

TESTIMONY TO THE TWENTY-FIFTH STATE LEGISLATURE, 2009 SESSION

To: House Committee on Housing

From: Hawaii Disability Rights Center

Re: House Bill 351
Relating to Public Housing

Hearing: Wednesday, February 11, 2009, 10:30 AM
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

Members of the Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting House Bill 351, Relating to Public Housing.

The Hawaii Disability Rights Center, formerly known as the Protection and Advocacy Agency of Hawaii (P&A) is the agency mandated by federal law and designated by Executive Order to protect and advocate for the human, civil and legal rights of Hawaii's estimated 180,000 people with disabilities.

We support this bill. We have been following this issue for some time of the lack of accessible units with the Hawaii Public Housing Authority. All public housing units owned or operated by HPHA must be brought into compliance with state and federal laws requiring accessibility for persons with disabilities. Federal laws require, for example, a minimum of **5%** of total dwelling units accessible to persons with mobility impairments. An additional **2%** of the units must be accessible for persons with hearing or vision impairments. These accessible units should be distributed throughout projects and sites and be available in a sufficient range of sizes and amenities.

By its own admission with the data it has provided to us, HPHA has repeatedly been in violation of these requirements. We understand that a federal court action has been filed against them to force compliance. We believe that if compliance must occur, the state is best advised to proactively address the issue head on, as opposed to waiting for a federal court to enter an order. Our experience in other areas is that court monitored compliance can be more costly and not always the most efficient way for local agencies to function. SB 1294 will address these actions by assuring adequate funds to facilitate compliance. It will save the state substantial additional costs in the long run.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



CHAD K. TANIGUCHI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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Statement of
Chad K. Taniguchi
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

February 11, 2009 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
H.B. 351
RELATING TO PUBLIC HOUSING

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) opposes H.B. 351, which appropriates funds to make needed repairs and renovations to public housing projects.

The HPHA opposes this measure because it would adversely impact the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010. The HPHA acknowledges that this measure has merit; however, given the current fiscal difficulties, it would not be prudent to pursue enactment at this time.



HB 351 Relating to

Hawaii Public Housing

House Committee on Housing

February 11, 2009
Room 325

10:30 am

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs supports the purpose and intent of HB 351.

The growing affordable housing problem is one of the most critical issues faced by our communities, especially our Native Hawaiian communities. This issue seems to have many of our families struggling to find adequate housing and to make ends meet.

As you are aware, public housing does help to fill this need. Public housing units needing repairs and renovations to ensure compliance with state and federal law must be done timely and be made available for occupancy, this is prudent.

OHA recognizes that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to provide this testimony.