



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934 HD1 SD1: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: Sen. David Ige, Chair; Sen. Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair; and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Fr. Robert Stark, Director Catholic Diocese Office For Social Ministry

Hearing: **Friday, March 28, 2014, 9:35 AM, Room 211**

Dear Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,

We thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of House Bill 1934, appropriating funding for a variety of critical programs targeted at addressing and ending homelessness. The Office for Social Ministry of the Catholic Church in Hawaii is part of a community collaborative effort focusing on the needs of homeless persons and strategies to end homelessness. We support this bill as a means to provide multiple pathways out of homelessness, including:

**Part I: Shallow Subsidy Program funding of \$1 million** to help ready-to-rent homeless families cover the gap between their income and market rent so they can move into a permanent home instead of languishing in transitional housing because they cannot afford a market rental.

**Part II: Housing First Programs funding of \$1.5 million:**

Housing First is an evidence-based best practice in which highly vulnerable chronically homeless individuals are placed in permanent housing with comprehensive support services. This enables them to stabilize their lives and address the underlying problems that led to chronic homelessness.

Housing First has been consistently shown to dramatically improve the health and well-being of our most vulnerable residents. It also dramatically reduces costs associated with homelessness such as hospitalization, emergency services, arrests, and incarceration. Across the country, the many communities who have adopted Housing First have seen large decreases in their chronically homeless population and related costs. Study after study clearly show that Housing First is the best way to end chronic homelessness. The vast majority of Housing First participants remain housed, and because they are stabilized, communities have seen public costs reduced by around 75% for each participant, saving millions of dollars.

Continued funding for this program is critical: Housing First only works with permanent, stable housing. We respectfully urge you to add this funding to the **base budget** for the program.

**Part IV: Permanent supportive housing funding of \$500,000** to provide matching funds for continuum of care permanent supportive housing programs funded by HUD. By funding these programs, the state will help the 600 homeless individuals with disabilities currently served by this program to stabilize their lives and remain housed while also leveraging a substantial amount of federal funding.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1934 providing funds for solutions to homelessness, including Housing First, the shallow rental subsidy program, and Continuum of Care permanent supportive housing programs.



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934, HD1, SD1: RELATING TO HOUSING

To: Senator David Y. Ige, Chair; Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair; and Members

From: Sarah Gaver, Masters of Social Work Candidate at Hawaii Pacific University

Hearing: Friday, March 28, 2014; 9:35 a.m. Conference Room 211; State Capitol

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB 1934**. I am Sarah Gaver, Masters of Social Work Candidate at Hawaii Pacific University, and also a Rehabilitation Specialist working with chronically homeless consumers that are diagnosed with a severe mental illness.

I strongly support Housing First, HB 1934, Part II of this bill. Although Hawaii already has programs that work toward eventually housing the homeless, those who are chronically homeless and also dealing with mental illness, substance dependency or other disabilities have more difficulty and reluctance in following the rigid rules and program policies required to succeed. Funding the Housing First program will allow us to get more people off the streets, helping them feel safe and grow their sense of hope for their future. The supportive services will then be available as they decide that working on their mental health and substance dependency issues will also help them maintain their safety and home.

The Housing First plan has been proven to be effective and is saving money for other states. In Pathways to Housing's 2007 Annual Report, they compared the cost of their Housing First plan with that of NYC Jail, NY State Psychiatric Hospital, NYC Psychiatric Hospital and NY City Shelter, which all amounted to \$1,889/night compared to their Housing First model which costs \$57 per night. "A four-year study indicates that putting up homeless people in subsidized housing, even without focusing on other medical or behavioral problems first, saves the public money and reduces chronic homelessness."

Please support Housing First, HB 1934, so that Hawaii can also save money and provide evidenced based services that will help end homelessness in our state.