

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



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LATE TESTIMONY

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
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January 24, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: H.B. 2194 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE STATE
COMMISSION ON FATHERHOOD
Hearing: Thursday, January 24, 2008, 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funding for operations, including staffing, for the State Commission on Fatherhood.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill and respectfully requests that its passage does not replace nor adversely impact the priorities in the Executive Supplemental Budget.

The Department recognizes the important role that fathers play in the family and in the lives of their children and has included \$50,000 in Federal funds in the Department's budget to provide contracts and grants to established agencies for programs for fatherhood initiatives.

The Hawaii Commission on Fatherhood was established by Act 156, SLH 2003, and directs the Commission to serve in an advisory capacity to State agencies to promote healthy family relationships between parents and children. The Commission is authorized to make recommendations on programs, services, and contracts relating to children and families.

Across the nation, there is a renewed understanding of the unique importance of fathers in the lives of their children, families, and communities. It is widely recognized that children are more likely to thrive with support, guidance, and nurturing from both parents. The presence of fathers has a positive impact on the lives of their children, as reflected in better school performance, fewer high-risk behaviors, higher self-esteem, and less substance abuse. Healthy families mean less impact on our child protective services and at-risk youth and youth offender programs and the Judiciary. However, many young men today are themselves fatherless, lack appropriate role models, and are in need of information and education regarding the appropriate roles and responsibilities of fathers.

The Commission on Fatherhood plays an important role in promoting healthy family relationships between parents and children and promotes involved, nurturing, and responsible fatherhood.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this bill.

Testimony in **strong Support of SB 2054**

Hearing: January 24, 2008
Time 1.30 p.m
Room 016 State Capital

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Senator SUZANNE CHUN OAKLAND, Chair

Senator LES IHARA, JR. Vice Chair

From: **Myrna B. Murdoch**
Children's Rights Council and Commission on Fatherhood
And SR10 Taskforce

LATE TESTIMONY

Subj: Testimony in **strong Support of SD2054**

My name is Myrna B. Murdoch, Convener of the Best Interest of the Child working group of the SR10 taskforce, founder of the Children's Rights Council of Hawaii and a member of the Hawaii State Commission on Fatherhood.

The passage of SB 2054 will make the BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD the cornerstone of judicial consideration when determining the award of custody to divorcing or never married parents. This is consistent with the mission of the Court to carry out its strategic plan to develop, support, and advocate for maximum parental involvement in the lives of their children. With the passage of SB2054 there will be a legal standard that is consistent with policy developed in other states across our nation, and also one which will be appealable in the appellate courts both in Hawaii and in the 9th circuit.

While the Family Court Legal Interventions Working Group (Working Group) adopted the best interests of the child criteria, some members of the Best Interests of the Child Committee(Committee) had concern about item (5) (lines 8-10 on page 8) as it may cause problems for victims of family violence. The Working Group thus asked the Committee to work on amended language that would address the concern. The following was agreed to by the Committee :

" (5) Each parent's cooperation in developing and implementing a plan to meet the child's ongoing schedule, needs, and interests, except that this factor shall be excluded if a determination by the court has been made that family violence has been committed by a parent, pursuant to section 571-46(a)(9):"

The Committee therefore recommends that SB2054 be amended by adding the above language on line 10, page 8, of the bill.

I urge your committee's favorable action on the bill as amended.
Myrna B. Murdoch
Best Interest of the Child, Convener.

To: Rep. Maile S. L. Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services & Housing

LATE TESTIMONY

From: Tom Marzec

Subj: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB2194 which appropriates funds for the State Commission on Fatherhood

Hearing: Thursday, 01-24-08 at 8:30 am in House conference room 329

I strongly support HB2194. This funding request has been before the Legislature for several years now, and providing for an Executive Director and appropriate staff, would allow the Fatherhood Commission to effectively assist fathers in their needs.

Fathers too often either fall through the cracks or the system is blind or not responsive to their unique needs. The Fatherhood Commission, having equivalent funding as the Commission on the Status of Women, would show that fathers matter as much as mothers. Helping both fathers and mothers ultimately supports our children and families, and having strong families is essential to the well being of our state.

Your consideration for supporting this bill is very appreciated.

LATE TESTIMONY

To: Rep. Maile S. L. Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services and Housing

From: Adrienne King

Subj: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB2194; funding for the Commission on Fatherhood

Hearing: Thursday, January 24, 2008, 8:30 am, House Conference Room 329

This testimony is in support HB2194. As immediate past Chair of the Family Law Section of the Hawaii State Bar Association, current Legislative Director of the Section, and family law attorney, I represent both mothers and fathers in Family Court. The Family Court seeks to make decisions that are in the best interests of the child, which ideally means the involvement of both parents in their children's lives. There appear to be many services that focus on single moms and heaven knows they need help, but part of that help for moms is to help the dads be better dads. We need to strengthen Hawaii's families by also helping fathers get access to services that will help them be better dads and address their specific needs and problems. Funding the Fatherhood Commission so that they can coordinate such issues is a necessary priority.

Men don't network like women. They are not likely to talk to other men about their parenting issues. They often don't ask for help, and even if they wanted to ask, they don't know where to turn. More public recognition and support for the role of fathers in children's lives would go far in reducing many of the problems created today by the absence of fathers in their children's lives. Parity of funding for programs for mothers and fathers is essential to everyone's goal to provide kids with the benefits of having both parents in their lives.