EXTENSION APPROVED FOR DHHL RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Posted on Aug 20, 2020 in Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Media Releases, Slider

DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2020

Extension Approved for DHHL Rental Assistance Program

(Kapolei, Oʻahu) – The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) has extended its COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program to help qualified native Hawaiian beneficiaries with rental assistance for a period of up to twelve months.

The Hawaiian Homes Commission (HHC) approved the extension of aid from six to 12 months at its August board meeting.

Launched in May 2020, the program, administered by Aloha United Way (AUW), was initially proposed to assist native Hawaiians on the DHHL Applicant Waiting List who may be having trouble paying rent as a result of income or job loss due to COVID-19. Those qualified could receive help with a security deposit and/or rent for a period up to six months with an additional six months on a case-by-case basis, subject to funding availability. In June, HHC approved the program's expansion to include Undivided Interest Lessees (UI). The latest extension will increase the aid to a period of up to 12 months.

"As necessary COVID-19 safety restrictions are imposed, we can see there will be continued financial strain throughout our community," said HHC Chairman William J. Ailā, Jr. "Dozens of families have already been helped by this program and it only makes sense to extend our assistance in light of the ongoing pandemic. Beyond the strains of COVID-19, this initiative provides DHHL the unique opportunity to help beneficiaries who have not yet returned to the land."

Since its inception, through Aug. 9, 2020, the program has assisted 63 native Hawaiians currently on the DHHL Applicant Waiting List and three UI Lessees. A total of 126 applications are pending documentation and verification. Twelve were disqualified, eight of those were individuals not on the Applicant Waiting List, two others did not meet the income requirement, and an additional two did not have a legitimate landlord.

Of the 66 approved beneficiaries, there have been nine on Hawaiʻi Island, one on Kauaʻi, 15 on Maui, and 41 on Oʻahu. In total, the households have included 136 adults and 101 minors. The program has provided assistance ranging from $111.50 to $2,642.96 a month.

Elythe Macomber, a single mother of two teenage sons from Hilo, says the DHHL COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program came at an opportune time.

"I was about to start a new job when the impacts of COVID happened. My employment was delayed, and I didn't know what to do," said Macomber. "A simple call to Aloha United Way qualified me for the DHHL program. The struggles in these times are real and this program has

helped me keep my household together. I am appreciative and very grateful for the help and relief I have been blessed with."

Macomber is being assisted with full rental payments totaling $1,400 for six months.

The DHHL COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program utilizes Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant (NHHBG) funds made available in accordance with the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) and other federal laws, including Public Law 115-141, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, which provided that NHHBG funds may be used to provide rental assistance to eligible native Hawaiian families both on and off the Hawaiian Home Lands.

To apply for the program, beneficiaries are required to provide a series of documentation to indicate a loss of income or job as a result of COVID-19.

Those interested in learning more should call AUW at 2-1-1. For more information on COVID-19 impacts on DHHL activities, visit dhhl.hawaii.gov/covid-19.

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About the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands:
The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands carries out Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole's vision of rehabilitating native Hawaiians by returning them to the land. Established by U.S. Congress in 1921, with the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, the Hawaiian homesteading program run by DHHL includes management of over 200,000 acres of land statewide with the specific purpose of developing and delivering homesteading.

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