

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**From:** Natural-Lee Garcia <shelnteegarcia@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 9, 2020 8:10 AM

**To:** Pablo, Esa J <esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written testimony for State rental relief program

Aloha Esa,

Here is my written testimony on the disappointment of this program. I believe the program was rolled out September 9th. That very day I submitted all paperwork in it's entirety. Upon checking my application status; nothing can be found. This is so frustrating being that it takes time to gather these documents and fill out necessary paperwork, only to have it mysteriously disappear.

My husband and I have both been out of work since March and paying rent has been a huge struggle; especially when you have a landlord that wants all of his money (he has about 11 rentals).

Some sort of follow up needs to be done with all applications, so we know how to proceed going forward.

Thank you for your time,

Another struggling Ohana on Kaua'i

Natural-Lee Garcia and Ohana

808-645-1577

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

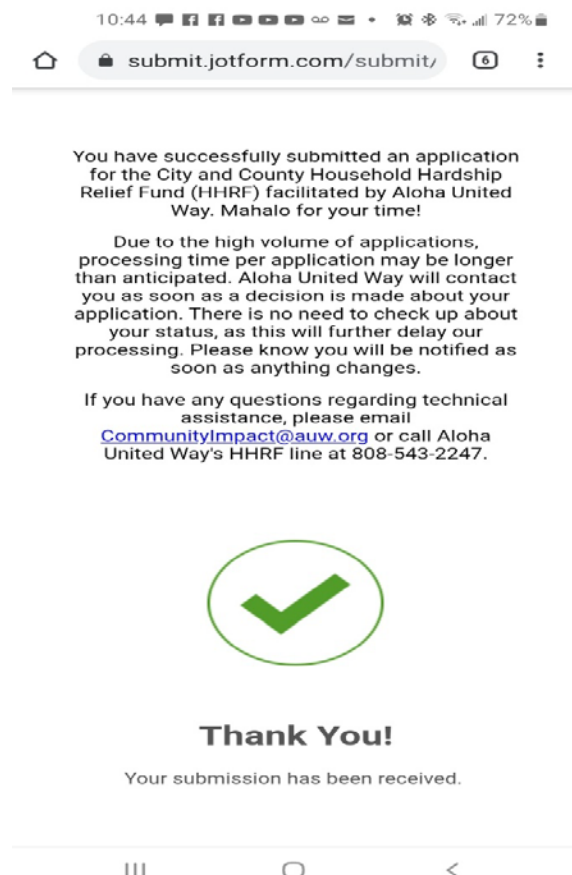
**From:** Bryan Gardin <bryangardin@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:55 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] AUW Rental Assistance

Aloha to all concerned

My name is Bryan Gardin. I am the head of household for a family of seven. I first applied to the Aloha United Way Rental relief on September 9 2020. I initially spoke with the auw over the phone. I then applied online and submitted all documents. I then applied for the month of October 15 2020. I am self employed ride share driver in which the covid 19 shutdowns greatly affected my income. My family is on the verge of eviction with no other housing options. Please help us resolve our issues with no contact from the state. I am not sure if my application was even recieved.

Mahalo  
Bryan Gardin

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)



**December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted**

**From:** Phoutthasack FUMIKO <fumikopp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:37 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RRHF

Aloha

I had submitted my applications [on Sep 11](#) and still waiting for approve.

No one get back to me.

My financial situation is very critical right now.

Please check the status.

I would much appreciate your quick reply.

My name is Fumiko Phoutthasack

Last 4 of SSN is 8582

Application Submit on 9/11/20

Phone [808-389-1538](tel:808-389-1538)

Fumiko Phoutthasack

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

From: Maile-Lani Acasia <maile.acasia@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:42 PM  
To: Pablo, Esa J <esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov>  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony

Aloha,

My name is Maile-Lani Acasia. I am here to share my testimony with you about the rent relief program I had applied for back in August. My family was impacted by the Covid, my husband who was our main source of income, our bread winner, had lost his job due to Covid. Losing an income was hard because though I did work out hours were being cut drastically. When the news came out saying the rent relief program was going to help with rent from Sept - December I just on the chance to apply. I got all my paper works together filled out the online application and recieved a confirmation that my application was sent. I thought everything was going to be great, days passed, then weeks, then months and that's where I started to worry. I was never late on my bills and I didn't wanna start now. I called customer service many times very hard to get through, called for days til I finally was able to reach someone. When I finally talked to the person she had trouble locating my application because of all the softwares I guess they use. She was clueless to what has happening with the application process so she said just be patient someone will call you. Another month rolled by and no one called, no one emailed, so I called again it was hard to get through, so I did the texting customer service to check the status of my application again, it's now November, I finally get through and again no new information just "you have to be patient" and that was the end of the conversation. It is now December and I have not heart anything back from Aloha United Way. I knew it would be a process and I was willing to be patient but when it comes months later and no communication it becomes frustrating. Also when applying no one told me you had to put in an application each month I thought it was a one time application but no you had to do it each month and they had closed the applications. I wasn't able to put in apps for Oct-Dec. I am still yet to hear from someone from AUW. It's become scary and frustrating for my family. I have two boys age 1 & 5 I do not want to raise them on the beach or in a shelter especially during this time. I feel like such a failure to them my heart hurts constantly. As a mother I will keep pushing to survive and take care my family even if that's sacrificing my time raising my kids to provide for them. This year just needs to end. I'm over it.

Thank you for listening.

Maile-Lani Acasia

Sent from my iPhone

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**From:** Lisa Murphy <[lisamurphy84@gmail.com](mailto:lisamurphy84@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:09:01 AM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Rent Relief

Aloha,

I would like to submit information to be discussed at the board meeting.

There are major inequalities in the Rent Relief acts. My family lost nearly half of our income overnight back in March due to Covid. We immediately cut everything except absolute necessities from our budget and borrowing money to make up our rent. In September, I applied for Rent Relief through Catholic Charities. They did not get back to me for 2.5 months. Then they told me that they cannot help with rent I have already paid - they said if I had just not paid my rent, then they would have back paid all the unpaid rent back to March. They contacted me in December and said the program only goes through December. I am now penalized by the program for paying my rent - even though it was not really money I had to spend due to job loss. They also admitted that if they would have contacted me right after I submitted my application, they would have paid my October, November, and December rent (plus any unpaid rent from previous months) - but due to THEIR DELAY, I am now penalized. I am asking that you please allow Catholic Charities to grant the money to residents that qualify based on income and job loss due to covid to be reimbursed for the rent that have paid. It is not fair that others benefit just because they knew how the system worked (they knew not to pay their rent). I was trying to do the right thing because I know my landlord has bills and I have a contract to pay them. We also did not qualify for UI or PUA because the lost income was a 2nd job.

I am asking that you please update the Rent Relief Policy to allow Catholic Charities to reimburse paid rent for the months that the applicant qualified (similar to what Hawaii County did). Please stop rolling out new programs when the past programs have not been fixed. The people that fell through the cracks in the previous program will continue to fall through the cracks. Creating new programs for the next year is great, but that does not do anything for the families that are still trying to recover from 2020. Especially if that family has been proactive and taken additional jobs to make up their income - they will not qualify for new programs. They are still suffering from 2020 and I am asking that you make the program fair. Please grant the people who have applied to this program the money for paid rent.

Thank you for your time.  
Lisa Murphy

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**From:** Micheal Barlesi <[barlesimike@me.com](mailto:barlesimike@me.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:19:15 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] About the housing rent relief program

Aloha, my names Michael Barlesi. I applied for the rental relief program on September 10th and never got a call or email in return. I did call one time and they said for me to call a different group for the help, but as you can see in the picture I sent, I was approved for United way. I have been struggling for three months on rent, and I am still waiting for my unemployment Peuc to be approved, but that's a different subject. Either way I have been struggling cause it's not only me, but I have a son too to take care of. Hopefully this testimonial will help. Mahalo Mike



You have successfully submitted an application for the City and County Household Hardship Relief Fund (HHRF) facilitated by Aloha United Way. Mahalo for your time!

Due to the high volume of applications, processing time per application may be longer than anticipated. Aloha United Way will contact you as soon as a decision is made about your application. There is no need to check up about your status, as this will further delay our processing. Please know you will be notified as soon as anything changes.

If you have any questions regarding technical assistance, please email [CommunityImpact@auw.org](mailto:CommunityImpact@auw.org) or call Aloha United Way's HHRF line at 808-543-2247.



### Thank You!

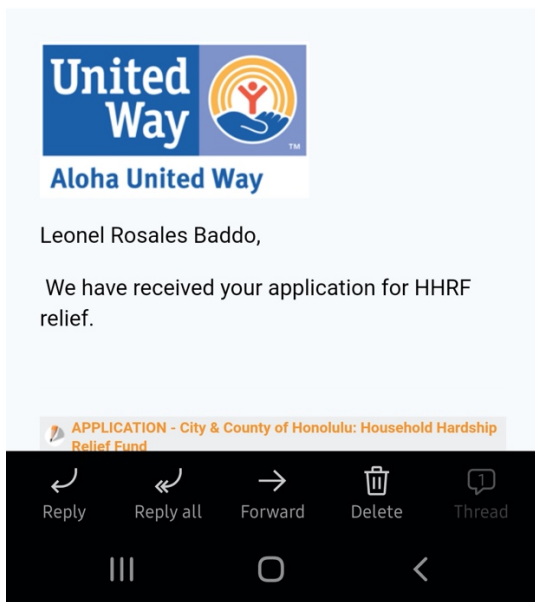
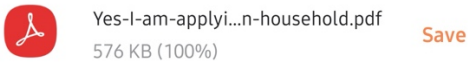
Your submission has been received.

**December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted**

**From:** leonelbaddo <[leonelbaddo@gmail.com](mailto:leonelbaddo@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 2:10 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>  
**Subject:**

Aloha,

I applied for mortgage assistance on October 1st or 3rd and got an email saying it was accepted. I called around November and was told just wait. Till this day, nothing! Millions in cares act fund but no where to be seen for home owners like me that was furloughed since MARCH. They can hire ppl from the mainland for call center but can't hire an alternative agency that can help with mortgage assistance?



Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**From:** Ivyella imperial <[ivizzy1107@gmail.com](mailto:ivizzy1107@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 10:08:51 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony of Rent Assistance (AUW)

We applied in September and that was when me and my husband on layoff and my inlaws have cut hours (2days a week of work) and they only reached us last week and ask us again for any paystubs and UI determination status. Because my father inlaw had more hours (3days a week) brother has 2 jobs but also cut hours they denied us because of that? My PEUC still pending till now and we're struggling to pay rent and bills and they said we're not qualified because of our income? Ridiculous!

Sent from my iPhone



## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**From:** Jessica Sills <[jsills75@gmail.com](mailto:jsills75@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 3:54 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RRHAP Feedback

My name is Jessica, I am a single mother of 3 wonderful children, living in an apartment complex in Mililani. When I first heard about the rent relief program, I jumped at the opportunity. I applied online via AUW, then later got an email instructing to resubmit my application through their website. After the second time applying, it took about a month and a half for me to receive a response. I was denied, saying the property I lived at didn't qualify for the program. It was a huge blow, especially since I am one of the thousands who are having problems with unemployment. If it were not for my sister pushing me to appeal the decision, I wouldn't have accepted the denial.

In November I filed an appeal and I ended up being approved for the months of October-December! I was overjoyed to hear the news. But it really got me thinking, how many people were denied in error & didn't think that an appeal was an option? Also, prior to this relief I had to borrow money to pay for my September rent. It made me wonder why I couldn't get credit for the month of September. If they would have inquired with my landlord, they would see that I didn't pay my September rent, until the end of October because I was afraid of becoming too far behind!

Mahalo for taking the time to read over my feedback. Mahalo for all your folks time in figuring out solutions for our community. I hope this gives you all some insight into what's going on with the processing. Stay safe!

Aloha,  
Jessica

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**From:** jvizmanos88 <[jvizmanos88@yahoo.com](mailto:jvizmanos88@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 2:47:00 PM  
**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Rental Assistance Relief Feedback

So I read that the state is seeking good and bad feedback regarding rental assistance. I applied for rental relief with AUW in the first or second week of September. I filled out the app and emailed all pertinent documents through email. Towards the end of September, I get an email saying to resubmit my app through the website due to the amount of apps receive. By doing that, I feel like I was placed in the back of the line for help. On the app, it asked what agency I would like help from. I just picked the only one I knew which was Salvation Army. Never heard anything since until last week. A lady from Alea Bridge emailed me saying they have my app I needed to turn in just a couple of more things which wasn't a problem.

I'm really glad that I heard something from someone. Just waiting for approval. It's almost the end of the year and I really at this point was just getting ready to be homeless. I've asked for help from family and wasn't going to do it anymore cause I owe too much. My frustration was the long wait time. Having to resubmit my app. I think they should've just accepted my app so that I didn't lose my place in the que. Also, I think they shouldn't have asked which agency to get help from. I'm sure it had to do with finances, but they (AUW) should have distributed the apps to agencies themselves who had it in their budget to help. Just like Unemployment they knew how much people were struggling they shouldve anticipated the amount of apps they were going to get and prepared themselves for it.

At this point, I just hope my patience paid off and my app will be approved for assistance.

Mahalo,  
Jennifer Pa

**December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted**

**From:** James Lee <[jylee213@gmail.com](mailto:jylee213@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 2:33 PM

**To:** Pablo, Esa J <[esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov](mailto:esa.j.pablo@hawaii.gov)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Aloha Esa Pablo,

My name is Johnny Lee and I am a resident of Oahu. I just wanted to share my personal experience with you regarding the Rent Relief & Housing Assistance Program.

I didn't really catch wind of the program till late October so I didn't get to take full advantage of it. I noticed most places like Hawai'i, Catholic Charities Hawai'i was not taking any new applications, so I applied for the HO'ĀLA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM on 10/24/2020 as they were still taking in applications.

I was finally approved on 11/09/2020 and was very excited. After a few days I submitted an email asking how long the wait would take and a few other questions. I did not receive a response so I called the following week and after being put on hold for 10 minutes I was able to speak to somebody.

I was told that they were severely behind schedule and there was no estimated date when the checks would get cut. Also the worker (I forgot her name as it's been almost a month now) that I should quickly submit for the month of December because they were not going to take any new applications after 11/18/2020.

So I rushed to submit for the month of December and it was finally approved on 11/12/2020. To this day I have not heard back nor have I been made aware that the payments were cut.

Overall in my eyes this program was a failure and did not provide any of the assistance that they claimed they would.

If you need any further information please let me know.

Mahalo,

Johnny Lee

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

Date: December 7, 2020

To: Esa Pablo, Secretary for The Board of Directors  
Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation

From: Eduardo Hernandez  
Resident and Voter in Hawaii House District 26 and Senate District 12

Re: **Public Testimony pursuant to HHFDC Agenda of December 11, 2020**  
This document is for public distribution to board members, all elected officials, the public and media immediately, pursuant to standard rules for open public meeting materials.

My testimony specifically addresses items indicated on the Agenda for HHFDC on 12/10/2020:

- [Instructions for testimony](#) – **ILLEGAL**
- [Agenda](#) – **PUBLIC TESTIMONY DENIED**
- [Executive Director Report](#) – **MISLEADING**

**Instructions for Testimony:** The instructions for public testimony to this meeting have been unchanging since March 2020. However, per multiple Supplementary Proclamations issued by Governor Ige regarding COVID-19 since May 5th, it has been and is, **the legal obligation of the HHFDC Board to: ...in good faith attempt to provide the public ...an opportunity to provide oral testimony.** Notwithstanding, the staff of HHFDC have never offered the opportunity to provide oral testimony to this Board, except in one case, and only under threat of arrest to the testifier (who maintained social distance and wore a mask).

HHFDC clearly has capacity and capability to conduct public statewide teleconferencing. ZOOM and TEAMS are currently used worldwide to engage members of the public. These technologies are a standard for HHFDC but, have not been offered in good faith for open public meetings of this Board of Directors.

**Agenda:** As described above, the staff of HHFDC have been obstructive in allowing public testimony. Even in the case when written testimony was submitted to this Board per the instructions of the HHFDC website, it required multiple follow up written and voice requests by the testifier for it to be disseminated to the public, as per the rules regarding dissemination of Board Meeting materials.

Without meaningful public testimony opportunities, HHFDC is effectively telling the public “You are not welcome here.” The agenda for Board meetings do not even list public testimony as an agenda item, nor when and how the Board considers public testimony during the meeting. Public testimony is integral to public policy. The Board and staff of HHFDC have lost opportunities to engage the public and this directly correlates to the failing and flailing Rent Relief Program.

## December 10, 2020 Board Meeting – Public Testimony Submitted

**Executive Director Report:** As regards the Rent Relief Program, the Executive Director has consistently mis-lead the public, and this Board through omission, false allegations and unsubstantiated comments. The record is clear. Madam Executive Director told this Board on **August 13<sup>th</sup>** that HHFDC would lead a \$100M effort to provide rent relief and related services. When asked if she would hire additional staff, the answer was “no.” When asked what the penalty would be for failure to spend the money, the answer was: “...**the community does not get served and Hawaii loses that resource.**”

One has to wonder, why HHFDC was even tasked with the administration of the Rent Relief program? In a [recent radio broadcast](#), Madam Executive Director led the public to believe that perhaps HHFDC is not up to the challenge of managing rental relief, acknowledging this [agency has no experience in this regard](#). Moreover, the public is left to wonder if this program was deliberately designed to fail so that funds could be siphoned to the Unemployment Trust Fund on December 28<sup>th</sup>.

As of this writing, less than \$43M has been spent for direct rent relief, resulting in an expense ratio of approximately 40% for every dollar spent, given that Madam Executive Director has indicated that \$16M of the \$100M fund was spent for program administration.

There has been no accounting provided to the public, although complete financial reports are to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature on a monthly basis and a final report due not later than January 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Conclusion** – Despite, having the highest costs for housing in the nation, and leading the nation in homelessness and risk of homelessness, the rent relief program was launched with poor training to nonprofit partners, poor guidance to applicants, and insufficient guidance, tools or resources to landlords. Notwithstanding, Madam Executive Director in her public comments about rent relief has chosen to blame applicants, landlords and the nonprofit partners for being non-responsive, submitting incomplete applications or other applications for CARES housing resources. If it were the vast minority of applications that were slipping through the cracks, that might be a reasonable explanation. But if just over half of funds have not been spent to date, it is clear we’re looking at systemic failure.

There is nothing inherently wrong with failure, if there is a demonstrated effort to learn from it and improve. Not learning from failure is the real problem. Not taking responsibility and instead shuffling blame off to others is the real problem. Not listening to the people in need is the real problem. If future CARES type funding were made available to Hawaii to prevent homelessness, HHFDC is not the agency capable of administering any follow-on version of this program.

I respectfully request that this testimony be included with the agency’s final report due by January 20, 2021.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

