



SUMMARY OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public hearing on the amended FY2018-2019 draft Annual Plan was held on March 6, 2018 on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and at two locations on Hawaii Island. During the 45-day public review period, four people submitted written comments. On the day of public hearing, of the 21 people who attended the public hearing, nine people provided oral testimony. The following is a summary of testimony on provisions of the draft PHA Annual Plan.

Deconcentration and Other Policies that Govern Eligibility, Selection, and Admission

One person commented that they agreed with the policy to limit the admission of more than one family member in the housing choice voucher program to only those added by birth, adoption, court awarded custody or hanai, when it would increase the subsidy to the family.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that they agreed with the amendment to shorten the time a housing choice voucher tenant is allowed to be temporarily absent from the unit from 120 to 60 days, taking into account valid medical issues and exceptions listed under the CFR.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that they agreed with the policy change in which the HPHA would notify families in the Housing Choice Voucher program of a change to the participant's voucher, based on family composition, up to 120 days before the end of the lease term rather than waiting for the next recertification.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that they agreed with the amendment that would change a voucher size at the end of the lease term when a family is requesting to downsize.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that they supported the policy to award a voucher to the family member who is awarded custody of the majority of the minor children or who has the majority of the days of custody.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that they agreed with the housing choice voucher policy amendment to require applicants with a criminal history to include the latest conviction date or arrest date.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.



Four people commented that they disagreed with the amendment to remove from the definition of “involuntarily displaced” those who are displaced by action of the housing owner beyond the applicant’s control and despite the applicant meeting all previously imposed conditions of occupancy, stating that the high demand for housing in Hawaii has encouraged landlords to take action to raise rents or sell, to the detriment and beyond the control of low-income tenants who are ultimately displaced as a result.

HPHA Response: The proposed rule change would align the HPHA with HUD’s definition of “involuntarily displaced”.

One person commented that they agreed with the policy to update the homeless preference to include those who are “housing ready” or verified to be in compliance with a social service plan.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that they agreed with adding a definition of “housing ready” to the administrative rules.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that there should not be a preference for veterans and their surviving spouses as there are other housing resources available, which they would likely prefer; and, veterans are often in need of other services to succeed in housing, which the HPHA does not provide.

HPHA Response: The HPHA believes that, with Hawaii’s large veteran population, this additional preference will enable the Agency to house a wide range of individuals in need.

Two people commented on the geographical to site-based waitlist policy change, one stating that they agree with the change, and one stating that if a waitlist policy change was to occur, they feel that a lot more detail will need to be included on what it means and what it will look like, as they feel many applicants don’t understand the waitlist as it currently stands.

HPHA Response: Prior to any amendment to the geographic waitlist policy is made, the HPHA will follow all Administrative Rule requirements, including conducting public hearings to collect the public’s thoughts, and will further provide educational materials and opportunities to those on the waitlist and in housing to ensure understanding of the new policy.

One person commented that refusing an offer due to an existing rental agreement should not be eliminated as a “good cause” reason as it could prevent public housing tenants who leave the program from obtaining housing because of a bad mark on their housing history.

HPHA Response: The change would align with HUD regulations, which does not consider this a “good cause” reason to refuse the unit.



Five people commented on the suggested policy to allow tenants a second year to fully comply with the community service requirement if they did not make the hours the prior year. The comments varied on this topic, with some feeling that community service requirements should be applied to all HUD subsidized programs or that HPHA needs to enforce the policy that already exists. Other commenters felt that the policy should limit the requirement to half the amount for those working part-time, that a new enforcement policy should erase prior infractions and allow the tenants to start off fresh, and that there should be a wider range of allowable community service opportunities to enable compliance.

HPHA Response: The proposed policy is in compliance with HUD's regulations on community service. The HPHA will continue to educate its tenants on the community service policy and work with its managers to ensure adequate opportunity is provided for tenants to fulfill this requirement.

Four people commented on the policy to create an incentive transfer policy for those with perfect tenant histories over a three-year period, with many feeling that individuals should not be rewarded for something they are already required to do, further stating that they foresee the unintended consequence of this policy to be the stigmatization of those not in the desirable properties. Two commenters also voiced that the existing rules of the rental agreement need to be enforced and those who do not pay their rent should be evicted.

HPHA Response: The HPHA revised the proposed policy amendment to read: "Assess the feasibility of the tenants transfer policy..." as this topic needs further discussion and assessment.

Four people commented on the occupancy guideline proposal to assign one bedroom for every two family members only, stating that gender needs to be taken into consideration, especially when there are minors in the household.

HPHA Response: The HPHA anticipates federal support to decrease in the coming years. This policy change will allow the Agency to better assist more individuals.

Three people commented on the "schedule of charges" policy, stating that if a tenant is being charged for the time maintenance spent fixing the issue, then the Authority should be providing skilled workers rather than unskilled labor who may do a poor job. Another commenter felt that accidents should not be charged.

HPHA Response: All units are renovated and/or repaired prior to any new admission into a unit. The policy change does not prevent a tenant from challenging a maintenance charge if they feel that they were improperly billed for time or material cost.

One person commented in support of adding the updated VAWA policy to the administrative rules.



HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented more information needed to be provided about the proposed individual relief from excess utilities.

HPHA Response: The HPHA intends to inform all tenants of the policy change for individual relief/

Rent Determination

One person commented that they agreed with increasing the housing choice voucher program minimum rent.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the support of the testifier.

One person commented that interim increase and decrease policy for the housing choice voucher program should include an automatic enrollment into the FSS program when the rent increases, as it will incentivize the family instead of penalize.

HPHA Response: As the FSS program is an option program, the HPHA cannot mandate tenants to participate. The HPHA will look into raising the monthly pay increase needed to increase the rent owed as a means to continue incentivizing voucher holders to succeed professionally.

Asset Management

One tenant commented that five thirty-year old trees and a hibiscus bush were removed from their AMP last year, despite being healthy, and ten trees from another location. The commenter stated that planting trees would be an enormous contribution to our oxygen supply.

HPHA Response: All trees on HPHA properties are assessed based on the health and safety of the trees, the surrounding areas, tenants, and REAC requirements prior any removal occurring. The HPHA will continue to abide by HUD requirements and tenant safety when determining whether a tree, bush, or other plant life may remain on site.

Safety and Crime Prevention

One person commented that security needs to better enforce the rules of the project.

HPHA Response: The HPHA agrees that the securities primary obligation is to maintain the safety of the projects they patrol, which includes to enforcement of the rules. The HPHA encourages tenants to speak up when the security is not meeting their responsibilities.

Non-Smoking Policy

One person commented that they don't believe the Authority has jurisdiction over the public sidewalk outside the project, so a twenty-five-foot distance would not be effective, further stating that a non-smoking policy should be applied to



maintenance and other workers who come onto the project, and that there should be established smoking areas.

HPHA Response: The amendment would align the HPHA with HUD's smoking policy requirements.

Public Outreach

Two people commented that HPHA needs to better advertise meetings and policy changes so tenants are able to understand the policies and their rights, as well as be properly informed on what meetings are taking place. It was suggested that copies of documents should be provided in the rent inserts or at the meetings.

HPHA Response: The HPHA appreciates the testifier's comments and will continue to work to improve the way in which it educates and informs its tenants. The HPHA welcomes all thoughts and suggestions on this issue.

Limited English Proficiency

One person commented that individuals should not be precluded from sharing their thoughts because of their limited English skills, stating that in instances where meetings are being taped, testifiers should be able to speak in the language they are most comfortable in, and the Authority can translate it later.

HPHA Response: The HPHA agrees with the testifier, and makes every effort to provide equal access and opportunity to its tenants and the public. The HPHA welcomes all thoughts and suggestions on this issue.