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**Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**

**HB 2198 HD 2, RELATING TO CAREGIVING**

**Testimony of Noemi Pendleton  
Director of Executive Office on Aging  
Attached Agency to Department of Health**

**Thursday, March 13, 2008**

**1:15 p.m.**

1 **Department's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA) supports this measure to  
2 establish a task force to focus on the needs of and issues facing grandparents raising  
3 grandchildren.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** Unknown.

5 **Purpose and Justification:** EOA recognizes that many public and private sector  
6 departments and agencies are involved in providing services to the group known as "Grandparents  
7 Raising Grandchildren." Some of these entities include the Department of Health, Department of  
8 Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Public Safety, Queen Liliuokalani  
9 Trust, Na Tutu Coalition, Legal Aid society, Judiciary, Department of Attorney General.  
10 The task force will bring together all major stakeholders for information sharing and solution  
11 seeking. The bill outlines the various tasks and problem areas to be investigated as well as the  
12 report to be presented to the Joint Legislative Committee on Family Caregiving.

13 Pursuant to Act 204, SLH 2007, the Executive Office on Aging had contracted with the  
14 University of Hawaii Family and Consumer Sciences Department to conduct an assessment of the

1 issues facing, and the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren in Hawaii. According to the  
2 report, which was authored by Dr. Lori Yancura, there are over 14,000 grandparents that are  
3 primary caregivers for over 33,000 grandchildren in the state of Hawaii. These grandparents  
4 raising grandchildren (GRG) are playing an important part in ensuring the well-being of Hawaii's  
5 children. They are also saving the state approximately 17 million dollars per month by caring for  
6 their grandchildren outside of the foster care system.

7           The services most needed by GRG are children's programs, financial assistance, respite,  
8 and grandparent rights. Many of these services are already in place, but GRG don't know that  
9 they are eligible for them and/or they don't know how to access them. There is a need for  
10 coordination of services for GRG. The service needs of GRG vary by county and island. GRG  
11 are more likely to use services that come from a trusted source, many said that they would use a  
12 call-in or walk-in resource center.

13           EOA is pleased to be named as a member of the Task Force, and we will participate to our  
14 full extent.

15           Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

# Hawaii Aging Advocates Coalition

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing  
Thursday, March 13, 2008  
Conference Room 016; 1:15pm

**Founding  
Organizations**

**City & County  
of Honolulu  
Elderly Affairs**  
Karen Miyaki  
Craig Yamaguchi

**City & County  
of Honolulu  
Service Providers**  
Tony Wong

**FACE**  
Stan Bain  
Jim Howell

**Hawaii Caregiver  
Coalition**  
Tony Lenzer

**HARA**  
Al Hamai  
Bruce McCullough

**Hawaii County  
Office on Aging**  
Alan Parker  
Lito Asuncion

**Hawaii County  
Service Providers**  
Debra Nakaji

**JACOSA**  
Lyn McNeff

**Kauai Agency on  
Elderly Affairs**  
Kealoha Takahashi

**Kokua Council**  
Larry Geller

**Maui County  
Office on Aging**  
John Tomoso

**Maui County  
Service Providers**  
Kathy Louis

**Maui Long Term  
Care Partnership**  
Rita Barreras

**PABEA**  
Gary Simon  
Eldon Wegner

**Co-Conveners**  
Wes Lum  
**Hawaii Caregiver  
Coalition**

Harry Mattson  
**Kokua Council**

**RE: H.B. No. 2198, H.D. 2 RELATING TO CAREGIVING.**

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Wes Lum and I am testifying on behalf of the Hawaii Aging Advocates Coalition (HAAC). **HAAC supports this measure.**

This bill establishes a Task Force to focus on the needs of and issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren.

This measure is a recommendation by the Joint Legislative Committee on Family Caregiving (Committee). During this past legislative interim, the Committee held a public hearing to hear testimony from the various state departments, the University of Hawaii, and the Area Agencies on Aging as to how they address the issues facing grandparents and other relatives caring for children. This bill is necessary to determine how these various government stakeholders can individually and collectively build a support system for grandparents and other relatives who are parenting for a second time.

HAAC supports this measure and asks for your favorable consideration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**IN SUPPORT  
TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD**

To the Committee on Human Services and Public Housing, Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair, Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair, regarding Hearing on Thursday, March 13, 2008, at 1:15 pm in Conference Room 016

**RE: HB 2198, HD2 RELATING TO CAREGIVING.- FAMILY CAREGIVERS**

Establishes a task force to focus on the needs of and issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren.

From: From Patricia Urieff, MSW, ACSW, LSW, employed with twenty-four years of experience providing social work services to children and families, including grandparents raising grandchildren.

Grandparents who respond to a family crisis by caring for their grandchildren 24/7, didn't raise their hands, that is they didn't plan on raising those grandchildren. Yet when those grandchildren have a need for a permanent home (because parents are either absent or lack capacity to provide a safe home), Hawaii's grandparents care for children, become the main caregiver with love and commitment. Observations show that typical family crisis during the past 15 years was caused by drug selling/using/addictions, parents with mental illness, out of wedlock pregnancies, divorce, and the high cost of living in Hawaii resulted in many parents with low job skills abandoning their children to find work in Nevada.

"Over 14,000 grandparents are the primary caregivers for 33,000 grandchildren in the state of Hawaii. They are saving 17 million dollars a month caring for grandchildren outside of the foster care system." *2007 Needs Assessment (for the Office of Aging) by College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources, University of Hawaii.*

Those grandparents are either senior citizens living on a fixed income or about to become a senior citizen with the challenges related to aging.

Observations show that Grandparents Raising Grandchildren are types who love and commit to caring for their grandchildren. The grandparents are at the stage of life when health issues arise. Those grandparents report they go without vitamins, new glasses, visits to the dentist, and leisure activities because the grandkids are more important and need things. This is a group of Hawaii's senior citizen that are quietly demonstrating behaviors of heroes and heroines.

Needed is increased community awareness. Awareness is the first step. That could result in more compassion and support (within already existing systems) for senior citizen grandparents raising grandchildren and for children growing up in that situation. Current example - Department of Education reports their system usually does not know which children are growing up in 'ohana homes. That means relative caregivers do not know that tutoring is available. If DOE was motivated to identify grandparent households then it could give information/outreach/supports.

In general, Grandparents raise their grandchildren in isolation and embarrassment about the situation. They are not aware of existing resources because those aren't well advertised.

**A Task Force to discuss issues related to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren makes good sense. Such a Task Force should exist for a minimum of two years for identifying issues, existing resources, examining systems, and reporting back to the legislature.**

TO: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING  
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Sr., Vice-Chair

FROM: Sandy Rongitsch, Medical Social Worker  
Hale Makua Home Health & Foster Family Programs  
Wailuku, Maui

SUBJECT: **HB 2198, HD 2, RELATING TO CAREGIVING**

Hearing: Thursday, March 13, 2008 1:15 p.m., Conference Rom 016

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. I support the establishment a task force to focus on the needs and issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren.

As a practicing social worker for over 25 years – 15 years in the field of gerontology and 7 years in child welfare - grandparents raising grandchildren has been, until recently, a hidden segment of Hawaii's older care giving population. The needs and barriers outlined briefly in HB 2198, HD2 have been too long overlooked. The creation of a task force representing a broad spectrum of service entities is an excellent beginning in identifying and addressing issues in a comprehensive way.

**testimony**

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**From:** Jacqueline T, Chong [chongj001@hawaii.rr.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2008 11:22 AM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** Testimony on HB 2198 HD2

Please forward to:

Committee on Human services and Public Housing  
**DATE:** Thursday, March 13, 2008  
**TIME:** 1:15 pm  
**PLACE;** Conference Room 016

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**SUPPORT**

*Na Tutu, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Coalition*

Jacqueline T. Chong, Chair

48-488 Kamehameha Highway

Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

Committee on Human Services & Public Housing

Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Chair

Senator Les Ihara, Jr, Vice Chair

**Re HB 2198 HD2**

The Na Tutu fully supports HB 2198 HD2 which will establish a task force on the needs and issues of grandparents raising grandchildren.

Grandparents raising grandchildren is a new population that, according to the US Census, is growing rapidly each year. Along with this population comes a generation of grandchildren who through no fault of their own, find themselves in situations that are sometimes difficult

3/12/2008

for them to understand. Grandparents, who have always been the mainstay of a family, also find it difficult to raise grandchildren who have been abused, or neglected by their parents, some of whom are addicted to alcohol or drugs. Grandparents find it heartbreaking to have to comfort their grandchildren who are embarrassed by the actions of their parents, many of whom are in jail.

These same grandparents love their grandchildren and do their best to bring stability back to their life, but there is a definite need for grandparents to find available resources . They need to know how, when, and where they can get information for services which can help them help their grandchildren. Grandparents who have access to a support group in their area are more aware of resources, but these support groups are not available in every community, leaving many more grandparents totally out of the picture.

Grandparents should be entitled to the \$529 a month subsidy that foster parents receive. Many of these grandparents are already retired and on fixed incomes, which doesn't leave much more for the movies, hot dog and popcorn; or to register for Little League baseball or Pop Warner football.

HB 2198 HD2 addresses these problems. The Na Tutu asks your support. Thank you