



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY RE: RESO 15-17: REQUESTING THE MAYOR TO UNDERTAKE AN EXPERIMENTAL AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT UTILIZING SHIPPING CONTAINERS FOR HOUSING PURPOSES

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TO: Councilman Ron Menor, Chair, Councilman Brandon J. C. Elefante, Vice Chair and Members, Committee on Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: Tuesday, February 10, 2015; 9:00 am; Committee Meeting Room

Chair Menor, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Resolution 15-17, which would ask the mayor to develop a demonstration project using shipping containers for housing. I am Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison for 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 60 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, developmentally disabled, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable of the people in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of working on housing issues and solutions to homelessness. We strive to help people live in dignified circumstances and reach their full potential.

We are strong advocates for new creative ideas to solve our housing needs. We all know our need for affordable housing is severe. Catholic Charities Hawaii receives hundreds of calls each month from families that need affordable housing. Rents in Hawaii have increased by more than 45% since 2005. Hawaii rents exceed the national median by over 70%. To build the 13,000 rental units we need, new models are being created.

There is a lot of excitement in the community about renovating shipping containers and other models for creating lower cost housing. We especially congratulate the Council for moving forward on the creation of rules to allow ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units). We support the inclusion of containers in this initiative. We are not sure if a demonstration project is needed, however. We would hope that with the passage of rules that are flexible and user friendly, that vendors would themselves come up with "model containers", like model homes that interested homeowners could look at and consider for purchase. This initiative holds so much promise for the future of our families and seniors. If done right, and if it allows creative ideas like this to be included, it could create thousands of rental units. We support the commitment of your Committee to look for long term solutions to Oahu's rental housing needs and your efforts to ensure that ADUs do not just become another law on the books.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 373-0356 or bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.

MISC. COM. 121

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