



A NEW DAY IN HAWAII

Housing, Families, and Human Services

Investing in People, Saving Money and Lives

For decades, Hawaii was a leader in attending to the needs of our people and families, with innovative policies and practices, low poverty rates, and a pervasive sense of community.

Recent funding cuts and the withholding of funds to crucial programs in health and human services have changed the landscape for many who are in distress.

Too many families in Hawaii are living in a crisis situation. I've been listening to community leaders, recipients of health and social services, nonprofit providers and others throughout the islands, and I know we can turn things around and restore Hawaii's national reputation as a state that really cares for its citizens.

We need to renew our investment in people and programs to end cycles of poverty, prevent family violence, nurture and sustain physical and social health, address the myriad of physical and social barriers facing the disabled, and reduce homelessness.

We can improve access to services, better integrate existing services, achieve better quality and effectiveness of service delivery, and make efficient use of tax dollars through improved systems within government and stronger partnerships with the nonprofit sector at no extra cost to the community. Most immediately, we can maximize and leverage federal dollars to achieve these objectives.

Solving big problems like poverty is not simple—and bringing the community together to work on solutions is critical. Children may have parents in prison; they may have physical or mental health challenges; they may be struggling in school; they may be homeless. They don't need a confusing array of services working separate and apart from each other. They need a coordinated, collaborative, and comprehensive direction. And we need to ensure communities are listened to and involved in the care of their own members. All Hawaii needs to stand together—businesses, nonprofits, state employees, faith-based organizations, neighborhood organizations, cultural groups, and everyday people.

In our vision of Hawaii, The Aloha State, no one is left behind.

Guiding Principles: Housing, Families and Human Services

- Address financial, language, geographic, physical, social, and other barriers to services
- Invest in preventive services
- Provide hands up, not just handouts
- Maximize and leverage every federal dollar
- Form strong partnerships with the nonprofit sector
- Monitor and ensure service quality
- Prioritize efficiency in procurement and billing
- Apply a holistic approach to human needs—break down silos

ACCESS FEDERAL DOLLARS AND REBUILD THE SAFETY NET

Nearly \$6 million for Hawaii's Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center was recently stalled because the state would not provide \$150,000 in matching funds. This lack of urgency needs to end so we can rebuild the safety net and get dollars churning in our economy. Congress recently provided \$86 million to maintain current Medicaid services which can buy us time to restructure our program. Besides federal funding, we can use the bonding authority of the state to improve information systems to improve efficiency. We need to be proactive in all areas so we can stave off hunger and poverty, curb domestic violence and substance abuse, and provide services for the most vulnerable in our society.

BUILD WORKFORCE HOUSING THROUGH PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

We can build housing that working people can actually afford using the same public-private model I developed in Congress, which produced thousands of high quality, energy-efficient units for military families here in our islands and fifty years of jobs for local construction workers. We can create similar partnerships for our own residents by using public lands, forging project labor agreements to ensure money stays here, and creating a vested interest for private developers to maintain energy-efficient high quality units.

DEVELOP ASSET-BUILDING PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS POVERTY AND GROW THE MIDDLE CLASS

Most of our existing human service policies focus on subsidizing people's incomes so they try to get by. Most of our existing policies to subsidize savings and investment help people who already have wealth. By developing policies to help lower- and middle-income people build financial assets, we will make families more self-sufficient, more resilient against misfortune, more able to create economic opportunities for themselves, and more able to leave a legacy so their children can escape cycles of poverty. Such policies

include encouraging savings through individual development accounts, instituting a state earned income tax credit, maximizing use of the federal earned income tax credit, expanding and coordinating financial education efforts throughout the state, working with private businesses to increase participation in retirement savings, creating incentives for college savings, and developing supports for homeownership programs and microenterprise. Much of this can be done in partnership with community organizations, nonprofits, and private enterprises including banks, which have a private interest in growing savings and investment in Hawaii.

LEAD A COMPREHENSIVE, INTER-GOVERNMENTAL APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS

It is sometimes too easy for people to forget that homelessness is about real people—people who are struggling with mental illness or substance abuse; people who are working, but can't afford housing for themselves and their children; people who are "hidden homeless," forced to live with friends and relatives; and people who aren't homeless, who look upon those living in parks, beaches and streets with fear, dread, discomfort, or shame. We cannot continue to just sweep people away. We need long-term solutions that involve communities and address root causes—mental illness, substance abuse, poverty, lack of housing, lack of good jobs, and a breakdown of community. In the short term, state and county governmental agencies need to work together and partner with community agencies, the private sector, and others to get needed services to individuals and families. We need collaborative solutions that satisfy everyone's desire for safety, compassion, health, and economic wellbeing.

INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Programs for the most vulnerable such as Healthy Start and preschool supports for needy families must be restored to build positive futures for at-risk children and to stave off much more expensive and intensive government services in the future. All the science makes clear that investing in the health and education of very young children is a wise use of public resources. See my comprehensive plan for Early Childhood.

REBUILD THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

The mental health system in Hawaii is broken, and we are all paying a deep financial, social, and spiritual price. We can turn this around by giving mental health the attention it deserves. Hawaii was once a leader in mental health services. It begins with transparent, open, and accountable leadership. We need integrated models of care that make the best use of Community Health Centers and work with primary care centers. As was Hawaii's trademark, we need to return to being a leader in evidence-based practices based on the best research. There are significant opportunities in the federal healthcare reform law that can help Hawaii. While the state pursues these, it will work with communities to develop plans of care that make sense for unique populations throughout our islands.

REFRAME OUR APPROACH TO AGING

We are in the midst of a collapse of leadership on the issue of aging at both the state and county levels. This growing problem is exacerbated by our failure to find proactive, preventive, and cost-effective solutions to the challenges of growing older. An Abercrombie Administration will reframe aging as an asset for Hawaii by fully engaging older adults in a Hawaii where communities are redesigned for all ages. See my comprehensive plan for Older Adults and Aging.

SECURE ADEQUATE FUNDS AND BUILD CAPACITY TO SERVE COMPACT MIGRANTS

In Congress, I worked hard to get adequate federal funding to support services for immigrants from the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau covered under the Compact of Free Association. We continue to need more support. The population of these immigrants is growing and they face significant financial, social, cultural, and language challenges. The impact is felt throughout the islands, affecting healthcare, education, and other government services. Besides working with the Congressional delegation to secure adequate federal funds to cover our federally mandated responsibilities, we must also build capacity here at home. The people from these islands have rich cultures, and many are working hard to weave into the fabric of Hawaii. We need to work with these communities, provide leadership development opportunities, and work together with nonprofits and the private sector to address common challenges.