



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

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DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

March 22, 2019

TO: The Honorable Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Scott Morishige, MSW, Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

SUBJECT: **HCR 36 – REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR'S COORDINATOR ON HOMELESSNESS
AND THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU TO COME TOGETHER AND
PRIORITIZE THEIR HOMELESS EFFORTS IN THE AREA SURROUNDING THE
HAWAII CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER BY CONVENING A TASK FORCE**

Hearing: Friday, March 22, 2019, 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator appreciates the intent of this measure, and respectfully offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this concurrent resolution is to request the Coordinator and the City and County of Honolulu to come together and prioritize their homeless efforts in the area surrounding the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center by convening a task force.

The Coordinator acknowledges that homelessness is a statewide issue that impacts every county. The Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), which includes participation by the Coordinator and the City & County of Honolulu, has adopted a comprehensive framework to address homelessness that focuses on three primary leverage points – affordable housing, health and human services, and public safety. The Coordinator works closely with State and County agencies and law enforcement to connect trespass and other enforcement efforts together with the offer of services and housing-focused programs, such as Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing. The coordinated efforts to implement the State's framework to address homelessness have made progress in reducing the number of homeless individuals statewide. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of homeless individuals in Hawaii

decreased by 690 individuals (9.6%). The decrease was one of the largest numeric decreases in homelessness in the country, only exceeded by decreases in California, Florida and Michigan. This recent decrease is the second consecutive decrease in homelessness in Hawaii – representing an overall 18% reduction since 2016.

In Kakaako Makai, the State assists with programs for emergency shelter, outreach, and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). Specifically, the Department of Human Services (DHS) administers two emergency shelters to address the needs of homeless individuals and families – the Family Assessment Center (FAC) and Next Step shelter. In addition, the Kalihi-Palama Health Center and the Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center (H3RC) conduct outreach regularly in the area, which includes offers of shelter, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and medical services. The University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) also administers the H.O.M.E. Project, which provides mobile medical services at Kakaako Waterfront Park every Thursday evening from 5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

One example of collaboration with the City & County of Honolulu in Kakaako Makai is the partnership between the Coordinator and the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) HELP Honolulu program. HELP Honolulu pairs HPD officers with State-contracted outreach providers who participate in coordinated outreach efforts that place individuals into emergency shelter or other longer-term placements (e.g. residential treatment, medical respite, etc.) with the assistance of the Coordinator and staff. A recent HPD HELP coordinated outreach effort resulted in the placement of 12 individuals into emergency shelter, and one individual to a residential treatment facility.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 5:08:55 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Loretta Yajima	Children's Discovery Center	Support	Yes

Comments:

March 20, 2019

To: The Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Re: HCR 36

Testimony prioritizing efforts to address homeless encampments in the area surrounding the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center

Children's museums play a significant role in promoting lifelong learning and serve as important cultural resources within the communities that they serve. As an Island State, Hawaii is geographically isolated from the rest of the United States and the world. For many children, this means that their personal experiences and impressions about the world beyond our island shores are limited to what is available to them within the State and what they learn or read about in school. In order to broaden their horizons and open new and wonderful worlds to them, a facility such as a children's museum is especially important to so many of Hawaii's children.

Solving the homeless situation is a major and complex challenge, but progress on addressing this issue is critically needed. While we are certainly sympathetic to those who are in need of help, the homeless encampments surrounding the Center have had severe repercussions for the Children's Discovery Center and other stakeholders in the Kaka'ako Makai area over the past many years. Unfortunately, we are seeing this problem intensifying once again. The issues that we've been subjected over the past ten years have been physically, mentally and emotionally devastating. Trespassing, vandalism, theft, and all kinds of harassment have been bad enough; but most hurtful of all, has been the lack of response or concern from those we've reached out to for help. Clearly, there is no easy solution to the problem of homelessness, and as I have stated publicly many times that is NOT what this is about. What it IS about is our children.

It is so important to us for the Children's Discovery Center to be a wonderful safe haven for all families with children who are eager to come here to play and to learn. Our staff has been extraordinarily dedicated to providing outstanding educational programs for those who continue to come because they love the Center and benefit from our

programs. For us to continue serving them in the best way we need help in addressing the problems created by the growing homeless encampment in Kaka'ako parks.

While these are surely challenging times, the challenges have also presented us with unique opportunities to step up and become strong advocates for our children on both a local and a global scale. We at the Children's Discovery Center are proud to have the opportunity share what we value about Hawaii and the people who live here with the rest of the world, through our children. By nurturing and empowering our keiki we strive to help them grow into compassionate, collaborative and courageous human beings and, in doing so, to become the wise, strong and committed leaders that our world so badly needs.

In the foyer of our Discovery Center the children of Hawaii are described as "Hawaii's Rainbow Connection to the world." We must put our efforts into working together to prepare them to navigate their world and to live and lead with their hearts filled with Aloha.

Loretta Yajima

Chair of the Board of Directors & CEO

Hawaii Children's Discovery Center

111 Ohe Street

Honolulu, HI 96813

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 12:06:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Betty Y Yoshida	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a former teacher I have witnessed the value of the educational experience when young children visit the Hawaii Children's Discovery Center. As a local resident I have witnessed the joy that my grandchildren and mainland/foreign visitors experience, wanting to return again and again. The Center is unique in its creative exhibits and activities that focus on science, environment, health, tourism, commerce, literature, the arts, and a variety of cultures in our state. Unless you have participated or observed a child in playful learning at the Center, you will not know how special and rare this place is. It exists because of its exceptional staff, generous donors, volunteers, and the repeat visits from many schools. For our children's sake, please find a way to keep it in its present location, safe from outside harm. Mahalo nui loa.

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 4:12:40 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Candace Yanagihara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a retired educator of over 30+ years, a parent, a grandparent, and a concerned citizen, I feel definitely qualified to say that the Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center is a key educational facility that fosters learning in even the youngest of our children. Not only do the children learn, but parents, the children’s first teachers, have a venue with a myriad of hands-on experiences which stimulate their children’s learning and social interactions. Parent involvement in a child’s education is one of the keys to a child’s success in school.....and HCDC fosters just that kind of parent-child interaction.

As a PAL (People Assisting Learning) volunteer at HCDC for over 10 years, I have seen firsthand the joy and excitement of children (my own 4 grandchildren as well) as they enter the facility and as they engage in the learning environment. Even parents who are coming for the first time are in awe of what the Center provides. HCDC provides learning opportunities weekly for the different age groups from toddler and preschoolers to learning camps (usually filled with a wait list) during school breaks, as well as visits by public and private schools. While I served as a PAL, I’ve had visitors to our island tell me that they don’t have anything like it where they live.

It is such a shame that the situation surrounding the Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center is a health and safety issue. How can it be that we cannot protect the areas that our keiki visit and learn in? How can it be that families are reluctant to visit such a place built for families to learn together because they do not feel it is a safe place for their children and themselves?

I realize much time, money, and effort, from many sources, have gone into trying to resolve the homeless issue but the fact remains that the Center is beset with sanitation problems and some families just do not feel safe there due to the close proximity of those who set up their shelters right across the street and in nearby parking lots.

I strongly feel that if there are laws prohibiting loitering/trespassing for schools, then there should also be the same laws/safe zones for wherever large groups of children congregate regularly.

Sincerely submitted and hopeful for a resolution to the health and safety issues surrounding Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center,

Candace Yanagihara

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 5:11:48 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Vera Arita	Volunteer at the Children's Discovery Center	Support	No

Comments:

As a retired DOE teacher and a volunteer at the Children's Discovery Center, the importance of early childhood learning is so vital. Please support this bill to protect the area in Kakaako of vagrants. It is such a shame to see all the litter and make shift homes in the vicinity.

Mahalo,

Vera Arita, M.ED.

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 6:10:15 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bianca Kusatsu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a retired teacher, a volunteer at Hawai`i Children's Discovery Center for 15 years, and a grandmother of 5 grandkids living on Oahu. I have played with each of my grandchild at the Discovery Center where it is a safe and nurturing environment for them to discover, create, and learn to whatever/wherever their imagination takes them. They have learned life skills and respect for the myriad of community helpers by becoming a postal worker, a police officer, and fireman themselves- all in play. All the while having fun interacting with me and other children around them. We love this place. My grandchildren now in their teens still recall all the good and creative activities they were engaged in. Please help to keep the surrounding areas of the Discovery Center a family and nurturing one.

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 9:01:13 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Daisy Ishihara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

"Our greatest natural resource is the minds of the children" Walt Disney once stated. These children, our children, will one day be the leaders of our great state, Hawaii. What better place is there to enrich a child's early learning than at Hawaii Children's Discovery Center in Kakaako? A place that facilitates learning in a fun way, using the child's senses to explore, discover, imagine and dream. A place where a child makes choices and making the right choice is important in adult life. As a retired educator and a volunteer at HCDC for 18 years, I, Daisy Ishihara, wholeheartedly support HCR36 and want it go into fruition.

Being exposed to encampments, unsanitary conditions where unhealthy habits prevail, littering, unsafe conditions in the parking area and walking and passing scary individuals to the museum prevent people, locals and tourists, from going there. Health and safety issues are a concern. Clean sweeps have not worked. Something needs to be done for the sake of our children. And the time is NOW! Let's go forward with HCR36!

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/20/2019 10:04:05 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sylvia Wee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing today, as a retired educator, to lend my voice to the throng of others who are concerned about the survival of the Hawaii Children’s Discovery Center. The Center is a valuable educational resource, unique in that it is the only museum in the state that caters to our preschool and lower elementary students, providing hands-on educational experiences appropriate to their age-level.

The homeless situation in the Kakaako Waterfront Park area has created a health and safety issue that affects the continued existence of the HCDC. As an occasional volunteer at the HCDC, I can empathize with the parents who are reluctant to visit the Center. On days when I help prep materials for HCDC hands-on activities, I park in an area where I can see my car during my shift. If I volunteer at the special night activities, I have my husband drop me off and pick me up at the CDC entrance so I do not have to walk to or from my car in the parking lot. If I walk around the grounds of the HCDC, I carefully watch where I step.

I support HCR 36 and am pleased that the Legislature is taking action by encouraging the Governor, Legislature, Mayor, and City Council to work together find a solution to the problems in the Kakaako Waterfront Park area so that all the residents of Hawaii can enjoy the park and the surrounding community.

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/21/2019 8:05:29 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Valerie Okihara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a retired Hawai`i public school teacher and administrator who volunteers monthly at the Hawai`i Children's Discovery Center (HCDC), I support HCR36. A task force of State and City officials, HCDC representative and other community members will be able to work together on solutions and coordinate efforts to ensure the safety and health of the area surrounding the center. Current efforts are ineffective and fragmented with the State and City working separately and disagreeing on jurisdiction. Making the area safe will benefit not only the center and Hawai`i's keiki but also community members who enjoy the park, go to the John Burns Medical School, and do business in the area. Solutions should also provide help for the homeless currently camping in the area.

The Hawai`i Children's Discovery Center provides an enriching and fun environment where Hawai`i's keiki develop language and critical thinking skills which are the foundations for literacy. It also provides experiences and background knowledge which may not be available directly such as viewing x-rays of their bones in a "doctor's office" and a "visit to Asian countries" from which their ancestors may have come. While interacting with others, children develop life skills such as cooperation and concern for others. Parents learn with their children and strengthen positive bonds. Thousands of Hawai`i's children, including those living in disadvantaged areas, also come to the center on field trips at a lower cost funded by grants.

Please vote "yes" on HCR36. The HCDC is a valuable educational resource. The creation of a task force will be a first step toward positive solutions to ensure the health and safety of the area.

HCR-36

Submitted on: 3/21/2019 10:43:22 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/22/2019 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Andrea Quinn	Individual	Support	No

Comments: