



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

STATE OF HAWAII  
STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**August 26, 2020**

**FROM:** Rep. Amy Perruso, Hawai'i State House of Representatives

**RE:** Support for ALEA Bridge

Aloha,

I, Rep. Amy Perruso, am pleased to offer my strong support for ALEA Bridge, which provides targeted services for persons experiencing chronic homelessness and suffering from severe mental illness in Central O'ahu. ALEA Bridge delivers an array of services to economically disadvantaged individuals and families, including assessing medical and psychiatric needs, developing case management strategies, implementing treatment and housing and shelter plans, and more. We need more organizations like ALEA Bridge that embrace effective collaboration to address our most critical social issues.

Hawai'i is experiencing an increased number of unsheltered and chronically homeless individuals. This is not only evident in the metro Honolulu area, but also in rural neighborhoods across O'ahu. Mental illness and substance abuse continue to disproportionately impact our houseless community, and often correspond with resistance to services. ALEA Bridge employs evidence-based practices to support families in need through assertive outreach and flexible treatment plans. Once clients are stabilized, the nonprofit offers services to promote long-term health and well-being, with the overall goal of creating a pathway toward housing.

The need for innovative programs and partnerships to address our community's houseless crisis could not be more acute. Hawai'i continues to face one of the highest rates of homelessness in the country. Recently, an analysis by Honolulu's chief medical examiner, Christopher Happy, revealed that 373 homeless individuals died on O'ahu from 2014-2018, with their average age of death reported to be just under 53 years, approximately 30 years shorter than our state's overall life expectancy. Moreover, about 30 percent of those deaths resulted from complications related to drug use (Hawai'i's drug-related death rate for the general population is only around 14 percent), according to the National Center for Health Statistics, while roughly 30 percent of deaths resulted from different diseases.

These statistics demonstrate the urgency of providing outreach to houseless individuals and prioritizing their service needs. Given ALEA Bridge's impressive track record of connecting chronically homeless persons with coordinated systems of care, I strongly endorse their efforts and request for assistance.

Sincerely,

*Amy Perruso*