

RES23-002
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 68

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Feb 22, 2023 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 3

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Will Kane	Email: willk@strategies360.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Hawaii Gas	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 17, 2023 @ 09:36 AM
Name: K. Lewis	Email: annie@hawaiiancouncil.org	Zip: 96707
Representing: Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 21, 2023 @ 10:51 AM
Name: Rob Van Tassell	Email: bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org	Zip: 96822
Representing: Catholic Charities Hawaii	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 21, 2023 @ 03:44 PM



February 22, 2023

The Honorable Tommy Waters, Chair
The Honorable Esther Kiaʻāiana, Vice Chair
Members of the Honolulu City Council,
City and County of Honolulu
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: Reso 23-2 CD1- RELATING TO REPROGRAMMING OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 (PUB. L. 117-2), STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS PROGRAM FOR THE RENTAL AND UTILITY RELIEF PROGRAM.

Aloha Chair Waters and Members of the Council,

Thank you for allowing Hawaiʻi Gas to provide testimony in support of Reso 23-2 CD1.

The Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP) has already made a significant impact in assisting residents across the island to stay in their homes reduce their chance of becoming homelessness. By designating additional funding, this Council is ensuring the continuation of a desperately need lifeline for many our most vulnerable residents.

During the pandemic many residents were unable to pay their rent or utility bills, which impacted not only them, but the landlords they rented from and the companies that provide utility services.. By using this funding, over 90% of residents who participated in this the program we're able to pay back the money they owed. This allowed the renters to stay in their homes and the landlords the ability to pay their mortgage and other associated costs.

The costs of living in Hawaiʻi are already some of the highest in the nation. With the 2+ years of a global pandemic, events in Ukraine and skyrocketing inflation driving those costs to record high levels, Hawaii Gas believes that by the City & County of Honolulu providing an assistance program like this, helps our most financially impacted residents in a meaningful and positive way. We urge the Council to adopt this resolution and move this program forward.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Hawaii Gas

Hawaii Gas distributes a blend of gas that ranges from low-carbon to zero-carbon to negative carbon emissions through approximately 1,100 miles of mostly underground utility pipeline



statewide. Our main utility system includes a blend of gas that includes Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG), Renewable Natural Gas (RNG), and Hydrogen. Despite representing less than 1% of the greenhouse gases emitted into Hawaii's atmosphere, we are working to conscientiously reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by pursuing cost-effective, local, renewable energy projects

Resolution 23-02

RELATING TO REPROGRAMMING OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 (PUB. L. 117-2),
STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS PROGRAM FOR THE RENTAL AND UTILITY RELIEF
PROGRAM.

Honolulu City Council

February 22, 2023

10:00 AM

Videoconference

The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** the Proposed FD1, CD1, Resolution 23-02, which would provide much-needed, additional funds for the City and County of Honolulu's Rent and Utilities Relief Program (RURP) to help keep families in their homes.

Since 2021, CNHA and Catholic Charities of Hawai'i have partnered to administer the City and County of Honolulu's RURP. Over this two-year period, we have collectively disbursed \$207 million in emergency relief to help nearly 16,000 families stay housed during the pandemic. Awarded households have received an average of about \$13,182 in financial support.

While the city's RURP has been incredibly vital in providing kākō'o to our most vulnerable 'ohana during the pandemic, the demand for continued support remains strong. **Simply put, our community's need far exceeds the current relief funding available.** Between CNHA and Catholic Charities of Hawai'i, we have a combined \$6.44 million remaining in state and local fiscal recovery funds. Those available funds would only cover 400 of the 1,500 RURP applications that are pending. This means that 1,100 households, who have already proven that they are unable to pay their rent, may be forced out of their homes, without government kokua. Moreover, we anticipate that the initially contemplated \$33 million infusion into the RURP would help an additional 1,000 families.

Passage of this resolution would fund strategies designed to touch those most in need. Our community outreach targets underserved populations, specifically the elderly and those with technology or language barriers. Moreover, RURP helps ease people into the post-



pandemic economy through other support services, including case management, job readiness programs, financial workshops and individualized financial counseling.

We humbly ask that you PASS Resolution 23-02 so that we can continue to serve our community and help keep our most vulnerable 'ohana housed. Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

J. Kūhiō Lewis, CEO

Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement

About Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement

CNHA is a member-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization with a mission to enhance the cultural, economic, political, and community development of Native Hawaiians. For more information, visit www.hawaiiancouncil.org/.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION 23-002: RELATING TO REPROGRAMMING OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 (Pub. L. 117-2), STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS PROGRAM FOR THE RENTAL AND UTILITY RELIEF PROGRAM

TO: City Council, City and County of Honolulu
FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: **Wednesday, 2/22/23; 10:00 AM; City Council Chamber + Videoconference**

Chair Waters, Vice Chair Kia'aina, and Members of the City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony **in Strong Support** of Proposed FD1, **Resolution 23-002**, which would provide additional funds for the City and County of Honolulu's Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP) to assist families that are still struggling financially and to prevent homelessness. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of working in the areas of affordable housing and homelessness.

Since 2021, CCH and the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA), have partnered to administer the City and County of Honolulu's RURP. Both agencies have distributed \$207 million in emergency financial relief to help nearly 16,000 families stay housed. The average amount of assistance per household is about \$13,182.00.

This program is a lifeline for the community, especially for the most vulnerable households with our kupuna and keiki. The need for this program is still great as our offices currently receive over 10,000 calls a month for financial assistance related to housing. These calls are in addition to the pending RURP applications that have to be processed.

We currently have a combined \$6.44 million remaining in state and local fiscal recovery funds. These funds would cover 400 of the 1,500 RURP applications that are pending. This means that 1,100 households are at-risk for homelessness for non-payment of rent or at-risk for having their utilities shut off. We anticipate that additional funding for the RURP would help another 1,000 households.

Passage of this resolution would help RURP serve households in zip codes that are underserved, have language barriers or technology challenges. These households would also be provided with other support services such as: case management, financial resiliency skill building, housing counseling, etc.

Please help and provide our neighbors with the financial assistance to pay their rent and utilities.

Contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson at (808) 373-0356 or bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org, if you have any questions. Mahalo.



Catholic
Charities
USA



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