



# INTERFAITH

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## Communities In Action

**Re: Bill 110**

April 16, 2018

Mayor Harry Kim  
Members of the Hawai'i County Council

Respected friends:

We greet you as representatives of faith communities living, working, and worshiping in East Hawai'i: Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Baha'i, Unitarian Universalists. Members of our faith communities teach in our schools, staff the counters of our shops, build our homes, and grow our food. We are deeply concerned for the welfare of our neighbors, and so we unite through Interfaith Communities in Action.

We are deeply concerned at the reduction in funding for homeless families and individuals contained in the current budget proposal before the Council.

In the budget for fiscal year (FY) 2016-17, the County allocated \$276,375.00 to programs that provide shelter and sustenance to homeless people. In the last budget, FY 2017-18, the funding dropped by 61% to \$106,125. In the proposal before you for FY 2018-19, the funding declines to \$65,437.50. That is less than one quarter of what it had been two years ago.

Less than one quarter – and we are told that addressing the needs of the homeless is a priority for this administration. The numbers say otherwise.

Friends, these funding levels represent real suffering. There will be cuts in services. There will be fewer available beds. There will be more people camping in the woods or sheltering from the rain in doorways.

The proposals of Mayor Caldwell in Honolulu, relying on police to move people from one place to another, serve only to perpetuate the problem and deepen the suffering. People homeless because of an illness or loss of a job will face the additional burden of prosecution and a criminal record. They will have fewer opportunities for employment.

And because people homeless as children tend to be homeless when they have children as well, it will perpetuate a cycle of suffering.

The Buddha declared compassion to be the chief virtue of human life. The ancient Hebrew Scriptures required provision for the poor. Jesus, who lived as homeless during his ministry, called love for neighbor a commandment second only to love for God.

On this island of Hawai'i, in this land of aloha, we urge you to restore funding for agencies serving the homeless, and to increase it so that we have some opportunity to interrupt the cycle and find safe shelter for all our island's residents as soon as may be.

We offer our prayers for you and your families, and that you may find the wisdom you need to choose well as you serve.

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Catherine Ishida  
President, ICIA  
Unitarian Universalists of Puna



Rev. Eric Anderson  
Vice President, ICIA  
Pastor, Church of the Holy Cross

ICIA Steering Committee:

- Rev. Paul Normann , Secretary, ICIA (Amida Hawai'i)
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<http://interfaithhawaii.org>