

**JUDtestimony**

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**From:** Poha Sonoda-Burgess [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 26, 2008 11:57 AM  
**To:** Rep. Blake Oshiro; JUDtestimony  
**Subject:** Re: Opposition to H.B. 2596--Relating to Children, 2/26@2:45p.m.  
**Attachments:** HB 2596

To : Honorable Tommy Waters, Chair  
House Committee on the Judiciary

**LATE TESTIMONY**

From: Poha Sonoda-Burgess, Volunteer  
Ho'olokahi Parent Facilitator Program,  
Family Court of the First Circuit  
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Subject: Opposition to H.B. 2596, H.D. 1, - RELATING TO CHILDREN

Hearing: Tuesday, February 26, 2008, 2:45 p.m.  
Conference Room 325

Good Afternoon,

My name is Poha Sonoda-Burgess and I am a volunteer parent facilitator at Family Court. I assist parents before their first hearing and during review hearings regarding their CPS cases. I see many parents who love their children and are following their service plan. My observations of these parents are of amazement. Parents are required to follow strict plans before they can regain custody of their children, it is difficult for me to even imagine engaging and completing all of the services that parents are required to complete. From random drug testing, to parenting class, anger management classes, to

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AA meetings, making visits, to making it to substance abuse treatment, to making work, to making court dates, the life of a parent involved in CPS is not easy.

Parents who become involved in the child welfare system are often overwhelmed by the state's intervention in their lives. It is easy to feel the cards being stacked against you. The sentiment among some parents I work with is one of being sucked into a system they do not understand, nor want to be in, forced to enroll and complete various programs that obstruct their home and work life, and constantly in fear of losing their children—a heavy burden for anyone to manage.

It is understandable that parents with confirmed abuse or neglect are missing something when it comes to parenting, but the state should not make unreasonable and rash decisions when it comes to protecting children and families.

I oppose H.B. 2596 H.D. 1 because these additional requirements of 60 days clean and 1 year before regaining custody will make it unnecessarily harder for many qualified parents to see their kids. It is cruel to deny parents access to their children. It is cruel to deny children access to their parents.

Children have a right to see their parents and to maintain their relationships. 60 days is an arbitrary time period that is not narrowly tailored to prevent "recent violent events." Since visits are supervised, there is no need to require 60 days of being drug free before a parent can see their children. The parent-child bond should be sustained whenever reasonably possible for the child and family's well-being. The supervising social worker has the ability to stop visits when necessary. This bill would make it unreasonably more difficult for family reunification. Please do not support H.B. 2596, H.D. 1.

Thank you,

Poha Sonoda-Burgess

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