



**WRITTEN 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. 2563, S.D. 1, RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

DATE: Thursday, March 5, 2026

TIME: 10:15 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 211

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**

(For more information, contact Melissa L. Lewis,
Deputy Attorney General, at 808 587-3050)

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill establishes a three-year homelessness sanctuary pilot program to be administered by the Coordinator on Homelessness in coordination with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the City and County of Honolulu. The program would provide a designated location with hygiene facilities and support services for unhoused primary caregivers and children. The bill also includes in section 3, on page 9, lines 8-17, an appropriation for the pilot program.

Section 5 of the bill (page 10, lines 1-5) provides that ". . . the governor may transfer all or a portion of the appropriation in **this section** to other state or county agencies for expenditures incurred to implement the homelessness sanctuary pilot program." The reference to an "appropriation in this section" is potentially confusing because **section 5 does not include wording appropriating funds**. If the intent is to refer to the appropriation contained in section 3, we recommend replacing the term "this section" with "section 3" (page 10, line 3) for clarity.

If this bill proceeds, we respectfully request that the recommended revisions be made. Thank you for considering our testimony.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT SENATE BILL SB2563 SD1
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai
(Senate Committee on Ways and Means)

Ke Kapitala‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 5, 2026

10:15 a.m.

Lumi 211

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2563 SD1**, which establishes a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program to provide voluntary, low-barrier, and safe spaces for unhoused primary caregivers and their children.

OHA’s constitutional and statutory responsibilities include advocating for policies that improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians.¹ Stable housing is a foundational determinant of health, and ensures families remain rooted in their communities. Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented among households experiencing housing instability and homelessness, particularly among families with children.

For decades, responses to homelessness have often relied heavily on enforcement, displacement, and criminalization. Evidence demonstrates that these approaches do not reduce homelessness and can instead deepen instability, erode trust in government systems, and create barriers to housing and supportive services.² Families who experience repeated displacement often disengage from coordinated entry systems, health care, and case management out of fear and trauma. Even for those that do engage, services are often over-utilized, and families lack safe places to sleep when there are no shelter vacancies.³

¹ Haw. Const. art. XII, §6; HRS ch. 10.

² National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, *Housing Not Handcuffs: Ending the Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* (2019).

³ See Shelter Vacancy Grid, Partners in Care, available at: <https://www.partnersincareoahu.org/vacancy-grid>

This measure reframes homelessness as a public health and housing allocation challenge rather than a criminal issue. By establishing a designated, safe location where unhoused caregivers and keiki can meet basic needs including access to showers, sanitation, meals, storage, and supportive services. This stabilization bridge can improve health outcomes, school attendance, employment retention, and successful transitions into permanent housing.

OHA particularly supports several key elements of this measure, including its family-centered focus that prioritizes primary caregivers and children who are among the most vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness; its low-barrier, voluntary participation model that fosters trust and encourages engagement with services without fear of punishment or coercion; the integration of supportive services such as mental health care, case management, identification assistance, and childcare that are critical to stabilizing families and supporting pathways toward housing and employment; and the inclusion of annual reporting and evaluation requirements that promote transparency, accountability, and data-informed decision-making regarding the program's effectiveness.

While emergency shelter and housing-first strategies remain essential, stabilization sites such as the proposed sanctuary pilot can serve as an important interim step when shelters are full, resources are over-subscribed, and families who are not immediately able to access permanent housing need a safe and supportive environment from which to re-engage with services. Addressing homelessness requires compassion, coordination, and structural investment in housing solutions. Stable environments are critical for 'ohana's long-term wellbeing. This pilot program represents a thoughtful effort to create a stable pathway towards housing and community support.

For these reasons, OHA respectfully urges the Committee to PASS **SB2563 SD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 4, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Jun D. Yang, Coordinator on Homelessness

SUBJECT: **SB 2563 S.D. 1 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

Hearing: March 5, 2026, Time 10:15 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

AGENCY'S POSITION: The Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS) appreciates the intent of this bill and offers comments. The purpose of this bill is to establish a homelessness sanctuary pilot program, administered by SOHHS in coordination with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the City and County of Honolulu, for unhoused caregivers and children under eighteen years of age. The bill requires the Coordinator on Homelessness to identify a location that can support the required components of the facility, including a central tent for shelter with additional individual tents, an area for parking and sleeping, restroom and shower facilities, storage space for personal belongings, and on-site security. The bill appropriates \$5,000,000 to operate the program and requires annual reports to the legislature.

SOHHS appreciates the legislature's support for programs serving unsheltered households. Approximately 70% (4,494 individuals) of individuals experiencing homelessness during the 2024 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count resided on O'ahu, including 1,123 individuals (276 households) who were members of families with adults and children. Approximately 54 family

households (244 family individuals) were surveyed during the 2024 PIT Count of unsheltered persons.

SOHHS offers comments on the implementation of the sanctuary pilot program to account for the specific needs of the intended population. The bill currently requires a specific configuration of the project location, including the use of central and individual tents for sleeping accommodations, similar to the Homeless Outreach and Navigation for Unsheltered persons (HONU) program currently operated by the City and County of Honolulu in partnership with SOHHS. The HONU program serves unsheltered individuals and families and is intended to rapidly transition participants to other appropriate settings, including shelters, kauhale, permanent housing, family reunification, and relocation. Tents and portable facilities are used to allow the program to relocate approximately 3-4 times per year to meet the program's desired goals and objectives.

The use of tents and other mobile structures at the sanctuary pilot program location may be appropriate for a program designed to be mobile or short-term in nature. If the proposed sanctuary pilot program is designed to accommodate long-term participation or to remain at a fixed location, the program may benefit from the flexibility to utilize permanent or semi-permanent structures if such structures are determined to be more appropriate for the designated location and population served. Permanent or semi-permanent structures are better able to withstand adverse weather conditions and ensure personal security and privacy for residents, which will be especially critical to the intended population for this program.

The kauhale model, which is focused on creating safe places for people to quickly move off the streets and into a community focused on healing and transformation, may work well for the intended population. At this time, four kauhale sites are able to accommodate families with children, including survivors of domestic violence. These projects use private and semi-private accommodations to create a sense of safety, stability, and shared responsibility among residents, while preparing them to transition to permanent housing. Families participating in kauhale projects tend to exit to permanent housing destinations more frequently than single adults or adult-only households. SOHHS appreciates the legislature's support of the Kauhale Initiative and welcomes the opportunity to expand the program and bring more people off the streets.

SOHHS defers to the Department of the Attorney General (ATG) for technical amendments and clarifications.

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



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Mar 3, 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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair / Sec

Valerie Yamada

Vice Chair

Zora Shove

Treasurer

Jonathan Yap

Member

Scott Suzuki
Sheila Castaneda
Jennifer Hartssock

The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: SB2563 SD1, Relating to Homelessness

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) **supports SB2563 SD1**, which establishes a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program to provide voluntary, low-barrier, safe spaces for unhoused primary caregivers and children to access shelter and supportive services. The program includes centralized shelter areas, restroom and shower facilities, storage, laundry, meals, transportation coordination, case management, and related supports.

AILH works with individuals with disabilities statewide, many of whom experience housing instability or homelessness. We respectfully offer recommendations to ensure that accessibility and disability inclusion are embedded in program design, implementation, and evaluation, thereby protecting the State's investment and ensuring equitable service delivery.

1. Ensure ADA-Compliant Infrastructure at Program Inception

SB2563 SD1 outlines required facilities including tents, parking areas, restrooms, showers, and related infrastructure. AILH recommends that all physical infrastructure meets ADA accessibility standards from the outset, including:

- Accessible restrooms and shower facilities;
- Accessible routes of travel throughout the site;
- Designated accessible sleeping areas;
- Clear accommodation policies for service animals.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair / Sec

Valerie Yamada

Vice Chair

Zora Shove

Treasurer

Jonathan Yap

Member

Scott Suzuki
Sheila Castaneda
Jennifer Hartssock

Integrating accessibility at the design stage avoids costly retrofits and ensures that families with mobility, sensory, or other disabilities can safely utilize the program.

2. Incorporate Disability-Informed Service Delivery

The bill provides for case management and surveys of resident service needs, including medical, mental health, and identification assistance. AILH recommends that implementation include:

- Staff training in cross-disability competency and trauma-informed practices;
- Clear referral pathways to independent living and disability-specific community resources;
- Accessible communication formats for residents with sensory, cognitive, or language-related needs.

Low-barrier service models are most effective when they account for the diverse needs of families, including those with disabilities.

3. Ensure Accessible Transportation Coordination

The measure includes transportation for school access and transit connections. AILH recommends that transportation coordination include ADA-accessible options and navigation support for paratransit services to ensure equitable mobility for residents with disabilities.

4. Include Disability Metrics in Program Evaluation

SB2563 SD1 requires evaluation and reporting to the Legislature. AILH recommends that evaluation metrics include:

- The number of residents with disabilities served;
- Accessibility barriers identified and addressed;
- Referrals to disability services;
- Outcomes related to housing stability and institutional diversion.

Tracking disability-related outcomes will help the Legislature assess whether the program effectively serves all eligible families.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair / Sec

Valerie Yamada

Vice Chair

Zora Shove

Treasurer

Jonathan Yap

Member

Scott Suzuki
Sheila Castaneda
Jennifer Hartssock

SB2563 SD1 reflects an effort to shift toward compassionate, evidence-based responses to homelessness. Embedding accessibility and disability inclusion within the pilot program's design and evaluation will strengthen its effectiveness and fiscal sustainability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Aloha,

Roxanne Bolden
Executive Director

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:32:14 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehaulani Lum	Testifying for Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

On behalf of the Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club (APHCC), I am writing in **strong support** of SB 2563 SB1. Mahalo nui loa for hearing this vital measure and for the opportunity to offer our mana'o.

APHCC was chartered by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in 1973, and we are headquartered in 'Aiea, O'ahu, where the challenges of homelessness are vivid and real.

As a former member of the Senate Housing and Homeless Task Force from 2014 to 2017, on behalf of APHCC, I have a deep appreciation for the complexity of causes that force our fellow residents into the condition of living unsheltered, on the streets, in cars, under bridges, in abandoned spaces, and anywhere that they can find to survive. In times of economic, health, employment, family, other personal hardships, none of us is immune from the potential challenges which can happen overnight.

I heard recently of a woman who was at the top of Hawai'i's professional world, until Covid hit the islands, and she lost everything that she owned, as a result of the shutdown. From being a distinguished business leader, thrown in a situation that she did not create, she found herself on the streets of Honolulu within a matter of a few months, with no family and no resources. Through the vision of a beloved community and kokua from a compassionate and able government social worker, two months ago, she found a safe and loving home and is healing body, mind and spirit. She has hope again.

However, that dwelling has demographic requirements that most of the people envisioned by this bill would likely not meet. There are no safe spaces specifically serving this community, with like intention.

In the land of Aloha, there are thousands of similar stories of good, caring, hard working and noble people of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds who have been cast asunder and stigmatized with no place to go. Many of them include mothers and keiki, our most innocent and vulnerable citizens, moreover, future leaders, who sleep in their own cars, shower at beach parks

and go to work and school. Some of them are baristas in Waikīkī, servers at restaurants, and even interview us on the phone when we participate in local survey polls!

How can we call ourselves a loving community when there are mothers and precious children living unhoused and unfed in our midst?

SB 2563 SB1 seeks to remedy this by establishing a three-year homelessness sanctuary pilot program to be administered by the Coordinator on Homelessness on designated land for the pilot program, which shall serve as a safe location for unhoused women and young children under the age of ten, to reside and access essential services. It further requires the Coordinator on Homelessness and the Coordinator's partner agencies to provide certain facilities and services to the designated location, as well as funding.

In 2017, the legislative Working Group proposed several systemic changes that we believed would ameliorate the situation of those who were unhoused. One of them which I and others strongly promoted was a Kauhale program that would help women and children tap into the power within themselves to transform their lives from scarcity to abundance in a creative, cultural village-style living space that would replicate Hawai'i's traditional system of thriving.

This measure sounds similarly focused on the holistic healing that is critically needed, as a preventive action that will save lives, increase opportunity, and ensure that we live up to our name.

The Aloha Spirit Law, HRS §5-7.5, informs and justifies this action.

Mahalo nui loa for your serious consideration of SB 2563 SB1. APHCC strongly supports its passage, full funding, and, hopefully, one day, permanent status.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Kehaulani Lum

President

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 10:38:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol England	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 10:45:23 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jameson Huang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

Please pass SB2563, which will establish a much-needed pilot program to address the needs of the homeless population in our state. They too are part of our community and deserve an equal chance at participating in society. This will give them the fighting chance that they need.

Thank you,

Jameson Huang

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 11:11:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Chou	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm writing in support of this critical legislation. Our community must care for the most vulnerable, especially now, when social support services are being gutted at the federal level and cost of living continues to soar.

All keiki deserve a safe, comfortable home, and the pilot program can provide this while also providing access to services that can help women overcome the problems contributing to their lack of stable housing. This program aligns with our state's values of embracing our kuleana to one another and uplifting each other in the spirit of aloha. I urge you to push this legislation forward.

Mahalo,

Stephanie Chou

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 2:15:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taryn Do	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

For decades, enforcement-based approaches to homelessness have failed to produce lasting reductions in unsheltered populations, instead increasing instability and barriers to care. Research from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Searching Out Solutions: Constructive Alternatives to Encampment Sweeps*, 2015) and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, *The State of Homelessness in America*, 2023) shows that punitive measures such as encampment sweeps and citations do not resolve homelessness and often make it harder for individuals to secure housing and employment. Studies supported by the National Institutes of Health (National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine, research on trauma-informed care and housing stability outcomes) further demonstrate that trauma-informed, low-barrier environments improve engagement with health and social services, particularly for women and children experiencing instability.

By creating a voluntary, safe, and service-connected sanctuary for unhoused women and young children, this bill advances evidence-based solutions that prioritize dignity, public health, and long-term housing outcomes by replacing costly cycles of displacement with a pathway toward stability and recovery.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 3:18:10 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheila Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Donovan Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)

Hawai'i State Legislature March 5, 2026, 10:15 AM

RE: IN STRONG SUPPORT of SB2563, Relating to Establishing a Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members,

My name is Sheila Medeiros, a resident of Kapolei, O'ahu. I testify in strong support of SB2563, which establishes a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program for unhoused primary caregivers and children under 18.

Punitive approaches like encampment sweeps and anti-camping laws have failed to reduce homelessness. They create cycles of trauma, displacement, and mistrust, especially harming families with children who face barriers to basic needs, education, and services.

This bill provides a humane, voluntary, low-barrier alternative focused on dignity and stability. I strongly support its key features:

- Safe designated location with shelter tents, vehicle parking/sleeping, restrooms, showers, laundry, lockers, waste disposal, fencing, and onsite security.
- Nonprofit partnerships for daily meals, pet allowance, and paid resident employment/volunteering (minimum wage) on backlog tasks.
- Resident-informed services including medical/mental health care, case management, childcare, job training, transportation, and benefits assistance.
- Environmental protections and required reports to the Legislature in 2027–2029 evaluating progress, outcomes, and recommendations.
- \$5 million appropriation for FY 2026-2027 with sustained budgeting.

This pilot builds trust, prioritizes voluntary participation, and offers pathways to housing—essential for Hawai'i's vulnerable families amid high costs and shortages.

I urge the Committee to pass and fund SB2563 to replace exclusion with inclusion and hope.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sheila Medeiros
Kapolei, Hawai'i

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 3:52:25 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois J Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 8:36:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chuck Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in FULL SUPPORT ofr SB 2563 as it provides shelter and services to a very vulnerable sector of our society (women and young children).

Hopefully, we can continue this great program in other areas of the island as well as the Neighbor islands as well.

Mahalo

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 9:22:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindy R Ajimine	Testifying for One Impact Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chairs & Committee Members:

I am writing to STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2563 for the reasons below. Please vote yes to protect and support our keiki.

- 1. In May 2024, familypromisehawaii.org reported that in Hawaii, particularly on O‘ahu, there has been a significant increase in homeless families, with 635 children reported as homeless in the latest census. The rise in homelessness among families is linked to economic challenges, with many children facing risks to their development and education due to unstable living conditions.**
- 2. A 12/2023 Hawaii News Now article reported that "On a single night in January (2023), more than 76% of the homeless in Hawaii were counted on the streets or in parks and vehicles — the highest in the country, followed by California and Oregon. Hawaii also had the 3rd highest rate of homeless youth staying in unsheltered locations. The problems have only gotten worse since the article was written,**

Thank you for listening and all you do to help our keiki.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 9:25:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lora Burbage	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I SUPPORT SB2563.

My family and I have been helping homeless people for about 4 years in the Waianae Boat Harbor area. This bill is a necessity, especially since we are seeing an increase in children and minors facing homelessness.

Please support this bill. Mahalo,

Lora burbage

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 10:41:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregg Hamamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Gregg Hamamoto and I am a lifelong resident of the State of Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong support for SB2563.

This legislation is important because it provides real assistance to homeless women and young children by providing basic needs, services, and transitional support.

Please vote for this bill. It will help the most vulnerable of Hawaii's people in very tangible ways.

Mahalo Nui

Aloha Senators Dela Cruz, Moriwaki, and other members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2563, which would establish a three year pilot program for a Homeless Safe Space for children and their caregivers.

I believe this program could help reduce a lot of issues that homeless people have. Families on the streets face constant stress, uncertainty, and risk. By providing a designated safe space, this program would give children and their caregivers a secure environment while they work toward stability. It could reduce trespassing, lessen the homeless in public spaces, and help connect families with services they need.

While I support this bill, I have a few concerns about how the program would be implemented. Where would the safe space be located? How might it affect surrounding neighborhoods and property values? Would there be guidelines regarding drug use, and how would those rules impact who is able to access the program? Also, would unaccompanied minors be allowed, and is the proposed budget appropriate for this?

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: March 3, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 2563 SD1
Measure Title: RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.
Report Title: Coordinator on Homelessness; DHS; City and County of Honolulu;
Primary Caregivers and Children; Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program;
Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 2563 SD1. Your consideration is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

Honorable Chairs & Committee Members:

I am writing to **STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2563** for the reasons below. Please vote yes to protect our keiki.

1. In May 2024, familypromisehawaii.org reported that in Hawaii, particularly on O‘ahu, there has been a significant increase in homeless families, with **635 children reported as homeless** in the latest census. The rise in homelessness among families is **linked to economic challenges**, with **many children facing risks to their development and education** due to unstable living conditions.
2. A 12/2023 Hawaii News Now article reported that "On a single night in January (2023), more than 76% of the homeless in Hawaii were counted on the streets or in parks and vehicles — **the highest in the country**, followed by California and Oregon. **Hawaii also had the 3rd highest rate of homeless youth staying in unsheltered locations.**

Cynthia A Dorflinger

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 6:07:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to support this bill.

Aloha Senators Dela Cruz, Moriwaki, and other members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2563, which would establish a three-year pilot program for a Homeless Safe Space for children and their caregivers. This program will help change many lives. It will give people the opportunity to turn their lives around for the better without the constant worry of putting a roof over their heads and their families heads. I believe this bill could decrease trespassing, reduce pollution, possibly clear the streets, and make everyone feel safer. However, I have some concerns about this bill. Where would the safe space be located? How many individuals could it accommodate? Would unaccompanied minors be allowed? How long would be the maximum duration they could stay in the safe space?

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 8:48:43 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna P. Van Osdol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senator Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Senator Dela Cruz, I am one of your constituents that is supporting this bill. Homelessness has been an issue for decades now, and I do not think there is a way to truly resolve this issue, unfortunately.

Because of our extremely high cost of living, many families are barely surviving. For parents with children who have no place to live, the bill is a good start to making sure our keiki, especially, will have a somewhat safe haven.

To me, our homeless families are worth the \$5M to start the project. Please pass this measure out of your committee. This is a bill I truly support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Donna Van Osdol, Waipio Acres, HI

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:20:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:39:38 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlene Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Let us remember our moto, Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono. We perpetuate Hawaii's righteousness by allowing bills that help our "Ohana" have a second chance in life to thrive. This bill allows women to transition into a new life and help them with their family. When we believe in them, through housing and training, they believe in themselves and contribute to our state; a change that will go on in the generations.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:44:15 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Smart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2563 SD1 with reservations.

According to the Civil Beat article of January 26, 2026 by Kevin Dayton and Chad Blair, Governor Green reported in his fourth annual State of the State address that in spite of all the funds spent each year on homelessness: “In Honolulu, however, the numbers [increased in 2024](#), as was the case [on the Big Island](#). And homelessness in Hawai‘i nearly doubled from 2023 to 2024 in large part due to the Maui wildfires.” It was also reported: “Going forward, Green said the state will spend \$50 million per year to expand kauhale villages statewide and provide \$10.8 million to rapid re-housing, outreach and civil legal services.” We already spend a lot of funds serving the homeless.

I have questions:

1. Will the \$5,000,000 requested come out of new funds? If so, what program will be cut to cover this cost? Will the \$5,000,000 cover all costs including land use, facilities (bathrooms, administrative areas, medical supplies, transportation, etc)?
2. What land will be used? Will it have a cost? Is the property zoned for “camping”?
3. Who/What agency/company will run it? What oversight will there be on the finances? Many NGO’s are in the news for exorbitant fraud.
4. How large will the area be and how many people/animals will it serve in the pilot project?
5. How is this pilot project different from the Kauhale villages? It sounds redundant other than people will be sleeping in cars and tents in the pilot project.
6. Why won’t normal school bus and city bus services be available to the area? If there are school age students, our city and county should service them.
7. Are you going to provide these services to individuals who are illegally in the country?

Before Hawaii turned to socialism and became lax about enforcing drug laws, people could afford a home and didn’t live on the streets. Wasting money on a Rail system and Transit Oriented Development high-rise ghettos that residents don’t want isn’t the answer. You need to bring down the cost of living, remove politicians who are corrupt, and stop implementing Agenda 20230 unsustainable and costly goals.

Since all the other efforts of the state have failed, if satisfactory answers to these questions are provided, I would continue to support this pilot project, but only for 3 years as stated in the bill.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:47:23 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ayman El-Swaify	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote "YES" on this bill to help protect our keiki affected by the increasing scourge of homelessness on Oahu.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:14:41 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Nakanelua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair and Committee Members,

As the sister of two local Hawaiian men who have struggled with homelessness for decades and are now incarcerated, I stand in strong support of HB2563, relating to Homelessness.

The homeless population in Hawai‘i shows significant racial and ethnic disparities, with Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders being disproportionately represented. This pattern holds across recent Point-in-Time (PIT) counts, which are annual snapshots required by HUD. The most detailed recent breakdown comes from the 2023 PIT count for Oahu (which accounts for the majority of Hawai‘i's homeless population, around 4,028 out of statewide totals like 6,223 in 2023), where race alone (HUD categories) included: - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 1,429 (about 35-36% of the total, though often combined with multi-racial identifications). - White: 550. - Asian or Asian American: 392. - Black, African, or African American: 158. - American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous: 27. - Multiple races: 859.

Primary contributors to homelessness in the Aloha State include a mix of structural, economic, and personal factors, exacerbated by the state's unique geography and economy:

High cost of living and lack of affordable housing. The leading driver, with Hawai‘i's housing costs far above the national average (often 149% higher). Inability to pay rent is the most commonly self-reported cause, affecting even working individuals/households due to skyrocketing rents driven by tourism, limited land, and short-term rentals (e.g., vacation properties).

Low wages and job loss/unemployment — Many jobs (e.g., in tourism/service industries) are low-paying and unstable; sudden losses push people into crisis, especially for those living paycheck-to-paycheck.

Family conflicts/domestic violence— A common pathway into homelessness, including breakdowns in family support networks.

Substance use disorders and mental health issues. Frequently reported (e.g., alcohol/drug use as a top cause in older counts), often intertwined with trauma or as a coping mechanism.

The homelessness sanctuary pilot program that is being proposed could offer our poorest population of PRIMARILY LOCAL residents an opportunity for a safe, stable place to live,

recover and build the life skills and tools necessary to live independently.

Three years of safe haven on designated land will not only serve as a safe location for men, women, families and young children to live and receive access to desperately needed services, but will provide these people with much-needed facilities and services that are designed to help them become self-sufficient.

We need more effective tools, services and programs that support the people among us struggling with high cost of living, low wages, addiction, loss and pain.

I ask you to support this bill.

Respectfully,
Laura Nakanelua
Republican National Committeewoman, Hawai'i

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 12:02:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah Komori	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators Dela Cruz, Moriwaki, and other members of the Ways and Means Committee.

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2563, to establish a three year pilot program of a Homeless Safe Space for children and their caregivers. This program will stop trespassing, It could make less homeless people on the streets, It would take stress off of the people to have a place to stay, and since people right now are breaking the law because of trespassing, they will prevent that. As a citizen I should have my own space, but it's very difficult to having that space because there's homeless people sleeping at bus stops, around bike routes, in front of stores, parks, it limits space. It would be nice if homeless people have their own space because they honestly have the same feelings towards me. Constantly getting moved around by people can get very annoying. If they had their own space, they wouldn't have to worry about getting moved around a lot.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The Mediation Center of the Pacific (MCP), I am submitting testimony in support of SB2563, SD1, which establishes a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program for unhoused women and young children. While MCP's core expertise is in mediation and community-based programs, we recognize the potential of this measure to foster safe, voluntary spaces that connect individuals with services and support.

Why this measure aligns with MCP's work:

- **Voluntary, low-barrier engagement:** Sanctuary spaces provide opportunities for trust-building and cooperative problem-solving, which aligns with MCP's approach to supporting individuals in navigating complex systems.
- **Community-centered support:** By offering safe spaces and access to basic needs, the pilot can help create environments where individuals are more likely to engage constructively with service providers, which can reduce conflict and foster collaborative solutions.
- **Focus on vulnerable populations:** Women and young children experiencing homelessness face heightened risks. MCP's experience shows that structured, respectful engagement improves participation in support programs and reduces the strain on families and communities.

While MCP does not operate direct shelter services, we appreciate the emphasis on safety, voluntary participation, and supportive engagement that this pilot program represents. From a mediation and community perspective, these principles are essential for building trust and encouraging constructive connections between unhoused individuals, service providers, and the wider community.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Me ka mahalo nui,

Roberta Hickey-Gómez
Programs and Communications Manager
The Mediation Center of the Pacific, Inc.

**The Senate
The Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026
Committee on Ways and Means
Thursday, March 5, 2026
12:04 p.m.**

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Re: SB 2563 SD1, Relating to Homelessness

Aloha Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Sharon Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal to establish a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program.

As our community grapples with the growing crisis of family homelessness, this initiative offers a compassionate and practical solution by providing safe, designated spaces for unhoused primary caregivers and their children. These sanctuaries will ensure basic security and provide families with access to essential services—including healthcare, education, and case management—granting children stability and caregivers the resources to rebuild their lives.

By requiring the Coordinator on Homelessness and partner agencies to provide critical facilities, this program demonstrates a commitment to holistic support rather than temporary fixes. Furthermore, regular reporting to the Legislature will ensure transparency and allow for data-driven decisions regarding future efforts. With dedicated appropriations, this pilot program can lay the groundwork for systemic change and help break the cycle of homelessness for vulnerable families in our community.

I urge you to approve this proposal to invest in a safer future for all Honolulu residents.

Mahalo.

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:48:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine Collado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to **STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2563** for the reasons below. Please vote yes to protect our keiki.

1. In May 2024, familypromisehawaii.org reported that in Hawaii, particularly on O‘ahu, there has been a significant increase in homeless families, with **635 children reported as homeless** in the latest census. The rise in homelessness among families is **linked to economic challenges**, with **many children facing risks to their development and education** due to unstable living conditions.
2. A 12/2023 Hawaii News Now article reported that "On a single night in January (2023), more than 76% of the homeless in Hawaii were counted on the streets or in parks and vehicles — **the highest in the country**, followed by California and Oregon. **Hawaii also had the 3rd highest rate of homeless youth staying in unsheltered locations.**

LATE

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:22:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiki Lan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators Dela Cruz, Moriwaki, and other members of the Ways and Means Committee, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2563, to establish a three year pilot program of a Homeless Safe Space for children and their caregivers. This program will help to stop a lot of trespassing. It would also provide space for homeless people to better rest in. It could solve the problem of seeing too many homeless people around the road and also provide a safer and quieter place for children and their caregivers to rest.

LATE

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:17:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jameson Town	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators Dela Cruz, Moriwaki, and other members of the Ways and Means Committee, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2563, To establish a three year pilot program of a Homeless Safe Space for children and their caregivers, What I am saying is that with this bill it will stop the on going Problem with homeless trespassing and people putting up tents on Private Property. Questions I have are; what would it do to the people living nearby?

-Thank you very much

Jameson

LATE

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:34:42 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fenton K lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2563

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

My name is Kaulana lee and I support SB2563.

This bill focuses on families with children experiencing homelessness. It creates a designated space where basic needs can be met. Showers, sanitation, meals, and safe areas to sleep. These are foundational to stability.

When families have a safe place to exist, they are more likely to engage with services, find work, and move toward permanent housing.

SB2563 also includes structure. Onsite security. A zero-tolerance policy for drugs and violence. Opportunities for residents to work and contribute while earning wages.

This is a three-year pilot program with reporting to the Legislature. That means outcomes can be measured and adjusted.

Helping families stabilize helps the entire community.

I respectfully ask you to support SB2563.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 11:19:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy Shimizu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators!

Please SUPPORT this bill.

LATE

SB-2563-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/5/2026 8:59:24 AM
Testimony for WAM on 3/5/2026 12:04:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reina Loughlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee,

I am supporting SB2563.

This bill offers a conceivable plan to support those wanting the opportunity to improve the trajectory of their life and for their children. I believe it will help people to transition as contributing members of the community and prevent living off the system or remaining homeless and unemployed.

I'm asking for your support for SB2563.

Mahalo,

Reina Loughlin