

SB2570

Measure Title:	RELATING TO THE RAPID RE-HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.
Report Title:	Rapid Re-Housing Assistance Program. (\$)
Description:	Requires DHS to establish a rapid re-housing assistance program to move homeless families and individuals into permanent housing as quickly as possible and achieve stability in that housing. Requires the program to be designed and operated to qualify for federal emergency shelter grants. Appropriates general funds for fiscal year 2016-17. Effective 1/1/2017.
Companion:	
Package:	None
Current Referral:	HOU, WAM
Introducer(s):	TOKUDA, CHUN OAKLAND, DELA CRUZ, ENGLISH, GALUTERIA, INOUE, KIDANI, KOUCHI, NISHIHARA, Baker



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
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February 11, 2016

TO: The Honorable Senator Breene Harimoto, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing

FROM: Rachael Wong, DrPH, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2570 – RELATING TO THE RAPID RE-HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Thursday, February 11, 2016, 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure and the Legislature's support of Rapid Re-Housing as an evidence-based best practice to end homelessness. We note that the Governor's Executive Budget contains a \$2 million request for a Rapid Re-Housing Program (RRH), and ask for the Legislature's support of the Executive budget request.

PURPOSE: The measure requires DHS to establish a rapid re-housing assistance program to move homeless families and individuals into permanent housing as quickly as possible and achieve stability in that housing; requires the program to be designed and operated to qualify for federal emergency shelter grants; and appropriates general funds for fiscal year 2016-17.

As mentioned above, the Governor requested \$2 million for Rapid Re-Housing Program. If funding is appropriated, DHS intends to implement a Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) program. The RRH will be specifically geared to operate in close coordination with homeless shelters to identify individuals and families who are capable of maintaining stable, permanent housing; work assertively with them to mitigate concerns (e.g. budgeting, debt management, employment, etc.); and efficiently move them into housing that is sustainable. Case management and housing placement services will be key factors in the RRH program.

By creating the program as part of the existing shelter program, the Department intends to support the overall systemic goals of reducing the length of stay in shelters and housing the homeless more efficiently. This approach will also create a "flow" into the shelter system so that the unsheltered homeless individuals and families who need and want shelter are never turned away due to a lack of space. This strategy will make more efficient use of existing shelter inventory and achieve long term positive outcomes in housing placement and stability.

The Department's Homeless Programs Office (HPO) is the collaborative applicant on behalf of the neighbor islands' Continuum of Care (CoC) known as Bridging the Gap (BTG). As such, DHS administers the HUD-funded Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) for BTG. The City and County of Honolulu administers ESG for the island of Oahu and on behalf of Partners in Care, the Oahu CoC. Absent a change in the CoC's designation, DHS is not eligible to apply for or administer ESG funds for Oahu. Therefore it is highly unlikely that DHS will be able to use ESG funds to offset the cost of this program. Moreover, current ESG regulations set income limits for recipients at 30% of Area Median Income (AMI). At that level, it is challenging to prove an individual/family's sustainability. DHS expects our RRH program will create eligibility standards at or around 31-60% of AMI. In this way, those who qualify for ESG can be served through federal assistance, and those who make slightly more income but still need help can also receive case management and short to medium term rental assistance through the State RRH program.

DHS believes that this program design addresses the greater needs of the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.