



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

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**  
S.B. NO. 2563, RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

**BEFORE THE:**  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026      **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 225

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Melissa L. Lewis or Erin L. Yamashiro,  
Deputy Attorneys General

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Chair San Buenaventura 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 to provide a safe space, on designated land, with hygiene facilities and support services, for unhoused women and children. The bill also provides in section 3, on page 9, lines 10-19, an appropriation for the pilot program, and we note two issues related to the appropriation, namely, the lapsing date and the transfer of the appropriation between agencies.

Lapsing Date

In section 3, on page 9, lines 18 to 19, the bill provides in part that "all moneys from the appropriation unencumbered as of June 30, 2029, shall lapse as of that date."

Article VII, section 11, of the Hawaii Constitution provides in pertinent part:

All appropriations for which the source is general obligation bond funds or general funds shall be for specified periods, and no such appropriation shall be for a period exceeding three years.

Our department has interpreted this provision to permit "the expenditure of an appropriation, if so specified in the act making the appropriation, up to one year beyond the biennial period covered by the appropriation." See Attorney General Opinion No. 81-2 (1981). Because this appropriation would cover the current fiscal period, July 1,

2025, to June 30, 2027, the lapse date of this appropriation may not extend beyond June 30, 2028. Accordingly, we suggest changing the date from "2029" to "2028" on page 9, line 19.

Transfer of Appropriation

In section 5, on page 10, lines 3-7, the bill provides that: "the governor may transfer all or a portion of the appropriation in this section to other state or county agencies for expenditure incurred to implement the homelessness sanctuary pilot program." The reference to an "appropriation in this section," is confusing because section 5 does not include wording regarding an appropriation. If the intent is to apply this provision to the appropriation in section 3, we suggest replacing, on page 10, line 5, the term "this section" with the term "section 3" for clarity.

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

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 4:25:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 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**

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 11:19:10 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chuck Lee           | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Aloha!

I am in strong support of SB2563.

We need a dedicated piece of property that our Houseless mothers and their children can reside at where they can feel safe and have the necessary resources to get them back on their feet and back into society.

Mahalo

Chuck Lee

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 1:28:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b>  | <b>Organization</b>  | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|----------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sara Lenzer Medeiros | Testifying for Policy<br>Advisory Board Elderly<br>Affairs PABEA | Comments                  | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

My name is Sara Lenzer Medeiros. I am a board member of PABEA. The comment I am submitting does not necessarily represent the executive office of elderly affairs.

The pilot program as outlined in the bill SB 2563, to provide shelter for homeless women with children is admirable. We are wondering if this would include women who are elderly, who are caregivers for those children who are not necessarily their parents. In addition, many of those homeless women that would be housed with children in this pilot program, may be also caregivers of kupuna.

I live in Kailua Kona. Hawaii. It is clear as you move around the streets in West Hawaii and East Hawaii, you will see many elderly women with children. And although you cannot tell by looking at them if they are housed or not, you may venture to think they are at risk in any case, based upon their appearance, and the fact they are sitting on the sidewalks or on curbs. They may also have a number of possessions with them. Perhaps even animals.

Some consideration, may be warranted in including and providing for kupuna in this pilot program. It is not clear upon reading the bill, whether there is age specific parameters, other than children who are under the age of 10. We are inquiring if they have kupuna, as part of their group, will they also be included?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.  
Sincerely,

Sara Lenzer Medeiros

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:29:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By                    | Organization   | Testifier Position | Testify              |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| Shelby "Pikachu"<br>Billionaire | Testifying for Kingdom of<br>The Hawaiian Islands &<br>Ohana Unity Party | Support            | Remotely Via<br>Zoom |

Comments:

### Testimony in Strong Support of SB2563 – Establishing a Three-Year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program

\*\*Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,\*\*

My name is "Pikachu" Shelby Billionaire, and I am testifying today as a concerned advocate for effective, compassionate solutions to Hawaii's persistent homelessness crisis. I urge the Committee to **pass SB2563** without delay. This bill establishes a three-year pilot program, administered by the Coordinator on Homelessness, to create safe, voluntary sanctuaries on designated lands specifically for unhoused women and young children under the age of 10. By providing secure shelter, meals, hygiene facilities, security, childcare, transportation, pet-friendly options, and direct connections to healthcare, employment support, and permanent housing pathways, this program offers a targeted, humane alternative to the dangers of street living and the limitations of punitive approaches like repeated encampment clearances.

Hawaii's homelessness remains one of the most severe in the nation, with women and children bearing disproportionate risks of trauma, violence, exploitation, and long-term health impacts. The most recent comprehensive statewide data from the 2024 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count reported **6,389 individuals experiencing homelessness** across Hawaii—a figure that includes **4,494 on Oahu** (over 70% of the total), **718 on Hawaii Island**, **654 on Maui**, and **523 on Kauai**.

These numbers reflect a crisis driven by Hawaii's extreme cost of living (65.7% above the national average), skyrocketing rents (median around \$2,000–\$3,000 for many units), and housing shortages that force families into instability. Recent 2025 sheltered PIT data from the Bridging the Gap Continuum of Care (covering neighbor islands) shows **632 sheltered individuals** statewide on January 22, 2025—a 2% increase from 619 in 2024.

This includes **303 family individuals** in **82 families**, with **175 children** (many under 10). Sheltered family homelessness declined 9% year-over-year, yet persistent needs remain: Hawaii Island saw a 14% rise in sheltered homelessness to **217 people** (including increases among families), Kauai jumped 41% to **83**, and Maui declined 10% to **332** amid ongoing wildfire recovery challenges.

On Oahu, family homelessness trends have shown increases in prior years (e.g., a 19% rise in homeless families reported in 2024 data), with hundreds of children affected and vulnerable to lifelong consequences. Women and children face acute dangers in unsheltered environments, including higher exposure to domestic violence, sexual assault, poor nutrition, untreated medical conditions, and developmental delays in young kids. Inaction is extraordinarily costly: Unsheltered homelessness drives excessive emergency room visits, hospitalizations (costing thousands per incident), and law enforcement interactions. In contrast, evidence-based supportive housing models in Hawaii demonstrate clear savings—Housing First programs have reduced healthcare costs by **over \$4,000 per month per client** and correlated with a **61% reduction in arrests**.

Retention rates in similar initiatives reach **86–90%**, and targeted interventions (like those reducing family homelessness on Hawaii Island by 52% since 2018) prove that focused support breaks cycles effectively. SB2563's modest **\$5 million appropriation** over three years is a prudent, high-impact investment. It prioritizes zero-tolerance environments for safety, incorporates resident input on services, and emphasizes voluntary participation and pathways to self-sufficiency—addressing root causes like abuse, job loss, and unaffordable housing without broad deregulation or overreach.

**In closing, I respectfully ask the Committee to pass SB2563 to deliver immediate protection and hope to our most vulnerable residents. Key reasons include:**

- **632 sheltered individuals** counted in 2025 on neighbor islands alone, including **175 children** in families—many needing safe, women-and-child-focused spaces to escape street dangers.
- **4,494 homeless individuals on Oahu** in 2024 data, where the pilot would launch, representing the epicenter of the crisis and urgent need for targeted sanctuaries.
- Proven cost savings from supportive models: **Over \$4,000/month in healthcare reductions per client** and **61% fewer arrests**, turning taxpayer dollars from crisis response to prevention.
- Declines in family homelessness through interventions (e.g., **52% drop on Hawaii Island since 2018** and **9% statewide sheltered family decline in 2025**), showing that programs like this work when implemented.
- A humane, evidence-based path forward that protects women and young children, reduces long-term societal costs, and aligns with Hawaii's values of ohana and community care.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. I am available for any questions and strongly encourage swift passage of this vital legislation.

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.  
Ohana Unity Party, Chairman  
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Facebook @Keiki'okalani  
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IG @Legendarybillionaire

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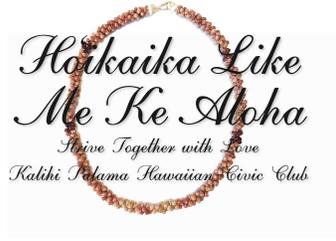
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[www.kalihipalama.org](http://www.kalihipalama.org)

February 17, 2026

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 2563 WITH AMENDMENTS  
RELATING TO THE HOMELESSNESS SANCTUARY PILOT PROGRAM

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

Kalihi-Pālama Hawaiian Civic Club strongly supports S.B. 2563 and includes a recommended amendment for your consideration.

Kalihi-Pālama is home to one of the largest concentrations of Native Hawaiians in urban Honolulu. Census data show our region has high levels of family households, higher poverty rates than other parts of Honolulu, and significant housing instability.

Lower Kalihi is a family-centered community. When homelessness occurs in our neighborhood, it rarely affects just one person; it is often an entire 'ohana, often with young children. Public data show Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates across the state. For our community, the sanctuary model proposed in this bill is a much needed, place-based response to conditions affecting our families and keiki.

For Native Hawaiians, 'ohana stability is foundational to community health. Providing a safe space where caregivers and young children can remain together during crisis reflects our values of mālama keiki and kuleana 'ohana and is an investment in breaking intergenerational cycles of homelessness.

While we support the bill's intent to protect women and young children, we respectfully request broadening eligibility to include any primary caregiver of a young child using gender-neutral language. In Kalihi-Pālama, fathers, kūpuna, and extended 'ohana members often serve as sole caregivers. These caregivers face the same housing instability and should not be excluded from a program to protect young children.

We suggest replacing "unhoused women with young children" with "unhoused primary caregivers with young children," while allowing prioritization based on vulnerability.

Because our community is directly impacted by housing instability and Native Hawaiians are disproportionately affected, the Kalihi-Pālama Hawaiian Civic Club supports S.B. 2563 with the recommended amendment.

We respectfully ask for your support and prompt passage of this vital bill. Mahalo for considering our testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Cedric Duarte, President  
Kalihi-Palama Hawaiian Civic Club



# WAI'ANAE COAST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

(A nonprofit organization serving our community)

P. O. Box 2308, Wai'anae, Hawaii 96792

Phone: (808) 723-9161

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Patty Kahanamoku Teruya  
President/Director

Keoki K. Aiwohi  
Vice President/Director

Katherine N Paas  
Treasurer/Director

February 14, 2026

Senate Committee on Human Services  
RE: SB 2563 – Relating to Homelessness; Homeless Sanctuary Pilot Program

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

Patty Kahanamoku Teriya, and I am writing in strong support of SB 2563, which seeks to establish a 3-year homeless sanctuary pilot program in (Waianae). The homelessness crisis in Hawaii is not a monolith; it requires specialized, regional solutions that understand the unique heartbeat of the community. SB 2563 provides exactly that by focusing on our most vulnerable population: unhoused women and young children.

I support this measure for three critical reasons by requiring the program to be administered by a coordinator from the Waianae area. This bill ensures that the sanctuary is managed by someone who understands the local landscape, the families involved, and the specific cultural nuances of our community. To protect for the vulnerable women and children face disproportionate risks of violence and trauma while living unsheltered. This pilot program creates a designated, safe space where they can stabilize without the immediate threats found in general encampments. A 3-year pilot provides the necessary timeframe to move beyond "emergency band-aids" and toward actual transition.

By designating land specifically for this purpose, we are providing a foundation of dignity and security. The (Waianae Coast), has waited long enough for a solution that reflects our needs and utilizes our strengths. We need a sanctuary that is not just a place to stay, but a place to heal and rebuild. I urge the Committee to PASS SB 2563 to provide our women and children with the safety and the future they deserve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,  
Patty Kahanamoku Teruya – PO Box 2308, Waianae, Hawaii 96792  
808 723-9161 pattyteruya@gmail.com





WAIANA, HAWAII 96792 \* 808 699-5488

**Robert Figaroa Jr**  
President Director

**Sabrina Grace**  
Secretary Director

**Randall Harakal**  
Treasurer Director

The Honorable Chair and Members of the Legislative Committee  
From: Sabrina Grace, Director of Back to the Beginning  
Date: February 14, 2026  
Subject: Testimony in Strong Support of SB2563

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Legislative Committee,

My name is **Sabrina Grace**, and I serve as the Director of **Back to the Beginning**. I am writing to you today to express my full and urgent support for **SB2563**. Our organization operates on the front lines of Hawaii's housing crisis, and we see the human face of these statistics every single day. We do not just discuss the crisis; we live it alongside our community. In a vital partnership with local landowners, we currently manage three farm properties in Nanakuli that provide a sanctuary for over 75 residents who had nowhere else to turn.

The mission of Back to the Beginning is to provide a path back to dignity for those whom the traditional system has forgotten. SB2563 aligns perfectly with our proven model of care. We are witnessing a terrifying increase in homeless families and mothers who are desperate for a safe, stable environment where their children can simply be children, away from the trauma of the streets. Furthermore, our Kupuna are now the fastest-growing homeless demographic in Hawaii. We house many Kupuna's on fixed incomes who have been priced out of the market and have no other options for survival.

Most uniquely and urgently, our Nanakuli locations provide a home for those in hospice. It is a tragedy that any member of our community faces the end of their life on the sidewalk. On our farms, we provide the Aloha and medical support they deserve in their final days, ensuring they pass with the dignity every human being is entitled to. Our experience proves that the "sanctuary" model works.

PAGE 2

The Waianae Coast continues to bear a disproportionate burden of the state's homelessness crisis. While our three farms are currently at capacity, the demand from our community continues to grow at an alarming rate. We need the structural support and the framework provided by SB2563 to ensure that organizations like ours can continue to save lives and provide a safety net for the most vulnerable among us. Passing this bill is a commitment to the idea that no child should grow up in a car and no elder should be left behind. I strongly urge you to pass SB2563 to provide the resources necessary to expand these life-saving sanctuary programs.

Mahalo for your time, your compassion, and your commitment to the people of Hawaii.

Sincerely,  
*Sabrina Grace*

Back to the Beginning  
Homeless Housing & Rehabilitation Coordinator

With gratitude and blessings!

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 10:40:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By     | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Chandra Kanemaru | Individual   | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2563 — RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS Senate Committee on Health and Human Services Hearing: February 18, 2026, 1:00 PM Conference Room 225 & Videoconference**

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

My name is Chandra Kanemaru, and I am a community advocate deeply committed to equity, dignity, and practical solutions that strengthen the well-being of Hawai‘i’s families. I am writing in strong support of SB 2563, which establishes a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program for unhoused women and young children.

For too long, our state has relied on enforcement, displacement, and criminalization to respond to homelessness. These approaches have not reduced homelessness; instead, they have deepened trauma, eroded trust, and pushed families further from the services that could help them stabilize. SB 2563 represents a meaningful shift toward compassion, safety, and evidence-based practice.

This bill creates a voluntary, low-barrier sanctuary where women and children can meet basic needs—restrooms, showers, meals, storage, laundry, and safe sleeping space—while accessing supportive services. It also allows pets, provides space for vehicle dwellers, and includes opportunities for paid work and community contribution. These are practical, humane measures that meet people where they are.

I especially appreciate that the bill requires resident input to shape services such as medical care, mental health support, domestic violence assistance, childcare, and transportation. This is how we build programs that actually work for the people they are meant to serve.

**Recommendations to strengthen the bill:**

1. **Clarify trauma-informed and gender-responsive standards.** Women and young children need environments that prioritize safety, privacy, and healing.
2. **Ensure the “zero-tolerance” policy is implemented with harm-reduction principles.** Safety is essential, but punitive approaches risk recreating the very barriers this bill seeks to remove.
3. **Strengthen pathways to permanent housing.** Sanctuary is a starting point; stable housing is the goal.

4. **Engage community-based organizations, especially those serving Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families.** Cultural grounding and trusted relationships are key to success.

SB 2563 is a compassionate, practical step toward protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our community. It replaces fear with stability, exclusion with inclusion, and punishment with pathways to recovery and self-sufficiency. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Chandra Kanemaru

Neighborhood Board #18 Secretary

NB#18 Chair of Environment & Health

Good Neighbor Program Coordinator

Honolulu, Hawai'i

Committee on Health and Human Services  
Chair Joy San Buenaventura                      Vice-Chair Angus McKelvey  
and Committee Members  
Senators: Dru Mamo Kanuha, Jarrett Keohokalole and Kurt Fevella

SB2563 Relating to Homelessness

Report Title: Unhoused; At-Risk; Women and Young Children; Coordinator on Homelessness; Sanctuary Pilot Program; DHS; Appropriation (\$)

My name is Rita Kama-Kimura and I would like to first thank Chair San Buenaventura for allowing this bill to be heard. Note I do stand in strong support for this bill, SB2563, it is a way overdue needed program.

To establish a safe place where homeless women and children under the age of 10yrs. can find the basic needs, that most people never give a second thought to. Shelter, bathrooms/showers, a safe place to sleep, a meal and onsite security!

This is a program long overdue and so needed by the most vulnerable among us.

Job training opportunities for these women, to help them establish an independent life and ensuring that the children have transportation to school where needed.

I like page 8, lines 12 & 13, although I do question lines 17, 18, and feel this should be removed. Let's go into this program with a positive attitude.

So I ask you to please move this bill forward, for the sake of these women who want a change to improve their lives and the lives of these children.

Respectfully,  
Rita Kama-Kimura

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 7:17:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Susan Kuwaye        | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Strongly support this bill that would provide a safe place for vulnerable women and children without housing to live and be able to access needed services. The bill provides the necessary funding for a 3-year sanctuary pilot program to implement this needed care for homeless women and children. And hopefully it will continue.

Susan Kuwaye (808) 387-4864

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 8:55:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cindy R Ajimine     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair & Committee Members!

I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT** of this pilot program. **FINALLY!** A good bill to support that addresses the needs of the underprivileged, women & children!

Thank you very much!

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:57:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Joy Shimizu         | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I believe this is an excellent pilot program for the women and children in our homeless community. I SUPPORT this bill.

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 6:19:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gregg Hamamoto      | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>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.

Mahalo Nui

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:37:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Leimomi Khan        | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Support with amendment to allow eligibility be broadened to include **any primary caregiver of a young child**, using gender-neutral language.

- Fathers are increasingly the sole caregivers of their children
- Kūpuna are raising grandchildren
- Extended ‘ohana members serve as the only parent a child knows

These caregivers face the same housing crisis and should not be excluded from a program designed to protect young children.

Respectfully suggest replacing:“unhoused women with young children” with:“unhoused primary caregivers with young children ”while allowing prioritization for those at greatest risk.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 5:54:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lila Mower          | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

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**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:36:59 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Kehaulani Lum       | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

Mahalo nui loa for hearing this measure and for the opportunity to offer my mana'o.

As a former member of the Senate Housing and Homeless Task Force from 2014 to 2017, I have a deep appreciation for the complexity of causes that force our fellow residents into the condition of homelessness. In times of economic, health, employment, family and other personal hardship, none of us is immune from the potential challenge.

I have 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 to survive. But, through the compassion of a beloved community, and kokua available through the government, last month, she found a safe and loving home and is healing body, mind and spirit. She has hope again.

In the land of Aloha, there are thousands of similar stories of good, hard working and noble people of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds who have been cast asunder with no place to go. Many of them include mothers and keiki, our most innocent and vulnerable citizens, who sleep in their cars, shower at beach parks, and go to work and school. Some of them are baristas in Waikīkī, servers at restaurants, and even speak to us on the phone, when we receive 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?

SB2563 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 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 help 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 them to transform their lives to abundance in a creative village-style living space that would replicate Hawai'i's traditional system of thriving.

SB2563 sounds similarly focused on the holistic healing that is necessary to free our most vulnerable families and future leaders from poverty.

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

Mahalo nui loa for your serious consideration of this measure. I strongly support its passage, full funding, and, hopefully, one day, permanent status.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Kehaulani Lum

'Aiea, O'ahu, Hawai'i

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:57:08 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Regina Gregory      | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

support

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 10:22:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Terri Yoshinaga     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:40:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Donna P. Van Osdol  | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support this bill since it will help mothers and children who are homeless. Please just make sure the monies actually go to the program and not anywhere else.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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



RYAN I. YAMANE  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

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'ŌKELE

February 17, 2026



TO: The Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Jun D. Yang, Coordinator on Homelessness

SUBJECT: **SB2563 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

**Hearing:** February 18, 2026, Time 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 & 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 women and children under ten 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.

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

**LATE**



WAIANAЕ, HAWAII 96792 \* 808 699-5488

Robert Figaroa Jr  
President Director

Sabrina Grace  
Secretary Director

Randall Harakal  
Treasurer Director

## **ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY SHARING CLIENT STORIES** **IN SUPPORT OF SB2563**

My name is Sabrina Grace, Secretary Director of the Board for Back to the Beginning, a non-profit from the Waianae Coast. I would like to share some of the real-life stories of individuals currently living at Back to the Beginning's farm lots.



*"Papa" William Sanchez* came to Back to the Beginning in the fall of 2021. He had been in remission for prostate cancer and his caregiver/girlfriend of over 20 years, Piilani Dorsey, was addicted to methamphetamine and cocaine and providing the illicit substances to Papa. Both were evicted from their long-time rental on the Waianae Coast and I had them moved to the organization's Farm Lot B. During my daily check in visits with individuals and families at that farm lot location, I grew concerned when Papa would ask me to bring him food/soda. I noticed that Pili was not providing basic care for Papa and was continuing to use illegal drugs. I phoned United Health Care to let them know Papa's caregiver was under the influence of

drugs; made a police report with HPD; and notified Adult Protective Services. All stated they could not do anything.

I moved Papa to our main lot called the “mansion” to get him sober and left Pii at Farm Lot B. I notified his eight children of their father’s living situation, and I paid out of pocket for his medical supplies and home health care for three years. Sadly, the family has only visited him twice in the last five years, most recently last year after Papa had a stroke. I offered to fly the oldest son to Oahu to visit his father, but the son said he “no more time.” Currently, Papa has Stage 4 prostate cancer and is in hospice at the mansion, surrounded by *hanai* family who care about him very much until God calls him home.



*Jordan Dominici* came to the mansion in the summer of 2023. Jordan’s uncle, David Dominici, asked me to take his nephew who had become bedridden due to drugs during the COVID pandemic. I went to the residence to meet Jordan and observed that he could not feed, bathe or clothe himself and had not showered in over a year. Jordan came to the mansion, and I scheduled his medical appointments with Dr. Justin Diego at the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Healthcare Center as well as a vascular professional to determine Jordan’s medical prognosis. Dr. Diego also referred Jordan for physical therapy which means health care providers come to Jordan to make sure his limbs are not atrophied. I also advocated for the past two years for an electric wheelchair which finally arrived just two short weeks ago. This allows Jordan new-found mobility about the property without the need of a bulky wheelchair. We were also successful in having Jordan’s medical supplies covered by his health insurance this month after 2.5 years of paying out of pocket for necessities like chux, bed linen and home health care. My goal for Jordan is his continued improvement in mobility (he can feed and bathe himself) and one day to be able to stand, walk and use the bathroom unassisted. Jordan would then be able to successfully transition to an assisted living facility to work toward his ultimate goal of one day walking again.



*Keoki Velasco-Briski* is a 39-year-old man whose behavior is that of a 12-year-old. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia and had been living in a clean and sober home in Waipahu. HPD brought Keoki to the mansion six months ago after he was found naked, running through a nearby high school. Other residents of the home had robbed him and given him methamphetamine and when police arrived, he was admitted to Queen’s Medical Center’s Kekela Unit. Upon Keoki’s arrival at the mansion, I provided clothes, food and most importantly, structure. Keoki’s health insurance didn’t know of his houselessness prior to coming to the mansion and kept paying the clean and sober home until I was able to notify them of Keoki’s new residence. His family resides on Hawaii Island and enjoy weekly telephone calls from Keoki to hear from him the goings-on in his life. Keoki’s schedule includes daily chores consisting of feeding the various farm animals and watering plants. He enjoys a reward system for his efforts and sometimes hourly reminders about expected social skills and behavior. Keoki enjoys animé, drawing and journaling vivid accounts of his “past” life experiences including his time as a POW aviator; a pharaoh’s architect in ancient Egypt; and a retired astronaut to Mars (just to mention a few). My goal for Keoki is to have his psychiatrist re-evaluate his diagnosis and have enough independent living skills to successfully enter an assisted living facility.



*Andrea Kekahuna* was houseless for over ten years before coming to the mansion in late 2022. Having been in a houseless camp in town, she made her way to Ulehawa

Beach where she stayed for a while with her fifteen dogs. The mansion farm lot provided her and her canine family with a stable living environment: her own wood cottage beneath a large kiawe tree and farm chores that included taking care of geese, chickens, goats and other small animals. From the first day she woke up she was on time, wore a smile while she attended her chores, and always offered a helping hand to other residents. Today, Andrea is employed full time with Event Sanitation Plus.

**LATE**

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 3:45:45 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By     | Organization               | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Daniel Kaneshiro | Testifying for THE SHELTER | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha

I support SB2563 as The Shelter has also been helping this demographics of homeless single women and their children for several years. This segment represents a very vulnerable population and there is a need for more facilities and beds to be available.

The Shelter will provide assistance to Representative **Garner M. Shimizu's** efforts in this arena.

Please feel free to call me at 808-372-3451.

Mahalo,

Daniel Kaneshiro, Executive Direct

The Shelter ([theshelter.org](http://theshelter.org))

**LATE**

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:47:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jeremy Sakamaki     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Good afternoon,

My name is Jeremy Sakamaki. I am a caseworker working with the homeless population in Honolulu for 3.5 years now (including 1 year doing street outreach). My caseload is mainly individuals who are homeless and have a severe and persistent mental illness. I wrote this testimony because SB 2563 addresses issues I deal with each week.

People often view document loss during sweeps as an annoyance and nothing else. However, document loss can delay an unsheltered individuals recovery process by months.

This is something I see all the time with individuals being released from OCCC or WCCC, with no known place to go. These individuals will arrive at service hubs such as Iwilei, with their documents, but prior to them being able to stabilize themselves, a sweep takes place and they discover they lost their documents. I have witnessed individuals losing housing opportunities due to their inability to provide the necessary vital documentation to sign a lease prior to a voucher expiring. Secure Storage and On-Site ID & Benefits Assistance in SB 2563 will directly alleviate this problem.

My clients typically operate under a 24 hour time horizon. When an individual misses an appointment and is then scheduled a month later, this is not a minor delay. In actuality, a month is more than enough time for their stability to change and for a window into services such as Community Care Services to close entirely.

A significant number of missed appointments are related to basic needs. I cannot get an individual to a housing intake if they have not eaten and/or have not been able to access a shower. Punawai Rest Stop is essential, but clients that are displaced further west by sweeps can't easily travel to this location. When clients are unable to bathe, they tend to avoid public spaces, including the offices that they need to get into. More on-site meals, showers & laundry would meaningfully reduce gaps in basic needs.

Sweeps can also undo months worth of progress with my SPMI clients. I have found clients after sweeps in a significantly worse state of mental health than when I last saw them due to displacement. When this occurs, we are typically going to restart long acting injectable medications, which take 2 to 3 months for any type of noticeable clinical response. The type of stability required for an individual to attend and follow through with treatment and engagement

is hindered by sweeps. During these months, everything remains stagnant. We are essentially starting over again.

SB 2563 is a pilot, and therefore, not a permanent solution, but it is designed based upon what is currently happening in this field. The women and children it is designed to assist are located in Iwilei, in Waikiki, and increasingly farther west. More difficult to reach, more vulnerable and still awaiting a safe place to begin.

I respectfully request that you support passage of SB 2563.

Thank you,

Jeremy Sakamaki

**LATE**

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:28:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Laura Nakanelua     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair and Committee Members,

As the sister of two local Hawaiian men who are homeless, I stand in support of HB2563, relating to Homelessness.

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 healthier, independent lives.

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 them with certain 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 addiction, loss and pain.

I ask you to support this bill and vote Yes.

Respectfully,  
Laura Nakanelua  
(808) 561-2325

**LATE**

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 11:26:29 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Susan Duffy         | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I **support** of this measure establishing a Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program for unhoused women and young children.

Homelessness in Hawai‘i is not a crime. It is the visible result of housing shortages, rising costs of living, domestic violence, medical crises, and economic instability. For too long, our response has relied heavily on displacement and enforcement. While public order is important, repeated sweeps and citations have not reduced homelessness — they have often deepened trauma and mistrust.

This bill offers a different approach.

By creating a voluntary, low-barrier sanctuary site, the State acknowledges that stability is the foundation of recovery. A mother cannot search for employment, enroll in Med-QUEST, secure identification documents, or place her child in school if she has nowhere safe to sleep or shower. Basic dignity — sanitation, rest, safety — is not a luxury. It is a prerequisite to progress.

Importantly, this measure focuses on women and young children, who are among the most vulnerable populations in our homelessness crisis. The inclusion of childcare, transportation to school, and access to case management recognizes the real barriers families face.

Hawai‘i has always valued compassion and kuleana. This bill reflects both.

I respectfully urge your **support** of this measure.

**LATE**

**SB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 1:20:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| kristal rivera      | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, I support this bill! It is needed throughout the island. We're not solving the problem with shelters and Kauhale. The houseless want to remain in the town where they reside. If we build encampments similar to what they are accustomed to, then agencies will be successful in connecting them to healthcare, wrap-around services, and consistency in follow-up. I've worked in the field, and I continue to do so as a volunteer. I asked on many occasions if this is something they are interested in, and everyone I asked is in agreement. We can't say there aren't enough funds; we have more than enough. I believe in this bill, and I'd love to be a part of putting it into place and navigating these areas where they live. Most importantly, we must focus on cities where they gather the most. Find land on the outskirts. For example, in Wahiawa on the hill above Karsten Thot Bridge, or off Kunia. This is a must-do. Please consider this bill. My name is K. Makanani Rivera. I am more than willing to help to see this bill pass and be a part of its effectiveness.