

Testimony on BF38-(26) and BF38-(30) For January 26, 2016

The Realtors Association of Maui wishes to go on record in support of the Mayor's proposals to build temporary sanctuaries for our homeless population, as well as funding a new Homeless Programs Division in the Dept. of Housing and Human Concerns to specifically address this important issue.

Shelter is a fundamental human need. And, while this will be a somewhat costly endeavor, it will most likely prove to be even more expensive to allow the situation to continue to go unaddressed. The homeless population in our state has reached a crises level and solutions are long overdue. Homelessness is a crisis not only for the individual experiencing this condition but for the community as a whole. Having hundreds of individuals and families wandering through our community in this condition will have negative effects to us all.

The Mayor's proposal recognizes that to seriously address homelessness we need someone in government that is dedicated and focused on this situation 24/7. If County government is serious about addressing homelessness, then creating a division in the Dept. of Housing and Human Concerns is a minimum first step. Failing to fund these positions run the risk of sending the wrong message that we are not serious about the homelessness situation.

Our reoccurring housing shortages that that have had such devastating impacts on our families strongly suggest that the County must place much more attention to the problem of providing shelter that our residents can afford. Time is of the essence to create a separate Housing Department that will be fully engaged and focused on developing solutions to this ongoing problem.

The proposed sanctuary plan is a good first step that must be followed up by the expeditious development of transitional housing and ultimately a greatly increased development of housing that our working population can afford.

As outlined in the proposal before you, a dedicated Housing Dept. would be able to explore all available options to create adequate shelter and could partner with the private sector and private property owners to provide a supply of much needed affordable rental housing units.

In concluding my testimony, I would like to paraphrase Governor David Ige: Government needs to stop being an impediment to housing development. We look to you as County Council members to lead the way in providing shelter for our homeless and affordable housing for our working families.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony today.

Michael Trotto

Realtors Association of Maui

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