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IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO:

26:OED

Statement of the
Hawaii Public Housing Authority

Before the
Senate Committee on Housing
and
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
1:00 PM – Room 225, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
SB 2227
RELATING TO RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Honorable Chair Chang, Chair Lee, Vice Chair Hashimoto, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of the Senate Committee on Housing, and Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts:

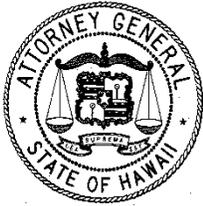
Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning Senate Bill (SB) 2227, relating to rental assistance. The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) supports SB 2227. This measure strengthens the State Rent Supplement (RSP) Program by establishing a dedicated special fund, providing a sustainable funding mechanism and prioritizing assistance for vulnerable populations, including kupuna, families with children, and persons with disabilities. The bill also authorizes HPHA to enter into memoranda of agreement with counties or qualified nonprofit organizations to efficiently administer rental assistance statewide.

The State RSP is a targeted and cost-effective tool to prevent eviction and homelessness. By helping low-income households bridge the gap between income and rising rental costs, the program allows families and seniors to remain stably housed in their communities and avoid the far greater social and fiscal costs associated with displacement and homelessness.

HPHA respectfully requests an amendment to appropriate \$284,748 to establish four (4.0 FTE) permanent Public Housing Specialist II positions and one (1.0 FTE) permanent Public Housing Specialist IV (supervisor) position to support with the administration of the program. Permanent staffing is critical to ensure timely processing, compliance, landlord coordination, and effective statewide implementation.

HPHA appreciates the Legislature's continued commitment to addressing Hawaii's housing crisis and stands ready to implement and administer this important program effectively.





**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 2227, RELATING TO RENTAL ASSISTANCE.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEES ON HOUSING AND ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

DATE: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 225

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Chase S.L. Suzumoto, Deputy Attorney General

Chairs Chang and Lee and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General offers the following comments.

This bill requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to assess a transaction fee for each recording made in the office of the Assistant Registrar of the Land Court and the Bureau of Conveyances under chapters 501 and 502, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), respectively. The bill currently sets the fee at an unspecified amount. All fees collected will be deposited into a newly established State Rent Supplement Program Special Fund. The special fund may be used to provide rental assistance on behalf of qualified tenants, as defined in section 356D-153, HRS, and support the State rent supplement program.

The transaction fees are more appropriately described as taxes. In determining whether a charge is a fee or a tax, Hawai'i courts analyze whether the charge: (1) "applies to the direct beneficiary of a particular service"; (2) "is allocated directly to defraying the costs of providing the service"; and (3) "is reasonably proportionate to the benefit received." *State v. Medeiros*, 89 Hawai'i 361, 367, 973 P.2d 736, 742 (1999). The fees created by this bill may not meet this test because they do not appear related to the costs associated with Land Court or Bureau of Conveyances recordings. We therefore recommend amending the bill to describe the fees as taxes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

SB-2227

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 2:46:51 PM

Testimony for HOU on 2/17/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Lenzer Medeiros	Testifying for PABEA policy advisory board on elderly affairs	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Sara Lenzer Medeiros, and I am a board member of PABEA, policy advisory board on elderly affairs. I am writing a comment on behalf of the board, but does not necessarily represent the views of EOA.

I am actually asking a question: by eliminating the separate funding for Kupuna, does this mean that Kupuna are included or excluded in the new bill? It doesn't seem clear that the special population of elderly will be given any special consideration relating to rental assistance. In addition, does the Bill offer assistance in mortgage or property tax payments? Especially those who are highly vulnerable to losing their housing because of being greatly in arrears, through no fault of their own.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and to ask questions for consideration.



LATE

February 13, 2026

**Testimony in Support of S.B.2227
Relating to Rental Assistance**

Aloha Chair Chang, Chair Lee, Vice Chair Hashimoto, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of both Committees,

Aloha United Way **supports S.B. 2227**, which strengthens and funds the State Rent Supplement Program to help local households remain stably housed.

In Hawai'i, housing costs continue to outpace wages. According to ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) data, 40%¹ of households struggle to afford the basic cost of living, with kūpuna on fixed incomes especially vulnerable to rent increases and displacement. Kūpuna are currently the fastest² growing ALICE demographic. For these households, a single rent increase, medical bill, or reduction in work hours can quickly lead to housing instability or eviction.

Short-term rental assistance is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent homelessness. A modest subsidy can bridge a temporary financial gap, keep families in their homes, and avoid the far higher public costs associated with shelter stays, emergency services, and long-term homelessness.

S.B. 2227 provides a dedicated funding mechanism and allows the state to partner with counties and nonprofit organizations to deliver these supplements efficiently. This approach builds on existing community infrastructure and ensures that assistance reaches those most at risk, including kūpuna, families with children, and individuals with disabilities.

Investing in rent stabilization is not only compassionate—it is fiscally responsible and essential to maintaining a stable workforce and healthy communities across our state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2227.

Mahalo,

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way

¹ <https://www.auw.org/about/alice-initiative/alice-reports/>

SB-2227

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 5:52:17 PM

Testimony for HOU on 2/17/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John A. H. Tomoso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

02-13-26

RE: SB 2227

Aloha,

This Bill requires the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) to award monthly rent supplement payments on behalf of qualified tenants under the State Rent Supplement Program prioritizing certain tenants, including Kūpuna, our Senior Citizens. I know that this Bill authorizes the HPHA to enter into memoranda of agreement for rental supplement payments with the counties or specialized nonprofit organizations. It amends provisions relating to the State Rent Supplement Program, and establishes the State Rent Supplement Program Special Fund. It requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to assess a transaction fee for each applicable recording in the office of the Assistant Registrar of the Land Court or the Bureau of Conveyances to be deposited into the State Rent Supplement Program Special Fund, and repeals the existing separate State Rent Supplement Program for Kūpuna, our Senior Citizens. I believe it also appropriates funds.

I am in strong support of this Bill.

Mahalo

John A. H. Tomoso+, MSW, ACSW

51 Ku'ula St., Kahului, HI 96732-2906

SB-2227

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:01:55 PM

Testimony for HOU on 2/17/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support the INTENT of
2227 SB RELATING TO RENTAL ASSISTANCE.
TO INCLUDE DHHL

To: Senator Stanley Chang, Chair
Senator Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Housing

Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 16, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 2227
Measure Title: RELATING TO RENTAL ASSISTANCE.
Report Title: HPHA; DLNR; State Rent Supplement Program; State Rent Supplement Program Special Fund; Bureau of Conveyances; Land Court; Transaction Fees; Repeal; Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 2227. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

LATE

SB-2227

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 2:24:40 PM

Testimony for HOU on 2/17/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rebecca Kauwe	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB2227 — Strong Testimony (Support Intent, Opposed Until Action Is Taken)

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

My name is Rebecca Kauwe. I support the goal of SB2227 to clarify owner-occupied residential use and reduce speculation. But I must **oppose the bill until tenant protections and accountability requirements are added.**

The Bill Ignores the Real Crisis Tenants Face

SB2227 focuses on ownership and eligibility, but **ignores the unsafe, unregulated, and abusive conditions** tenants face in many developments.

When owners, landlords, and management staff are:

- unlicensed
- unresponsive
- hidden behind multiple LLCs
- violating safety and privacy laws

tenants remain at risk—no matter what zoning or occupancy rules are set.

Revolving Door of Homelessness & Turnover

Where mismanagement exists:

- tenants leave or are forced out
- staff turnover skyrockets
- instability spreads throughout entire buildings
- families get displaced repeatedly

Without accountability, SB2227 will **reinforce the same systems causing displacement today.**

Existing Laws Are Ignored

- **HRS §521-42** – Habitability
- **HRS §521-51** – Privacy
- **HRS §521-67** – Owner/Agent Disclosure
- **HRS §521-74** – Anti-retaliation

These protections mean nothing when owners and managers ignore them.

Tenants Need Real Protections

- Safe premises with functioning security
- No unauthorized entry or surveillance
- Fair, transparent lease terms
- Access to legal remedies
- Clear identification of who the landlord actually is

Action Required

- Require transparency in ownership and management
- Enforce tenant protection laws
- Tie redevelopment rights to compliance
- Expand assistance acceptance to more owners

Conclusion

I support the intent of SB2227, but **oppose its passage** until it includes measures that protect tenants from mismanagement and prevent the ongoing cycle of displacement.

Mahalo,
Rebecca Kauwe