



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

Testimony to the House Committee on Housing

Representative Tom Brower, Chair

Representative Nadine K. Nakamura, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 7, 2017, 9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423

By

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Written Testimony Only

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 488, Relating to Housing

Purpose: Provides general obligation funds for rental housing, mixed-use affordable rental housing, a multi-use juvenile services and shelter center, and public housing.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports the need for both affordable rental housing and the juvenile services and shelter center. The majority of youth that would be served by the juvenile services and shelter center would be status offenders and low level law violators. Many of these offenders are youth that are constantly running away and become part of our homeless population. The shelter will not only provide short term housing for these youth but will also provide services to address issues such as anger, substance abuse and mental health that impact the youth and family relationship. Left unaddressed at this early stage these issues often escalate and may result in the youth moving from status offenses to law violations and situations that require detention. These types of issues may also impact social and educational development which can impact long term social costs upon society in the form of higher use of government services such as welfare.

Many of these youth are from families where the cost of housing is a constant strain on the family and contributes to the stresses that result in acting out behaviors that contribute to the youth coming to the attention of the court.

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A juvenile service center such as the one envisioned in this bill is a promising approach used across the nation. Nationally, these centers help decrease the number of youth and families that continue to have interaction with the courts while enhancing public safety. Effective utilization of a center allows police to return to patrol duty instead of sitting with a youth until a parent is able to take custody of the youth. The center will provide services and supports to assist youth and their family that focus on preventing the youth from going deeper in the juvenile justice system. Youth will be diverted to appropriate community-based services based on their needs and risk to public safety.

The need to provide affordable rental housing, as well as the need to provide services to help youth and families that have become part of the juvenile justice system, is extremely important and the Judiciary welcomes the opportunity to be a partner in the accommodation of both of these community needs.