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Support for H.B. No. 1773, H.D. 1, Relating to Housing

As a medical student at the John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii, I have had the unique opportunity to get to know, as well as participate in treating several of the homeless individuals that call Kakaako their home. I strongly support H.B. No. 1773, H.D. 1, Relating to Housing, which would expand the Housing First and Shallow Rent Subsidy Programs in Hawaii to help address the rapidly growing homelessness problem.

Through the proximity of Kakaako Beach Park to my school's campus, my fellow classmates and I have gotten to know many families living in the park. I believed many misconceptions about homelessness in the past; I thought of the homeless as lazy drug addicts that were trying to take advantage of public resources. What I know now is that the largest contributor to homelessness is neither drug use nor laziness, but simply poverty.

Firstly, many of the families living in Kakaako are on the street because when they had to make a choice between feeding their children and having a roof, they chose food and a temporary roof. No one should have to make that decision. Most of these parents have jobs, they just don't make enough to afford the rising cost of rent. If there were more opportunities for affordable housing, like through the Shallow Rent Subsidy Program, these families may be able to find a more permanent solution. It will help to have families transition back into housing, which is vital in a long term housing goal.

Secondly, Housing First works well with those who may struggle with drug abuse, and does not require abstinence in order to maintain housing. Working with the individual in a supportive fashion once they are housed seems to have better outcomes than demanding them to stay clean lest they become homeless again. Providing housing without the demand of 100% compliance has shown to be effective in several other states in reducing both homelessness and drug abuse. I truly believe that with more programs such as these, our state will spend less on each chronically homeless individual or family, and reduce the overall homelessness throughout the islands.

Expanding the Housing First program may not solve homelessness on its own, but it will make the world of difference in many lives. Providing this service will serve to reduce homelessness, and save the state, as well as the City and County of Honolulu, money. It will reduce the number of sweeps, lower the costs spent on emergency sheltering, and provide a long term plan to return these people to society. I strongly support and urge the committee(s) to pass H.B. No. 1773, H.D. 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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HB1773

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dylan Armstrong	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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