

RES25-186
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 380

*BUDGET (BUD)

***BUDGET (BUD) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Jul 22, 2025 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 12

I wish to comment: 2

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Dr. Kanoe Naone	knaone@gshawaii.org	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Girl Scouts of Hawaii	Oppose	Jul 21, 2025 @ 02:15 PM
Testimony: The City and County Grant in Aid process allows important services to be delivered to high risk populations especially when other funding opportunities are not available. To move the threshold down takes away council members discretionary ability to fund critical services and does so in an arbitrary manner. Our council members are more than capable of funding at the appropriate level without having a law or resolution that limits them. This limit does not take into account any unforeseen circumstances whereby funding over \$100,000 would be critically needed. Thank you for your consideration.		
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Maureen Purington	maureen@hugshawaii.org	96816
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support) for Hawaii's Seriously Ill Children and Their Families	I wish to comment	Jul 21, 2025 @ 02:28 PM
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Kelly Bryant Berganio	kellymbb@gmail.com	96822
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
HUGS	I wish to comment	Jul 21, 2025 @ 03:46 PM
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Ben Morgan	benmorg@gmail.com	96814
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
HUGS	Oppose	Jul 21, 2025 @ 04:02 PM
Testimony: Aloha Chair and Councilmembers, As a board member of HUGS, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization. HUGS provides essential, long-term support to families across O'ahu who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families—including many in		

underserved areas—and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers.

HUGS also directly supports the City's Age-Friendly initiative by involving seniors in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them active and connected.

Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit the organization's ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ben Morgan
Board Member, HUGS

Name: Joseph Castaneda	Email: jclcastaneda@gmail.com	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 04:11 PM

Testimony:
Testimony on Resolution 25-186
Submitted by Joseph Castaneda
Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support)
Date: July 21, 2025

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

As a board member of HUGS, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization.

HUGS provides essential, long-term support to families across O’ahu who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families—including many in underserved areas—and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers. As a cancer survivor that received chemotherapy from Kapiolani Hospital I understand the impact that HUGS has on the families of Hawaii and the importance of GIA funding.

HUGS also directly supports the City's Age-Friendly initiative by involving seniors in meaningful volunteer roles that keep

them active and connected.

Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit the organization's ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joseph Castaneda

Board Member, HUGS

Name: Christian Chambers	Email: cchambers@legalhawaii.com	Zip: 96814
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 04:30 PM

Testimony:

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

I am a resident of the City and County of Honolulu. I am also a board member of HUGS, which provides critically important services to families caring for a seriously ill child. During my time as a board member, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand how much of a difference HUGS makes to families dealing with incredibly difficult circumstances. As a member of HUGS' finance committee, I have also seen how important the City's Grants in Aid program is to HUGS and our community as a whole.

I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization. Having seen first-hand the impact the Grants in Aid program has on HUGS, I can say without reservation that a reduction in the maximum grant amount will hurt our community. The impact would go far beyond the 300 Oahu families who directly benefit from HUGS' services and would have a cascading effect for our community.

Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit the organization's ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Name: Kanani Kaopua	Email: kananik@hawaiianprop.com	Zip: 96813
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Representing: HUGS Hawaii	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 04:38 PM
Testimony: Testimony on Resolution 25-186 Submitted by: Kanani Kaopua Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support) Date: July 21, 2025 Aloha Chair and Members of the Honolulu City Council, I am submitting this written testimony in opposition to Resolution 25-186, which proposes to lower the maximum annual Grants in Aid (GIA) award from \$150,000 to \$100,000, effective Fiscal Year 2027. I do so in my capacity as a Board Member of HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support), a nonprofit organization that serves over 400 Hawai'i families statewide who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. This proposed reduction would have a devastating impact on HUGS' ability to deliver critical services to our island's most vulnerable population, our seriously ill keiki and their families. These families are navigating unimaginable emotional, physical, and financial challenges. For many, the support provided by HUGS, funded in major part by GIA, is a lifeline. The resolution itself affirms that GIA funding is intended to support projects that empower community-based organizations and provide services to populations deemed most vulnerable by the City, including children. HUGS directly fulfills this mission by delivering tailored programs that support not only the keiki, but their parents, siblings, and caregivers as well. A \$50,000 cut may appear minor in the broader city budget, but to a nonprofit like HUGS, it is deeply significant. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families, including many in underserved areas, and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers. This reduction would force painful decisions about which programs to scale back or eliminate. HUGS also directly supports the City's Age-Friendly initiative by involving Kupuna in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them active and connected. We also ask the Council to consider the broader context: The high cost of living in Hawai'i continues to escalate, putting added strain on the families we serve. Now is not the time to reduce critical funding. Continue holding nonprofits accountable through the strong reporting and compliance standards already in place. Please do not make it harder for organizations like HUGS to continue doing this deeply meaningful and necessary work.		

Please reject this proposal and, instead, reaffirm your support for the community organizations that are on the front lines serving our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. I urge you to vote no on Resolution 25-186 and protect the integrity and impact of the Grants in Aid program.

With deep appreciation and urgency,

Kanani Kaopua

HUGS Board Member

808-539-9501

kananik@hawaiianprop.com

Name: Danka Fabiankovicova	Email: dfabiankovicova@chaneybrooks.com	Zip: 96744
Representing: HUGS Hawaii	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 04:45 PM

Name: Catha Combs	Email: catha@wikoffcombscpa.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: HUGS	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 05:15 PM

Name: Greg Pietsch	Email: greg@sunsetranchhawaii.com	Zip: 96712
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 06:16 PM

Testimony:

GIA funding is a vital part of our ability to offer consistent, high-quality support to families caring for a seriously ill child. These funds help us serve nearly 300 Oahu families a year, run 50+ programs, and engage more than 1,000 volunteers—including our kūpuna, who are a meaningful part of our Age-Friendly City

Name: Julie Kaneko	Email: jhkaneko@gmail.com	Zip: 96825
Representing: HUGS Hawaii	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 07:13 PM

Name: Kevin Yim	Email: kyim@hawaii.rr.com	Zip: 96814
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 07:46 PM
Testimony: Testimony on Resolution 25-186 Submitted by Kevin Yim Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support) Date: July 21, 2025 Aloha Chair and Councilmembers, As a board member of HUGS, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization. HUGS provides essential, long-term support to families across O'ahu who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families—including many in underserved areas—and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers. HUGS also directly supports the City's Age-Friendly initiative by involving seniors in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them active and connected. Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit the organization's ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities. Mahalo for your time and consideration. Sincerely, Kevin Yim Board Member, HUGS		
Name: Stephanie Hamano	Email: shamano@ywcaoahu.org	Zip: 96813
Representing: YWCA Oahu	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 21, 2025 @ 09:00 PM

Name: Joni Chun	Email: jchun@susannahwesley.org	Zip: 96819
Representing: Susannah Wesley Community Center	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 22, 2025 @ 08:49 AM



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and their Families*

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HUGS EIN#99-0213594



Aloha United Way

AUW Designation #96590

CFC Designation #84333

July 21, 2025

Aloha Chair, Councilmember Kia'āina, and Members of the Honolulu City Council,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on Resolution 25-186. On behalf of HUGS, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current maximum Grants in Aid award of \$150,000 per organization per fiscal year.

The Hawai'i Department of Health's Family Health Services Division identifies children with serious illnesses as a priority population in need of focused healthcare and support services. Since 1982, HUGS has provided long-term, wraparound support to families across O'ahu who are caring for a child with a serious or life-threatening illness. These families face emotional, social, and logistical challenges that often continue for years—and sometimes for a lifetime. Our programs help families cope, connect, and thrive through peer support programs, respite activities, and family engagement events.

The Grants in Aid program is a vital source of funding that helps us serve 284 Oahu families and nearly 1,400 family members—including those living in underserved or geographically isolated areas. GIA funds allow us to:

- Hire and retain experienced staff who plan and deliver 50 events each year
- Provide meaningful opportunities for families to reduce stress, strengthen resilience, and build valuable networks of support
- Engage over 1,000 volunteers annually

Importantly, HUGS also fully incorporates the goals of the Age-Friendly City Program. We engage seniors as essential members of our volunteer force, particularly in preparing for family programs, assembling amenity kits, and supporting event logistics.

Reducing the GIA maximum award to \$100,000 would create significant challenges for organizations like ours that are already operating efficiently and at capacity. This change would limit our ability to provide continuity of care, expand access, and support volunteers—many of whom rely on these programs as a meaningful way to contribute to their communities.

If the Council's goal is to broaden access to funding, we encourage consideration of strategies that do not reduce the resources available to established organizations delivering high-impact services across the island.

HUGS is grateful for the continued support of the City and County of Honolulu. Maintaining the \$150,000 maximum GIA award is an investment in family stability, intergenerational inclusion, and community well-being.

With gratitude,

Maureen Purington

Testimony on Resolution 25-186

Submitted by [Board Member Name]

Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support)

Date: July 21, 2025

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

As a board member of HUGS, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization.

HUGS provides essential, long-term support to families across O‘ahu who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families—including many in underserved areas—and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers.

HUGS also directly supports the City’s Age-Friendly initiative by involving seniors in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them active and connected.

Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit the organization's ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kelly Bryant Berganio

Board Member, HUGS

Testimony on Resolution 25-186

Submitted by Danka Fabiankovicova

Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support)

Date: July 21, 2025

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

As a proud board member of HUGS, I'm writing today to express my strong support for maintaining the current Grants in Aid (GIA) funding cap of \$150,000 per organization per year.

HUGS plays a critical role in supporting local families navigating the unimaginable challenges of caring for a seriously ill child. We serve nearly 300 families across O'ahu each year, many of whom live in underserved communities. With the help of over 1,000 dedicated volunteers, HUGS offers more than 50 programs annually—providing not only emotional and financial support, but also a deep sense of community and hope.

GIA funding is a vital part of our ability to sustain these efforts. Lowering the maximum grant to \$100,000 would significantly limit our capacity to maintain staffing, deliver consistent programming, and respond to the increasing needs of families in crisis. It would directly impact the continuity of care these families count on.

HUGS also actively supports the City's Age-Friendly Honolulu initiative by involving kupuna in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them engaged and valued in our community.

I respectfully urge the Council to preserve the current GIA cap and consider alternative budget solutions that do not undermine the impact of high-performing nonprofits like HUGS. It is not only the right thing to do, but also the necessary thing to do.

Mahalo for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Warmly,



Danka Fabiankovicova

Board Member, HUGS

Testimony on Resolution 25-186

Submitted by Catha Lee Combs

Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support)

Date: July 21, 2025

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

As the Treasurer on the Board of Directors of HUGS and a HUGS family member, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization.

HUGS provides essential, long-term support to families across O‘ahu who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families—including many in underserved areas—and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers. My family has benefitted from HUGS’ programs and because I have experienced first-hand the impact on our HUGS’ families, I have remained active on the HUGS’ Board for over 25 years.

HUGS also directly supports the City’s Age-Friendly initiative by involving seniors in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them active and connected.

Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit HUGS’s ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catha Lee Combs". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Catha" being the most prominent.

Catha Lee Combs

HUGS Board Treasurer

Testimony on Resolution 25-186

Submitted by [Board Member Name]

Board Member, HUGS (Help, Understanding & Group Support)

Date: July 21, 2025

Aloha Chair and Councilmembers,

As a board member of HUGS, I respectfully urge the Honolulu City Council to maintain the current Grants in Aid maximum of \$150,000 per year per organization.

HUGS provides essential, long-term support to families across O‘ahu who are caring for a child with a life-threatening illness. GIA funding allows HUGS to deliver 50 programs a year, reaching nearly 300 Oahu families—including many in underserved areas—and engage more than 1,000 community volunteers.

HUGS also directly supports the City’s Age-Friendly initiative by involving seniors in meaningful volunteer roles that keep them active and connected.

Reducing the maximum grant award to \$100,000 would limit the organization's ability to provide continuity, maintain staff, and meet growing needs. I ask the Council to consider alternative strategies that do not compromise the ability of high-impact organizations to serve vulnerable communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Kaneko

Board Member, HUGS

July 21, 2025

To: Honolulu City Council
Chair Okimoto
Vice Chair Nishimoto
Members of the Committee on Budget

From: Stephanie Hamano on behalf of YWCA O'ahu

Re: Resolution 25-186 Grants in Aid Fund
Establishing City Policies and Priorities for the use of the Grants in Aid Fund

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this resolution.

Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in our community by providing essential services and addressing critical gaps that would otherwise go unmet. At YWCA O'ahu Fernhurst, GIA funding is instrumental in supporting women as they transition out of challenging life circumstances, including incarceration, substance use recovery, and homelessness. However, GIA funding does not cover the full cost of delivering these life-changing services. Like many of our nonprofit peers, we are constantly seeking additional resources to sustain our programs. A reduction in GIA funding would place an even greater financial burden on organizations already navigating the uncertainties of federal funding and other shrinking revenue streams.

The possibility of receiving less than the current level of city and county support is a significant concern. We respectfully oppose Resolution 25-186 and urge the City Council to maintain the current GIA funding level for FY27. Doing so will help ensure that nonprofits like ours can continue to serve Honolulu's most vulnerable residents with stability and impact.

Mahalo for your continued support.



July 22, 2025

Councilmember Val A. Okimoto, Chair
Committee on Budget
Honolulu City Council

Aloha Chair Okimoto and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Joni Chun, and I serve as the Executive Director of Susannah Wesley Community Center, a nonprofit based in Kalihi that has been serving the community for 125 years.

I'm writing in strong opposition to Resolution 25-186, which proposes reducing the annual Grants in Aid (GIA) funding cap from \$150,000 to \$100,000 per organization.

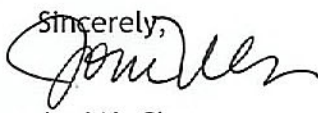
It's important to note that this would be the second reduction in recent years—the cap was previously \$250,000. A drop to \$100,000 represents a **60% overall reduction**, and that significantly limits what nonprofits can do for the communities we serve.

While GIA funds aren't meant to be ongoing operational support, they've played a critical role in helping community-based organizations like ours stabilize programs and stretch limited resources. With rising costs and other funding streams staying flat or even shrinking, GIA has helped us retain staff, respond to urgent needs, and deliver consistent services to our neighbors—especially our kūpuna, keiki, and working families.

Lowering the cap even further would make it harder to sustain essential programs. The \$150,000 level allows for more thoughtful, impactful planning. At \$100,000, we're forced to narrow our scope or pull together even more fragmented funding—something that's especially difficult for small and mid-sized nonprofits already doing more with less.

I respectfully urge the Council to maintain the current \$150,000 cap. Organizations rooted in communities like Kalihi are doing everything we can to meet the growing needs around us, and this support makes a meaningful difference.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joni N. Chun
Executive Director