



PARTNERS IN CARE

OAHU'S CONTINUUM OF CARE

Position Statement on Laws, Policies, and Practices that Unfairly Punish People Who Are Homeless and Are Counterproductive to Addressing Homelessness

Partners in Care (PIC) is a coalition of Oahu's homeless service providers, government representatives and community stakeholders working together in partnership to end homelessness. PIC is pursuing its mission by:

- developing and maintaining a collaborative process that relies on information-sharing and data-analysis to match those experiencing homelessness with the services they need to make more efficient use of available resources;
- ensuring that homeless persons are treated with dignity and care; and
- advocating for policies that promote a comprehensive, long-term approach to solving homelessness.

As such, PIC opposes laws, policies, and practices that:

- disrupt the footholds of stability necessary for those experiencing homelessness to secure housing and economic security;
- punish people experiencing homelessness for engaging in activities that are necessary due to their state of homelessness; and
- divert resources away from proven-effective, long-term solutions to homelessness in favor of approaches that are either ineffectual or counterproductive.

In particular, in the absence of sufficient and adequate resources—such as shelter, public bathrooms, and social services—PIC opposes laws, policies and practices imposing fines, confiscating property, or exacting other forms of punishment for the following activities: sleeping or camping in public; loitering loafing, and vagrancy; living in vehicles; panhandling; and public urination and defecation. With respect to unaccompanied homeless youth, PIC opposes laws, policies, and practices that result in the arrest (and its associated collateral consequences) for running away from what the youth perceive to be an unsafe or unhealthy environment.

In place of laws, policies, and practices that are punitive toward those experiencing homelessness, and that are counterproductive to addressing Hawai'i's homelessness crisis, PIC support the adoption of the following:

Laws, policies and practices that are designed to improve interactions between law enforcement/government actors and homeless or mentally ill people. For example, PIC supports Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), a pre-arrest diversion program that grants police officers the discretionary authority to redirect low-level offenders—typically drug-involved and homeless—to case managers if they choose to do so. Other examples include Community Courts and Jail Diversion programs, which are similar in concept to LEAD, but further downstream, connecting defendants to services that address the underlying causes of the relatively minor offenses for which they have been charged.

Policies for cleaning public places that do not displace homeless people from public lands, nor result in the destruction of their belongings, when there is no adequate housing alternative.

Plans for prisons, jails, hospitals, mental health care facilities, and foster care systems to discharge people from those institutions or systems of care directly into housing with supportive services as necessary.

Laws, policies and practices that prioritize interventions and investments that address the root causes of homelessness by efficiently connecting people who are homeless with effective services and adequate housing. Examples include funding for outreach, Rapid Rehousing, Housing First, Permanent Supportive Housing and low-income housing.