



**Representative  
Lauren  
Matsumoto  
Serving You in District 45**

**Aloha Friends and Neighbors!**

We're well into the 2019 Legislative Session, and I wanted to thank you for participating in the 2019 Legislative Info Survey that we sent out in November 2018. In order to do my job effectively, I need to hear from you! This year, top concerns included cost of living and homelessness. You can find the survey results on RepMatsumoto.com as well as sign up for our e-newsletter, where we send out updates on what's happening at the legislature. We can make our community, our district, and our state better by working together.

This year, the survey results showed the I put together a bill package that covers Cost of Living, Homelessness, Health & Safety, and Government Transparency. See below for a few bills I'm introducing this session. For a full list of bills in my package this year, please visit RepMatsumoto.com. The following are a few bills from the list of all the bills I introduced.

**Cost of Living**

**HB 1592 - Relating to General Excise Tax Exemptions**

This bill eliminates the general excise tax from food, medical services, and feminine hygiene products. The general excise tax contributes to the high cost of goods and services in Hawaii. Food is a major expense for our families. Thirty-two states, plus the District of Columbia, exempts groceries from their sales tax, and another six states tax groceries at lower rates than other goods. Food is a necessity and people should have to pay tax on a need.

Health care is another major expense for local families, and 41 states exclude medical services from their sales tax. Hawaii is one of only a handful of states that taxes us on medical and dental services.

Finally, when we work with nonprofits serving the community, one of the top requests are for feminine hygiene products. Several states exempt feminine hygiene products from sales or excise tax. We need to reduce the financial burden on our residents by not taxing basic living necessities.

**Homelessness**

**HB 1594 - Relating to Licensed Crisis Residential Shelters**

**HB 1145 - Relating to Grant in Aid**

Homelessness is a multifaceted issue and one of the ways to resolve this is by increasing the number of residential beds available for those experiencing a mental health crisis through HB 1594. There are currently only 20 beds on Oahu - having a larger inventory of available beds would reduce the pressure on emergency rooms and psychiatric units in medical facilities.

One of the other ways to impact homelessness is by ensuring that payments to nonprofits who serve health and human services are not delayed. Late payments often destabilize organizations which serve vulnerable populations such as homeless and low-income individuals. HB 1145 would require the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health to disperse grant-in-aid funds to recipient organizations within ninety days.

These are a few of the main pieces of legislation that I wanted to share in this article, but please visit RepMatsumoto.com to learn more about how we're working to improve our community.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns about any happenings in our community. Call me at (808) 586-9490, email RepMatsumoto@capitol.Hawaii.gov, or visit RepMatsumoto.com.