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Hawaii Advocates Win Revenue for Rental Housing Trust Fund

by Michael Anderson // 2015, Summer



Hawaii affordable housing and homeless advocates won a commitment of \$40 million in bond financing for the Rental Housing Trust Fund in the FY2016 state budget negotiations. This is significantly more than the legislature has approved in recent years. The Rental Housing Trust Fund was created in 1992 and receives a 50% of revenues from the state’s conveyance tax up to \$38 million a year. As of 2014, the Fund has helped support more than 5,000 rental homes throughout Hawaii.

Several advocacy groups have been collaborating through PHOCUSED (Protecting Hawaii’s Ohana, Children, Under-served, Elderly and Disabled). Ohana means family in the Hawaiian language. Catholic Charities Hawaii, Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, EAH Housing, FACE Hawaii (Faith Action for Community Equity) and many others have worked intensely to increase the state’s commitment to investing in affordable housing and homelessness. *“You’d be surprised how many people are just kind of on that tipping point, where all it takes is one small, unexpected emergency to tip them over the edge where they’re at risk of losing their home.”* Observed Scott Morishige, Executive Director of PHOCUSED.

Over the past two legislative sessions, coalitions have formed around specific substantive issues, such as the increase in minimum wage and increases in funding for affordable housing and homeless efforts. Success for these coalitions has been tied to a diverse, broad-based membership working together to support common interests and priorities. In September 2014, PHOCUSED, Hawaii Appleseed and Catholic Charities

HAWAII'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

- Hawaii has the most expensive housing in the country, at more than twice the national average. (#1)
- For every 10 extremely low-income families, only 3 units are available and affordable.
- Honolulu Fair Market Rents: 2 bedroom apartment. \$1,810. Fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Honolulu. 67% increase between 2005 and 2015.
- #1 Rate of homelessness among the states.

TAKE ACTION

Support the Rental Housing Trust Fund

The Rental Housing Trust Fund (RHTF) creates affordable rental housing through low-interest loans or grants for development.

- 20,215 housing units are needed for very low-income renters households or below.
- Since its creation, the RHTF has created more than 5,000 units in 64 projects.
- Nearly all serve very low-income households (<40% of the area median income).
- Close to half of RHTF units are occupied by extremely low-income households (<30% AMI).

The Rental Housing Trust Fund stimulates Hawaii's economy.

- \$100 million General obligation bonds for the RHTF
- 800 Permanent affordable housing units
- 266 to 359 Direct construction jobs
- 670 to 714 Indirect jobs

Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice | hiappleseed.org/housing

Hawaii convened an Advocacy Conference as a step to better aligning diverse coalitions across Hawaii. This was followed with a Social Advocacy Forum in January 2015.

In March 2015, PHOCUSED held a Social Advocacy Day to strengthen the existing informal network of advocacy coalitions by providing opportunities for coalition members to meet with legislators and share their voices at the State Capitol. Partners in Care, Waikiki Health, Pacific Alliance to Stop Slavery, Hawaii Primary Care Association, Community Health Outreach Work to Prevent HIV/AIDS, Child & Family Services, Hawaiian Community Assets, COFA CAN, and others raised awareness about the need for affordable housing and funding for homeless services.

The Hawaii Rental Housing Trust Fund is administered by the Hawaii Housing Development and Finance Corporation. The Rental Housing Trust Fund provides low-interest loans or grants for the development, pre-development, construction, acquisition, preservation, and substantial rehabilitation of affordable rental housing units. Eligible applicants include qualified nonprofit and for-profit corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, and government agencies. Developments with low-income housing credits, HUD funding or funding from the Department of Agriculture Rural Development are given a priority when at least half of the available units are for households with incomes at or below eighty per cent of the median family income and at least five per cent of the available units serve households with incomes at or below thirty per cent of the median family income. The remaining units may serve households earning no more than the median family income. Priority is also given to mixed-income rental developments or units in a mixed-income rental project where all of the available units are for persons and families with incomes at or below one hundred forty per cent of the median family income.

Contact: Scott Morishige, ED of PHOCUSED <http://phocused-hawaii.org/>.

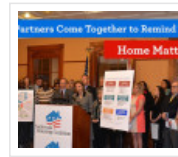


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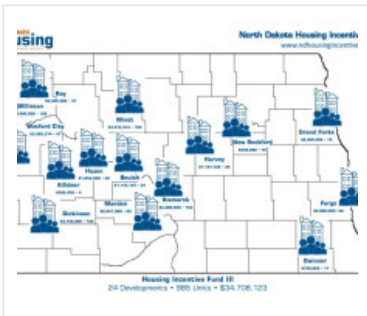


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Florida Housing Advocates Protect Funding for the State Housing Trust Fund

Hawaii Advocates Win Revenue for Rental Housing Trust Fund



North Dakota Increases Investment in HIF

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