

## SUPPORT FOR HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PROGRAMS IN 2023 AND BEYOND

The COVID-19 pandemic put into perspective how close many of us and our loved ones are to housing insecurity or homelessness. Now is the time to make the commitments necessary to end people's experiences of homelessness and prevent others from falling out of housing.

Partners In Care (PIC), Bridging The Gap (BTG), and the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) have worked tirelessly over the years, including throughout the pandemic, to help our most vulnerable community members access services and housing. We know what works – programs such as those through our core homelessness services, including Street Outreach and Housing First, enable community organizations to assist people into housing and access needed wraparound supports.

The pandemic has only increased the amount of our residents who are having trouble making ends meet. Following the recession in 2009, we saw increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Hawaii over the next seven years. As we emerge from the pandemic era, we need to make sure that we take care of those already in need as well as proactively prepare for the fallout from the recession brought on by the pandemic to prevent additional people from falling into homelessness.

Emergency measures put in place to assist people over the last two years, including rental relief programs and eviction mediation, have proven beneficial in helping our community members but these programs have been winding down. Now more than ever, we need the Legislature to support sustained annual commitments to affordable housing and core homelessness and housing programs.

The 2022 State Legislative Session saw great wins for housing, including over \$600 million for Department of Hawaiian Homelands lot development and \$300 million for the Rental Housing Revolving Fund. Together we can build upon this momentum and commitment, making sure that people in all stages of their journey have access to not only a housing unit, but also rental assistance and supportive services that can help people get and stay housed.

We, the undersigned individuals and agencies, support efforts that will:

- Increase our housing stock, including housing specifically for people as they transition out of homelessness,
- Keep people housed and maintain existing services, which includes maintaining funding for core homelessness services and sustaining emergency rental assistance, and
- Provide quality services for vulnerable individuals, including increasing services and access for higher needs populations and paying workers a living wage.

Our community members are struggling. For homelessness and housing programs to best serve our residents, they need sustained, long-term funding commitments. As our elected leaders, you were elected because constituents recognize that you can represent everyone in your districts – both those who are housed as well as unhoused. We have the opportunity right now to make these commitments to bring people in off the streets and to provide the tools needed to keep people in housing. We urge the Legislature to sustain funding for homelessness and housing programs.

