**

The Hawaii Catholic Conference and Hawaii Family Forum would like to make some comments on HB 1694, relating to public housing. Along with our community partner, Catholic Charities, we oppose the section of this bill which would prohibit the establishment of preferences for the selection of tenants; however, we support the section that would establish a minimum rent of \$250. We urge the legislature not to change the preference for tenant selection.

**Comments on Preferences:**

Currently the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA)'s rules provide for a preference for homeless individuals and families who are working with a homeless shelter, transitional housing program, or outreach and following their service plan to get their lives back on track. Without this preference, the families would have very few options for affordable housing and many, if not most, would remain homeless. The families cannot afford the market rents for a 2 bedroom unit, even though many are working. The main objective of the State is to help homeless families to gain housing and the skills they need to remain in housing. Without affordable housing, this objective cannot be met. While some families may obtain better jobs and find a market unit, most of the families who work need rents at 30% of their income. The waitlists for Section 8 housing and other affordable projects that offer rents at 30% of income, have long waitlists. For senior projects, the wait is usually at least 3-5 years, and family projects are longer. Without public housing homeless participants would not be able to move out of transitional shelters within the 2 year time limit, and would again become homeless.

The experience of Catholic Charities, who operate Ma'ili Land Transitional housing is that without affordable housing, the outlook is very grim for families in transition. With rents having doubled or tripled even in the Waianae area, there are few affordable rentals out in the market. Until adequate affordable housing projects are created, public housing remains one of the few resources that the State has to reduce homelessness in our State.

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**Comments Minimum Rents:**

Knowing the many challenges facing the State's housing projects, we would support a fair minimum rent that would be used to help ensure housing is safe, in good repair, and provides dignity to the tenants. A minimum rent would assist the housing projects to stabilize their projections for rental income. There also must be flexibility in the implementation with existing tenants so as not to drive these tenants into homelessness.

We urge you not to change the tenant selection rules. If the homeless preference is removed, transition of families out of programs like Ma'ili Land will be severely impacted. Families may end up becoming homeless again at the 2 year limit for the program due to no affordable housing available. HPHA's preference for homeless is critical to maintain, until more affordable rental units are actually built.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments on HB 1694.

To: Representative Rida Cabanilla, Chair,  
Representative Pono Chong, Vice Chair  
Committee on Housing

From: Community Alliance Partners  
Hawai'i Island Continuum of Care to End Homelessness  
(808) 933-6033 [hawaiicap@gmail.com](mailto:hawaiicap@gmail.com)

HSG Public Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2009 (9:00 a.m.) CR 325

**HB 1694**                      **RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING**  
**Opposition to Removal of Homeless Preference**

Dear Chair Cabanilla, Vice Chair Chong, and members of the Committee on Housing:

Community Alliance Partners (CAP), the Continuum of Care for the Island of Hawai'i, is a broad based consortium of social service providers and community members working together to address the issue of homelessness. These efforts are centered on collaboration to support the development of a spectrum of resources and services to assist those affected by homelessness in obtaining and maintaining sustainable housing and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

**CAP is writing to OPPOSE the section of HB 1694 which would prohibit HPHA to establish preferences for the selection of tenants in public housing.**

Current guidelines allow for a preference status for persons who are homeless and are working with service providers to resolve obstacles to their stability. This preference provides a key avenue to assist individuals and families in the most severe situations to access affordable housing which can provide the foundation of support to help them continue their progress. Public Housing is an essential resource in the Continuum of Care, and the homeless preference is a key tool in facilitating the forward momentum of those working to improve their lives.

The removal of the homeless preference for public housing will result in extended periods of time for individuals and families to remain unsheltered, meaning increased exposure to the circumstances of the highest risk factors. If individuals in homeless programs are no longer placed as a high priority for public housing it will also limit access to emergency and transitional shelter services, as participants will increasingly stay for the full extent of the program duration, as they struggle to compete for extremely limited inventory of affordable housing in the community.

We urge the committee to retain the homeless preference option for public housing as a key step in reducing homelessness, and encourage continuing collaboration with service providers to developing support services to help families continue the transition on into the mainstream housing market and greater independence.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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**From:** Betty Lou Larson [BettyLou@catholiccharitieshawaii.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 03, 2009 9:40 AM  
**To:** HSGtestimony  
**Subject:** TESTIMONY for 2/4/09, 9:00 AM, Housing Committee



## **TESTIMONY- OPPOSE/COMMENTS - HB 1694: RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING**

**TO:** **Representative Rida Cabanilla, Chair**, Representative Pono Chong,  
Vice Chair, and Members, House Committee on Housing

**FROM:** Betty Lou Larson, Housing Programs Director, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

**HEARING:** Wednesday, February 4, 2009, 9:00 am; CR 325

Chair Cabanilla, Vice Chair Chong, and members of the Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on this housing bill. I am Betty Lou Larson, the Housing Programs Director at Catholic Charities Hawai'i. We are also members of Partners in Care. Catholic Charities Hawai'i **OPPOSES** the section of this bill which would prohibit the establishment of preferences for the selection of tenants. However, we **SUPPORT** the section that would establish a minimum rent .

**RE: Preferences:** Currently the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA)'s rules provide for a preference for homeless individuals and families who are working with a homeless shelter, transitional housing program, or outreach and following their service plan to get their lives back on track. Without this preference, the families would have very few options for affordable housing and many, if not most, would remain homeless. The families cannot afford the market rents for a 2 bedroom unit, even though many are working. The main objective of the State is to help homeless families to gain housing and the skills they need to remain in housing. Without affordable housing, this objective cannot be met. While some families may obtain better jobs and find a market unit, most of the families who work need rents under \$1000/month. The waitlists for Section 8 housing and other affordable projects that offer lower rents, have long waitlists. Without public housing, homeless participants would not be able to move out of transitional shelters within the 2 year time limit, and would again become homeless.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i operates the Ma'ili Land Transitional Housing Program. Our experience there is that without affordable housing, especially public housing, the outlook would be very grim for families to transition out within two years. With rents having doubled or tripled even in the Waianae area, there are few affordable rentals out in the market. Until adequate affordable housing projects are brought on-line, public housing remains one of the few resources that the State has to reduce homelessness.

RE: Minimum Rents: Knowing the many challenges facing the State's housing projects, we would support a fair minimum rent that would be used to help ensure housing is safe, in good repair, and provides dignity to the tenants. A minimum rent would assist the housing projects to stabilize their projections for rental income. There also must be flexibility in the implementation with existing tenants so as not to drive these tenants into homelessness.

We urge you not to change the tenant selection rules. HPHA's preference for homeless is critical to maintain, until more affordable rental units are actually built.



2745 Pali Hwy • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817 • Phone (808) 595-0077 • Fax (808) 595-0811  
[www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org)



George J. Zweibel, Esq.  
President, Board of Directors

M. Nalani Fujimori, Esq.  
Interim Executive Director

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB1694 - RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING**

February 4, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii hereby provides testimony to the House Committee on Housing in opposition of HB1694 – Relating to Public Housing.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii provides free legal services to the low-income population of the State of Hawaii. In addition to providing services to clients who currently reside in public housing, we also assist individuals who are on the waiting list to gain access to public housing. In 2008, we received over three hundred calls requesting assistance on public housing matters and represented approximately thirty or 10% of these callers in administrative and/or court hearings. Many of our clients are on limited, fixed incomes such as Social Security, General Assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Many of our clients are also victims of domestic violence, homeless and a few are displaced persons.

This bill would (1) set a minimum of rent of \$250 for all public housing so long as it does not disqualify the entity from federal assistance and (2) would remove discretion in determining housing based on need and establish a preference of 10% of all housing to veteran's and the wives of veterans.

While we appreciate the intent of this measure, we are concerned that the provisions will have an unintended impact on fixed income and public assistance recipients and will limit the public housing's authority to determine the need for shelter based on actual need.

**MINIMUM RENT OF \$250**

Currently the HPHA Admission and Continued Occupancy Handbook states that the minimum rent is \$0. According to the Handbook minimum rent refers to a minimum tenant payment. Many people on welfare and social security will not be able to afford \$250. Normally, the total tenant payment is 30% of monthly adjusted income. Thus as person on welfare receiving \$470 per month pays approximately \$100. Raising the minimum rent to \$250 will result in a disproportionate number of evictions for the elderly and children who will not be able to afford this amount and still afford to eat and get medications.

**PREFERENCES**

With the discretion currently provided under statute, the HPHA Admission and Continued Occupancy Handbook states current preferences for public housing are: victims of domestic violence, homeless families that are residing in a transitional shelter for the homeless and who are in compliance with a social service plan and involuntarily displaced persons. Involuntary displacement can occur due to fire, floor or earthquake making a home uninhabitable. These guidelines give preference to the neediest of our population.

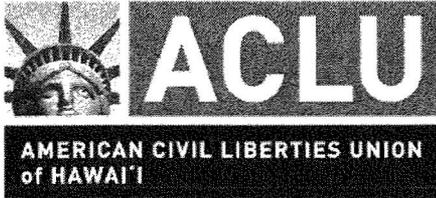
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

  
Sheila P. Lippolt  
Supervising Attorney  
Housing Unit

 LSC

[www.legalaidhawaii.org](http://www.legalaidhawaii.org)  
A UNITED WAY AGENCY



**BY EMAIL:** [HSGtestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:HSGtestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov)

Committee: Committee on Housing

Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, February 4, 2009, 9:00 a.m.

Place: Room 325

Re: *Testimony of the ACLU of Hawaii in Opposition to H.B. 1694, Relating to Public Housing*

Dear Chair Cabanilla and Members of the Committee on Housing:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii (“ACLU of Hawaii”) writes in opposition to H.B.1694, which seeks to require the Hawaii public housing authority to establish a minimum rent of \$250 per month for all state public housing units.

This bill severely and unnecessarily punishes poor families. In this time of high and rising unemployment, we should not be considering ways to raise public housing tenants’ rent. The current rent structure appropriately balances the goals of the public housing authority with the needs of public housing tenants and should be maintained. Hawaii would be better served by enforcing the current rules and providing support to individuals and families seeking to transition out of public housing units.

The mission of the ACLU of Hawaii is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawaii fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawaii is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawaii has been serving Hawaii for over 40 years.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Temple  
Staff Attorney  
ACLU of Hawaii

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i  
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