



Hawaii Children's Action Network

Building a unified voice for Hawaii's children

February 4, 2016

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To: Senator Breene Harimoto, Chair
Senator Brickwood Galuteria, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Housing

From: Deborah Zysman, Executive Director
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **SB 2086, Relating to Housing - Support**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 325 – February 4, 2016 – 2:45 PM

On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), formerly Good Beginnings Alliance, we are writing in support of SB 2086, Relating to Housing.

HCAN is committed to improving lives and being a strong voice advocating for Hawai'i's children. Last fall, HCAN convened input in person and online from more than 50 organizations and individuals that came forward to support or express interest for a number of issues affecting children and families in our state that resulted in the compilation of 2016 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda, which can be accessed at <http://www.hawaii-can.org/2016policyagenda>.

HCAN supports SB2086, which would appropriate funds to the State Rental Supplement Program for working individuals and families who are ready to rent or obtain permanent housing by providing a rent subsidy up to \$500 per month for each household.

We need programs like these to address the chronic housing shortage and bridge the economic gap for families to afford safe and secure housing, especially those with young children. Without these subsidies, we could see our state continue to lead the nation in growing rates for homelessness and unsafe and unstable housing.

Homeless Children: Hawai'i has the highest homeless rate in the nation. It's estimated that one-third of the homeless in Hawaii are children.

Unstable Housing: Many of our families may not be living on the street or the beach, yet they don't have permanent housing -- they stay with friends and family -- moving frequently.

High cost of housing for families: 60 percent of households with young children in Hawai'i pay more than 30% of their income for housing.

According to a 2012 report published by Child Trends, children who experience a high degree of instability and turbulence in their lives are more likely to suffer higher levels of emotional and behavioral problems. Children who are homeless may suffer from hunger, poor physical and emotional health, and missed educational opportunities. According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, children who are homeless are twice as likely to go hungry, as are children who are not homeless. Homeless children are more likely than other children to have moderate to severe acute and chronic health problems, and less access to medical and dental care. Symptoms of asthma, hyperactivity/inattention, and behavior problem are more prevalent among this group. Homeless children have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems, such as anxiety, depression, sleep problems, withdrawal and aggression. Children without stable homes are more than twice as likely as others to repeat a school grade, be expelled or suspended, or drop out of high school. A quarter or more of homeless children have witnessed violence.

We need better solutions and outcomes for our most vulnerable populations. Let's help our state build a comprehensive affordable housing solution that helps families at every stage to secure stable housing options that help families and keiki in our state build a pathway toward greater economic stability and a healthier thriving community.

For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests that the committee vote to pass this bill.