

No More Homeless

Have you ever walked on the sidewalk and seen tents lined up on the other side of the road? Well that's what I see every time I come home from school. In fact, you see homeless every time you drive through Kalihi. This is a major problem in Hawaii, and this is what we can do to fix it.

Hawai'i is filled with homeless and more come every year. Hawai'i has seen a 35 percent rise in the homeless population since 2009 and a 4 percent increase over the last year, despite costly temporary fixes. Nearly one-third of the homeless are Native Hawaiians, yet they sleep in tent cities and are criminalized. The Department of Human Services Homeless Division lists that one-third of the homeless are minors, 50 percent of which are under the age of 6. Of the adults, 60 percent of the homeless are mentally ill, 47 percent without a high school education, 40 percent unsheltered, 34 percent are chronically homeless, 12 percent are veterans, and 8 percent are chronic substance abusers. The problem is that house rates inclined heavily through the years. It used to cost \$150,000 to buy a decent condo in 2001. Now it costs \$300,000 to buy a condo. That's a \$150,000 difference which has forced many people out of their houses and onto the streets.

This problem has solutions, but I believe that when people build shelters for the homeless, it just makes the problem more severe. If you actually think about it, building shelters just attracts more homeless to Hawai'i because when you build a shelter it goes on the news, and when the homeless on the mainland hear about free shelter and food, they find the money to get a plane ticket to Hawai'i and come and stay inside these shelters and the shelters get filled with all those mainland homeless, then even more homeless are on our streets. Recently Hawai'i

ranked number one in the United States with the number of homeless per capita, and with the numbers steadily rising the state cannot afford to make costly mistakes.

When you go on vacation, do you want to go to a place with homeless right across the street? No, but that's what tourists experience every time they come to Hawai'i. Think of how many more tourists would re-visit Hawai'i if they saw less homeless? More tourists mean more money, and more money means lower house rates, which means less homeless for the state of Hawai'i. Even when you give them food, it makes the problem more severe because why would they give up free food that people give them everyday? It just encourages them to stay homeless.

Hawai'i has been trying to resolve this problem for decades but there is still no solution. Utah is a prime example of ending homelessness. They virtually ended chronic homelessness while reducing the annual cost from \$19,000 to just under \$8,000 annually per homeless individual. Providing permanent housing solutions for this underserved population has had nothing but a positive impact. Another solution is that we could have programs that teach homeless life skills and how to make a living wage for their families and give them houses in trade for labor. As the saying goes, "give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Give him a net, you feed him for a lifetime."

This relates to Clarence T.C. Ching because he was all about solving the problems of Hawai'i and helping make the community a better place, and if we can fix homelessness, we will have one foot in the right direction. I believe his foundation can help solve this problem and make Hawai'i truly a place of paradise.

All these problems dealing with homelessness has a huge impact on the entire state of Hawai'i in all kinds of different ways. The solutions may be scarce, but I believe that all the solutions I proposed should majorly scale down the number of homeless in Hawai'i. This

nagging problem in Hawai'i must be addressed by the government and it must be fixed for the sake of our entire state.