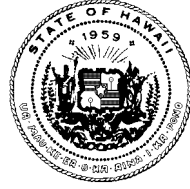


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



LEANNE GILLESPIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LUNA HO'OKELE

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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES
Ke'ena Lawelawe 'Ōpio
1010 Richards Street, Suite 314
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

March 21, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Leanne Gillespie, Executive Director

SUBJECT: HB 2167 HD2, RELATING TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2026 @ 1:40 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Office of Youth Services (OYS) supports this bill, respectfully requests amendments and offers comments. Furthermore, OYS respectfully requests that any appropriation not replace or reduce a priority identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill requires the Office of Youth Services to establish a two-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to award funds to certain nonprofit organizations and government agencies to support eligible youth with financial assistance.

The Office of Youth Services appreciates the legislature's ongoing support for young adults faced with challenges that prevent them from being successful. The primary purpose of this program is intersected with the mission of OYS to prevent delinquency and reduce recidivism among juveniles through prevention, rehabilitation, and treatment services.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

OYS respectfully requests the following changes to clarify language or alignment with federal assistance programs:

Page 5, Lines 9-10: “youth housing stability assistance pilot program to provide, subject to the availability of program funds, flexible...”

Page 7, Line 3: “determined on a case-by-case basis ~~by the administering agency~~”

Page 7, Lines 9-14: delete and move to Page 9, Line 13: ~~(1) Funds shall be a single payment to a landlord, mortgage, or utility, including an internet service provider or other vendor as determined by the administering agency, that is intended to stabilize an immediate housing crisis, including rent, deposits, or emergency needs;~~

Page 8, Lines 12-13: “assistance program, federal temporary assistance ~~to~~ for needy families program, or similar resources.”

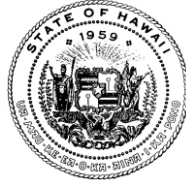
Page 9, Lines 11-12: (g) Funds awarded to a youth pursuant to this section ~~shall be administered by participating agencies and~~ may be disbursed:

Page 9, Line 13: (1) Directly as a single payment to a landlord, mortgage, or utility, including an internet service provider or other vendor as determined by the administering agency, that is intended to stabilize an immediate housing crisis, including rent, deposits, or emergency needs in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 of subsection (f) ~~to vendors on behalf of eligible youth; or~~

Page 9, Line 14: (2) Directly to youth for approved ~~basic needs~~ expenses, in accordance with paragraphs 3 to 6 of subsection (f) ~~participating agency policies.~~

OYS respectfully requests that funding for administrative costs and oversight for qualified nonprofit organizations or government agencies awarded these funds be anticipated, appropriately 20% of dispersed public assistance funds, in the fiscal appropriation to carry out this project. Respectfully, a suggested budget for this pilot program is \$375,000 to assist a minimum of 30 youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony on H.B. 2167 HD2
RELATING TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

March 23, 2026, at 1:40 p.m.; Room Number: 225

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) supports H.B. 2167 HD2 and respectfully defers to the Office of Youth Services.

The transition to adulthood is a significant and challenging developmental stage for all young people. For youth aging out of foster care without the support of a stable family or support network, this transition can be even more challenging. Many lose access to the services and supports they relied on while in care, leaving them to navigate adulthood entirely on their own. Compounding this, federal funding streams are siloed by eligibility rules, meaning youth who access one form of assistance are often barred from receiving another. These young adults face disproportionately high rates of behavioral, mental, and physical health challenges, housing instability and homelessness, academic and employment barriers, early parenthood, incarceration, and other long-term adversities.¹

Data from Hawai'i's 2024 Quality of Life and Well-Being Survey corroborate this pattern: individuals who reported adverse childhood experiences (i.e., traumatic or stressful events that occur during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, domestic violence, or

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2025, November 9). *What happens to youth aging out of foster care?*
<https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-happens-to-youth-aging-out-of-foster-care>

parental incarceration) reported more days of mental and physical illness, greater activity limitations, chronic sleep deprivation, and significantly fewer days of hopefulness.²

Despite these challenges, outcomes can be improved when policies and practices ensure that young people exiting foster care receive culturally responsive, trauma-informed transition services. Research suggests that programs offering direct financial assistance, health care coverage, case management, and supportive services play a critical role in reducing negative outcomes and increasing positive ones for young people transitioning out of foster care.³ These interventions help bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood, providing the scaffolding that most young people receive from family.

HB2167 HD2 offers a strong and innovative approach that could significantly benefit Hawai'i's youth exiting foster care.

This bill recognizes that young people aging out of foster care deserve the same opportunities for stability, guidance, and support that all young adults need. By investing in their well-being and removing structural barriers, HB2167 HD2 strengthens their chances of entering adulthood with confidence, security, and hope.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Tia L.R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience

² Barile, J. P., Orimoto, T., Kook, J., Chae, S. W., Dgheim, D., Rivera, C., Helfner, S., Turner, H., Thompson, K., Yamauchi, E., Leipold, N., & Hartsock, T. (2024). Hawai'i quality of life and well-being dashboard. Partnership for Wellness & Resilience, Health Policy Initiative, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

³ Reilly, T., & Schlinkert, D. (2023). *Comparing outcomes 20 years apart: Transitioning out of foster care for emerging adults* (Focus on Poverty, 39(1)). Institute for Research on Poverty. <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Focus-on-Poverty-39-1d.pdf>



Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus Commission



Advocating for the Hawai'i LGBTQIA+ Community

Mailing Address: LGBTQ+ Commission, c/o The Department of Human Services,
P.O. Box 339, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96809-0339

Email: hawaiistatelgbtqpluscommission@gmail.com
Web: <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/lgbtq-commission/>

March 21, 2026

Senate's Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2026, at 1:40 PM

RE: Strong Support for House Bill 2167 HD 2

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and fellow committee members,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 2167 on behalf of the Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Commission, which was established by the 2022 Hawai'i State Legislature to

“improve the State's interface with members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus community; identify the short- and long-range needs of its members; and ensure that there is an effective means of researching, planning, and advocating for the equity of this population in all aspects of state government.”

The Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission offers **strong support** for House Bill 2167, which requires the Hawai'i Office of Youth Services to establish a five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to contract with nonprofit organizations or execute memoranda of agreement with government agencies to provide direct financial assistance to eligible youth.

Housing stability is foundational to health, safety, education, and long-term self-sufficiency. Yet across our state, too many young people experience housing insecurity and homelessness. [Māhū, LGBTQIA+ and QTPI+](#) youth are disproportionately impacted. National research consistently shows that LGBTQIA+ youth experience higher rates of family rejection, displacement, and homelessness compared to their non-LGBTQIA+ peers. For transgender youth, these risks are even more severe.

In Hawai'i, where the cost of living remains among the highest in the nation, even short-term financial crises can result in eviction, couch surfing, or unsafe living arrangements. Youth exiting foster care, those involved in the juvenile legal system, and youth who have experienced family rejection are especially vulnerable. Without intervention, housing instability can quickly cascade into school disruption, unemployment, exploitation, and involvement with the criminal legal system.

HB 2167 provides a practical, compassionate, and fiscally responsible solution. By empowering the Hawai'i Office of Youth Services to partner with trusted community-based organizations and government agencies, this pilot program leverages existing infrastructure and expertise. Direct financial assistance—whether for rent, security deposits, utilities, or other housing-related costs—can be the difference between stability and homelessness.

Proudly established pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 369, as enacted through Act 41, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022

HI State LGBTQ+ Commission Testimony in Support of HB 2167 HD 2

Prevention is more cost-effective than crisis response. The cost of providing modest housing stabilization assistance is significantly lower than the long-term public costs associated with homelessness, emergency healthcare, child welfare involvement, and incarceration. Investing in youth housing stability now reduces downstream burdens on state systems later.

For māhū, LGBTQIA+ and QTPI+ youth in particular, affirming and stable housing environments are life-saving. Housing instability is strongly correlated with increased rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidality among māhū, LGBTQIA+ and QTPI+ youth. A program that prioritizes stability does more than address housing. It promotes mental health, educational attainment, and workforce participation.

A five-year pilot allows the State to evaluate outcomes, gather data, and refine best practices. It reflects both urgency and accountability. The Commission supports ensuring that data collection includes demographic information, including sexual orientation and gender identity (when voluntarily disclosed and their identity is kept confidential), to better understand disparities and target future resources effectively.

HB 2167 represents a commitment to Hawai'i's youth: that we will not allow temporary financial hardship to permanently derail a young person's future.

For these reasons, the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission respectfully urges the Committee to pass HB 2167 HD 2.

If you or any member of your staff has any questions regarding my testimony you can reach me at hawaiistatelgbtqpluscommission@gmail.com.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration,

Sandy Harjo Livingston (he/him/they/them)

Chair

[Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission](#)

[Inclusive LGBTQIA+ Glossary](#)

The [Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission](#) has this webpage and that is dedicated to understanding and being able to use the correct terms when talking about the rainbow community from māhū to LGBTQIA+ to QTPI+ to MVPFAFF+ and beyond. The list found on this page is not an exhaustive list and will be updated as appropriate.



March 21, 2026

Senate's Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2026, at 1:40 PM

RE: Strong Support for House Bill 2167 HD 2

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and fellow committee members,

Pride at Work – Hawai'i is an official chapter of [Pride at Work](#) which is a national nonprofit organization that represents LGBTQIA+ union members and their allies. We are an officially recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO that organizes mutual support between the organized Labor Movement and the LGBTQIA+ Community to further social and economic justice. We write in **strong support of House Bill 2167 HD 2**.

Pride at Work – Hawai'i proudly stands in strong support of House Bill 2167, which requires the Hawai'i Office of Youth Services to establish a five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to contract with nonprofit organizations and partner with government agencies to provide direct financial assistance to eligible youth.

As the AFL-CIO's constituency group representing māhu and LGBTQIA+ union members and allies, Pride at Work – Hawai'i understands that housing stability is a worker's issue. Safe, stable housing is the foundation that allows young people to finish school, maintain employment, participate in job training, and enter the workforce with dignity.

Too many young people in Hawai'i are one emergency away from homelessness. For māhu, and LGBTQIA+ youth—particularly transgender youth—the risks are even higher due to family rejection, discrimination, and economic marginalization. When a young person loses housing, their education is disrupted, employment becomes unstable, and their long-term earning potential suffers. This is not just a housing issue; it is a workforce development issue.

Hawai'i's labor movement believes in investing upstream. Preventing homelessness through targeted financial assistance—such as help with rent, deposits, utilities, or emergency housing costs—is far more cost-effective than addressing the long-term consequences of instability. A modest, timely intervention can keep a young person housed, employed, and on a path toward self-sufficiency.

This bill wisely empowers the Hawai'i Office of Youth Services to work with community-based partners who already have trusted relationships with youth. Organized labor knows that strong partnerships deliver results. Leveraging nonprofits and public agencies ensures that funds reach youth quickly and effectively.

Pride at Work – Hawai'i's Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of Re: HB 2167 HD 2

For young workers and future workers, housing stability is economic justice. Youth who experience homelessness face higher risks of exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and wage theft. Stable housing strengthens their ability to assert their rights, pursue apprenticeships, and join the workforce on equitable footing.

A five-year pilot program provides the opportunity to gather meaningful data, evaluate outcomes, and build a sustainable model that can be expanded statewide. Investing in youth today strengthens Hawai'i's future workforce and reinforces our shared commitment to fairness, opportunity, and dignity for all.

Pride at Work – Hawai'i respectfully urges the Committee to pass House Bill 2167 HD 2.

In Solidarity,

Michael Golojuch, Jr. (he/him)
President
[Pride at Work – Hawai'i](#)



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

SUPPORT HB 2167 HD2: RELATING TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2026; 1:40 PM & Videoconference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members, Committee on Health and Human Services:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **strongly supports HB 2167 HD2**, which establishes a five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program under the Office of Youth Services.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i is a community-based, tax-exempt organization that has served Hawai'i for 78 years. Across our statewide programs, we work with individuals and families facing poverty, trauma, and housing instability. Many of the young adults who would benefit from this pilot first entered our services as minors during periods of significant crisis. When they turn eighteen, they frequently lose essential child-focused supports and must suddenly navigate adult systems without the skills, stability, or judgment fully developed. CCH continues to assist many of these youth as they transition into early adulthood, giving us direct insight into both the barriers they face and the proven effectiveness of coordinated case management and housing supports.

This measure fills a critical gap by providing urgently needed financial support to young adults ages 18–25 who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability—including youth exiting foster care, fleeing unsafe environments, or couch surfing. These young people often fall outside eligibility criteria for existing housing programs and remain at high risk of long-term homelessness without targeted intervention.

The ability to provide flexible financial assistance alongside supportive services during this pivotal transition period is key to preventing homelessness and promoting long-term self-sufficiency.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i respectfully urges the Committee to pass this important bill to help stabilize young adults.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your continued leadership. If you have any questions, please contact Shellie Niles, Vice President of Mission, at (808) 527-4813.





Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Re: **HB2167 HD2 – Relating to Youth Homelessness**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
March 23, 2026; 1:40 PM

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB2167 HD2**. This bill requires the Office of Youth Services to establish a five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations or execute memoranda of agreement with government agencies to support eligible youth with financial assistance.

This bill can help prevent long-term homelessness among Hawai'i youth by reaching them before they enter emergency homelessness systems, helping them maintain housing stability, reducing costly use of emergency shelter systems, and improving their long-term outcomes.

As we all know, Hawai'i's homelessness crisis is among the most severe in the United States. In 2024, more than 1,000 youth and young adults across the state were counted as homeless¹ and Hawai'i had the highest homelessness rate in the nation, more than 3.5 times the national average.²

By focusing on young residents who are especially vulnerable – experiencing homelessness, domestic or family violence, or sex trafficking or related exploitation; exiting from the foster care system; or served an eviction notice or otherwise in immediate need of stability – this bill can help keep our young people housed and avoid adding to our homelessness crisis.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ <https://hhdw.org/na-2024-homeless-point-in-time-counts/>

² <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/HawaiiHousingFactbook2025.pdf>



HOALOHA PROJECT

Serving foster keiki of Hawai'i

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee,

Hoaloha Project **strongly supports** HB2167, establishing a youth housing stability assistance pilot program.

In Hawai'i, there are over 1,000 youth in the foster care system, many of whom will transition into adulthood **without the financial safety nets or family support that their peers rely on**. We see firsthand how quickly a single life event—aging out of foster care, family conflict, or financial hardship—can push a young person into crisis. HB2167 helps stabilize youth **before they enter homelessness**—when intervention is most effective and **far less costly**.

For many young people, a one-time payment for rent, a deposit, or basic needs can mean the difference between stability and long-term hardship. In a state with one of the highest costs of living, this investment is both compassionate and fiscally responsible. Preventing homelessness not only improves long-term outcomes in education, employment, and health, but also reduces reliance on emergency shelters and state-funded systems.

Mahalo nui,

Ku'u Pasco

Ku'u Pasco
Executive Director
Hoaloha Project



Judith F. Clark
48-218 Kamehameha Highway
808-499-9966
Judithforceclark@gmail.com
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

March 30, 2026

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura , Chair,
And members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Testimony in Support of HB 2167 HD 2 Relating to Youth Homelessness

As a community advocate, youth homelessness service provider for 25 years, and a person with lived experience of young adult homelessness, I strongly support HB 2167 HD 2.

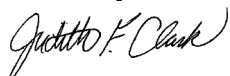
When I was 20, I was laid off from work and could not pay the rent on my apartment. It was a miserable and terrifying time. I was hungry and cold. I was afraid of being assaulted or raped. When an elderly friend allowed me to sleep on the floor of his senior living apartment, I knew that he was not allowed to have overnight visitors, and that I was jeopardizing his housing.

I was fortunate. Within 2 months, I found another job and my homeless experience ended. Rent support for those 2 months would have made a huge difference in my life.

In Hawaii, the gap between what young adults can afford, and the actual cost of housing is huge. One unexpected medical bill or car repair bill can be the tipping point into homelessness. A small amount of assistance now can prevent years of dependence on public assistance and long-term homelessness.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH

HB-2167-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 6:18:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/23/2026 1:40:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB2167.

I'm on the board of Rainbow Family 808. Weekly, we take food, mainly milk, other dairy products, fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs, and other items for the homeless youth at Residential Youth Services and Empowerment (RYSE). We also provided items to Youth Outreach.

From many discussions with various groups and individuals, I know there is a definite need to expand current assistance to homeless youth. We do not want these kids to be victims of sex trafficking or other undesirable consequences of being homeless.

It is important to please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

Board Member/Secretary, Rainbow Family 808

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



BONNIE KAHAKUI
ADMINISTRATOR
DAYNA OMIYA
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII'
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE
P.O. Box 119
Honolulu, Hawaii 96810-0119
Tel: (808) 586-0554
email: state.procurement.office@hawaii.gov
<http://spo.hawaii.gov>



TESTIMONY
OF
BONNIE KAHAKUI, ADMINISTRATOR
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE
ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
March 23, 2026, 1:40 p.m.
HOUSE BILL 2167, HD2
RELATING TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2167, HD2, which establishes a pilot program to provide housing assistance for youth experiencing housing instability. The State Procurement Office (SPO) appreciates that the House Draft 2 of this bill incorporates the recommended language that the Office of Youth Services contracts are subject to Chapter 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

However, the SPO has concerns with the language in Section 2, page 5, lines 13-19, which restricts contracting to nonprofit organizations or government agencies and excludes for-profit providers, regardless of their qualifications. This restriction is in direct conflict with HRS Section 103D-101 (a)(6)(A), which encourages economic competition by ensuring that all persons are afforded an equal opportunity to compete in a fair and open environment. The SPO recommends that the measure includes clear justification of why the Office of Youth Services is limiting contracts to nonprofit organizations or entering into memoranda of agreements with government agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

LATE

Mar 23, 2026

MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roxanne U. Bolden

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Jennifer Hartssock

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: HB2167 HD2 – Relating to Youth Homelessness

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB2167 HD2**, relating to youth homelessness. Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a cross-disability, community-based, nonprofit organization that promotes independent living and community inclusion for people with disabilities across all islands.

Independent Living and Youth Housing Stability

Youth and young adults aged 18-24 are at high risk of housing instability during “emerging adulthood,” when they are expected to move into higher education, employment, and independent living while their brains and decision-making capacities are still developing. For youth with disabilities, this transition is even more complex due to barriers in education, employment, transportation, and access to supportive services that allow them to live in the community rather than institutions or unsafe situations.

HB2167 HD2 aligns closely with Independent Living principles by targeting the very conditions that prevent young people with disabilities from choosing where and with whom they live. The bill establishes a five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program within the Office of Youth Services to provide flexible, rapid, youth-centered financial assistance to eligible 18-24 year-olds who have experienced homelessness, foster care exist, domestic or family violence, sex trafficking, or similar qualifying



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events. This structure recognizes that youth must be able to stabilize housing quickly in order to remain in school, work, and community activities that are essential to genuine independent living.

Disproportionate Impact and State Data

Hawaii continues to experience one of the highest homelessness rates per capita in the United States, with an estimated 80-81 people experiencing homelessness per 10,000 residents in recent analyses. In the 2024 statewide Point-in-Time Count, 6,389 people were identified as experiencing homelessness, with the majority on Oahu. Youth and young adults are a significant part of this picture: the legislature's findings in HB2167 HD2 cite 864 unaccompanied youth and young adults identified statewide in the 2024 count, while noting that this does not include couch-surfing or doubled-up youth who are often invisible in formal counts.

Youth who are doubled up, couch-surfing, or in unsafe, unstable situations are routinely told that they are not "literally" homeless and therefore do not qualify for many housing or eviction-prevention resources, pushing them toward sleeping in cars, staying with unsafe acquaintances, or entering adult emergency shelters that are not designed for young adults. For youth with disabilities—including behavioral health, developmental, and physical disabilities—this exclusion increases the risk of exploitation, institutionalization, and long-term disconnection from employment and education, all of which are contrary to Hawaii's Independent Living and Olmstead obligations.

Cost-effectiveness and Systems Impact

HB2167 HD2 is also fiscally prudent. The bill's findings note that national studies have documented per-household costs of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing ranging from roughly \$3,100 to \$14,400 for individuals and \$6,500 to nearly \$39,000 for families over four to twelve months. In Hawaii, the legislature further notes that the average cost of an emergency shelter bed exceed \$27,500 per person per year in 2015, with family shelter costs often surpassing \$80,000



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annually—figures that are likely higher today given inflation and operating costs.

From an Independent Living perspective, it is far more cost-effective and rights-affirming to prevent youth from entering the homelessness system than to respond after they have already experienced trauma and instability. HB2167 HD2 does this by allowing up to \$10,000 in flexible assistance per eligible youth, limited to the actual unmet need, and targeted toward rent, deposits, utilities (including internet), transportation, food, basic needs, and childcare. Funds are paid directly to landlords, mortgages, utilities, or directly to youth for approved basic-needs expenses, after a housing or stabilization planning conversation with a case manager or housing counselor. This is a smart, time-limited intervention that can prevent far higher downstream costs in emergency shelter, health care, criminal-legal involvement, and institutional placements.

Cross-disability and Equity Considerations

The qualifying events listed in HB2167 HD2—including homelessness, foster care exit, domestic and family violence, and sex trafficking—are all disproportionately experienced by youth with disabilities, Native Hawaiian youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth of color. Youth with disabilities are overrepresented in foster care and juvenile justice systems, and they experience higher rates of poverty and housing instability than their non-disabled peers, making them especially likely to be among the “hidden homeless” who are doubled up or couch-surfing. Flexible assistance that can be used for transportation, childcare, and basic needs is essential for cross-disability youth who may rely on paratransit, assistive devices, or caregiver support to participate fully in community life.

Importantly, the bill allows for a wide range of documentation—such as homeless verification letters, Department of Education Form MV-1, letters from shelters or service organizations, police reports, and medical records—to establish eligibility. This approach reduces administrative barriers for youth with disabilities who may not have traditional documentation or who may be hesitant to self-identify in systems that have historically been punitive or exclusionary.



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Request

AILH respectfully urges the Committee to pass HB2167 HD2 without weakening amendments and to ensure that the Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program is implemented in partnership with cross-disability and youth-serving organizations, including Centers for Independent Living. Incorporating Independent Living principles—youth choice and control, peer support, community-based services, and cross-disability accessibility—into the program’s contracts and MOAs will maximize its impact for Hawaii’s emerging adults with disabilities.

Mahalo for your consideration of this important measure and for your commitment to improving housing stability, health, and independent living outcomes for Hawaii’s youth and young adults.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden

Executive Director

LATE

TO: Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee

HEARING: Monday, March 23, 2026
1:40 PM
Conference Room 415

FROM: Sharla-Ann Houlding, LCSW

RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2167, HD2 – Relating to Youth Homelessness

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sharla-Ann Houlding. I am the Supervisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative, whose mission is to educate, advocate and collaborate for improvements to the foster care system and promote better outcomes for youth in foster care. I respectfully submit **testimony in strong support of HB2167, HD2**, which establishes a five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program within the Department of Human Services' Office of Youth Services to provide rapid, flexible financial assistance to young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness.

Youth and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 are facing unique challenges in their transition to adulthood, often without financial stability or the necessary support systems needed for them to thrive. It's a well-known fact that the price of housing and the cost of living in Hawai'i are among the highest in the nation. The average two-bedroom rental averages around \$2,400 to \$2,600 per month on O'ahu to about \$2,900 in Kailua-Kona where I live. The affordability gap is increasing with each passing day, forcing kama'aina with several generations of ties to Hawai'i to move to the continental United States because they cannot afford to pay rent here. Among many of the people who are migrating out of Hawai'i are Native Hawaiians who are forced to not only abandon their ancestral homeland but their cultural ties as well.

Over the last 17 years of my career working with youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood, I have witnessed first-hand the heartbreaking struggle this population goes through with not being able to afford safe and stable housing that they can call their own. More often than not, after aging out of foster care, they are forced to move out of their foster home and have to either move back in with the biological family from which they were removed from in the first place, cohabitate with a partner, couch surf at a friend's house, live out of their car (if they are lucky enough to have one), or live in a tent on the side of the road or at the beach. Experiences such as this retraumatize them and leave them vulnerable to exploitation, early parenting, incarceration, substance use, overdependence on the welfare system, and lead to long-term cycles of housing instability.

Preventing homelessness for youth ages 18 to 24, especially those who are aging out of the foster care system, is our collective kuleana (responsibility). Youth and young adults enter foster care because a legal caretaker failed to provide the basic necessities of life—safety and stability. We need to do better if we want to help them break generational cycles of abuse.

Though it may seem like a hefty investment, preventative measures are shown to reduce the overall financial burden on the government. By providing flexible and rapid financial assistance to youth ages 18 to 24 over the course of five years for anything housing-related, we can help decrease the number of youth sleeping in homeless shelters or on the streets and increase their likelihood of achieving gainful employment and/or a college education. When youth don't have to worry about their housing stability, they can focus on setting and achieving their goals towards financial stability and independence.

This targeted stabilization approach has the potential to support the hundreds of youth aging out of foster care every year in Hawai'i. This measure can provide a layer of protection and support for this high-risk, high-need population as they are facing the most critical period of development in life. When youth have stable housing conditions, they can thrive. And when youth in Hawai'i thrive, everyone in Hawai'i thrives.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB2167, HD2, as this represents a thoughtful, evidence-informed, and fiscally responsible investment in Hawai'i's young people. By preventing homelessness before it occurs, this measure will reduce long-term system costs, improve outcomes for vulnerable youth, and strengthen and stabilize communities across the State of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and for the opportunity to testify.

With my deepest gratitude and aloha,
Sharla-Ann Houlding, LCSW