

COMMENTS OF ROBERT N.E. PIPER, ESQ., MBA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
HONOLULU COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC. (HCAP)
TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS -
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES (OCS)
ON THE
FFY 2016 AND 2017 COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)
HAWAII STATE APPLICATION AND PLAN
JULY 23, 2015

My name is Robert N.E. Piper, Executive Director of Honolulu Community Action Program, Inc. (HCAP), and I am pleased to submit these written comments in support of the State of Hawaii's Office of Community Services' Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) State Application and Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017.

HCAP is the designated community action agency for the island of Oahu and an eligible entity as defined in the federal CSBG Act, and has been proudly serving the communities of Oahu since 1965. HCAP's mission of "POI: Providing Opportunities and Inspiration to enable low-income individuals or families to achieve self-reliance" is very deeply rooted in its responsiveness to the community and its needs. It is our belief and philosophy that no individual should be denied the opportunity to share and contribute fully - to the best of his or her capabilities - in the social and economic well-being and prosperity of our society. As such, HCAP fully supports the CSBG promise that strong community action is vital in bringing relief, hope, and inspiration to those in need throughout the community.

HCAP offers many programs and services to alleviate the social, emotional and economic stress associated with poverty, in order to assist individuals or families to achieve self-reliance. Annually, HCAP services impact over 20,000 low-income individuals and families on Oahu through programs and services in six major areas: Early Childhood; Employment; Education; Economic Development; Emergency and Transitional Programs; and Community Development and Advocacy. HCAP provides these programs and services at over 100 sites throughout Oahu, with annual support and revenue of \$21 million, and a staff of 315 dedicated and passionate employees.

HCAP strives to provide quality and relevant programs and services to those who need them – where they need them. Through long-established connections in their communities, HCAP's District Service Centers and program sites are knowledgeable about the characteristics of their respective districts, available services and resources, and current local issues. With the strong

bonds that form between our clients and staff, our clients are able to work with staff to set goals and implement plans to realize their goals.

In addition to the staff/client connection, HCAP utilizes District Advisory Councils to serve as a forum for low-income residents to discuss poverty-related issues and to voice their needs, concerns, and opinions about HCAP programs and other matters. Perhaps most importantly, each District Service Center Advisory Council elects a HCAP Board Representative to sit on the HCAP Board of Directors. The Head Start Policy Council provides similar structure and representation. This representation on the Board is an integral feature of community action agencies unique tri-partite structure, whereby the public, private, and resident sectors all have an equal voice in the direction of the agency.

CSBG provides the funding that allows HCAP to provide the programs and services to our communities in need, and also provides the community action agencies the administrative support necessary to implement these essential programs. The funding complements and/or supplements other diverse and important programs, which are often not fully funded or are unable to budget sufficiently for administrative and overhead expenses. These programs include our emergency and crisis stabilization services, employment and job training programs, early childhood education, and other community building initiatives. CSBG funding also helps to expand the outreach and accessibility of these services to a wider target population and a broader demographic.

Specifically, some of the programs supported by CSBG funding are as follows:

- Senior Community Service Employment Program;
- The Hā Initiative: Creative STEM After-School Program;
- Youth Services Program;
- Hawaii Adult Community School Diploma Program;
- Kumuhonua Transitional Living Center Program;
- Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance Program
- Weatherization Assistance Program;
- HCAP Head Start Program;
- Na Lima Hana Employment Core Services Program;
- Free Tax Assistance Program;
- District Service Center Programs.

Without this core and vital funding, HCAP's menu of programming would be reduced considerably and achieving our mission would not be possible.

In Federal Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017, HCAP will continue to work collaboratively with OCS and with its sister community action agencies on Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island to provide

quality services and anti-poverty programs to low-income families and communities throughout the state. We support, and will work diligently to achieve, the mission and goals of the CSBG program in Hawaii as described in the proposed State Plan.

In closing, I would like to commend and thank the Office of Community Services for its dedication and efforts to eliminate poverty in our State. I thank OCS Executive Director Rona Suzuki and her staff for their partnership and participation with HCAP and our sister community action agencies. This collaboration between the Office of Community Services and the community action agencies has been instrumental in developing the State Plan, and we are looking forward to working together to achieve our shared goals.