

Eduardo Hernandez
Testimony to the Board of Directors of the
Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation

November 10, 2020

Re: Executive Director's Report – Hawaii Rent Relief and Housing Assistance Program

Via E-mail to: esa.i.pablo@hawaii.gov

Aloha to the staff and members of the HHFDC Board of Directors:

According to the August 13 Regular Meeting Minutes of this Board, Executive Director Iseri-Matsubara stated there would be \$100 million for the establishment of the Rent Relief and Housing Assistance Program. Chief Planner Janice Takahashi had been working with intermediaries Catholic Charities and Aloha United Way. In July, Executive Director Iseri-Matsubara signed a contract for more than \$90,000 with Anthology Marketing Inc to roll out the program with media, public relations and crisis management services. This same firm had previously been hired by the City and County of Honolulu to roll out their rent relief program.

At the August 13 meeting Vice Chair Mackler recognized it would take a lot of work and expertise to expend these funds as planned and rightly queried whether HHFDC would be hiring additional staff to realize the goals of this program. Executive Director Iseri-Matsubara said that would not be possible given the short time frame.

With the expertise of Anthology Marketing and their then ongoing similar work on behalf of the City and County of Honolulu, the expertise of HHFDC staff and the staffs of Catholic Charities and Aloha United Way, why would anyone think this program could actually work as planned? In fact, Director Fukumoto had concerns and asked about any penalties for not getting all the monies out. Executive Director Iseri-Matsubara replied that **"the penalty would be that the community does not get served and Hawaii loses that resource."**

Instead of taking responsibility for this disastrous outcome that is coming to pass, the Governor and the staff of this agency have blamed the public. The public was provided with no tools, resources or information to avail themselves of this program, guide them through the process, inform them about their status through the application period. **Executive Director Iseri-Matsubara told us "the community does not get served and Hawaii loses that resource."**

As of November 5th, less than \$27 million has been approved for payment through this program. The public has no idea what is happening, because all decisions and discussions have been held in executive/closed sessions. Where is the transparency? Where is the accountability? Where is the confidence that this staff is able to do the essential work for those in need?

The public deserves to know what is happening. Are extra staff being hired? Why would they be able to be effective now, if in August, we were told there wasn't enough time. What has changed?

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

