

March 24, 2008

JUD Committee

Re: SB2730 Child Protection Act; Ohana Preference; Grandparents

Dear Head of JUD committee and committee members,

My name is Amanda Lucero and I am a Bachelor of Social Work student at the University of Hawaii Manoa. I strongly support SB2730 in regards to establishing grandparents or other appropriate relatives for the out-of-home placement of children needing child protective services.

I recently started an internship with Foster Family Programs of Hawaii, in which I have been learning about Hawaii's child welfare and foster care system, as well as interacting and providing childcare for foster children. I agree with the legislature in regards to children needing and deserving competent, responsible parenting and a safe, secure, loving, and nurturing environment. I also agree with the fact that children who have been harmed or threatened by harm are less likely to realize their full educational, vocational, emotional potential, and are more likely to become involved with the mental health system, juvenile justice system, or criminal justice systems, as well as become an economic burden on the state.

If children in Hawaii, needing out-of-home placement are placed with relatives or hanai relatives, when appropriate, their experience will be less traumatic because they are placed with people who they are familiar with and they will be in a comfortable environment. This will lead them to function at a higher level and have a faster resiliency rate compared to if children needing out-of-home placement were placed with foster parents whom they are unfamiliar with and in an environment that they are uncomfortable with. I believe it is important that the state of Hawaii recognizes hanai relatives just as important as blood relatives because this concept plays such a big part in the Hawaiian culture. This is why I support SB2730 in regards to establishing grandparents or other appropriate relatives for the out-of-home placement of children needing child protective services.

If you have any questions I can be reached in the evening by cell phone at [REDACTED] or anytime by e-mail at [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time,

Amanda Lucero
BSW Student ~ UH Manoa
[REDACTED]

JUDtestimony

From: Elijah Davenport [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2008 1:54 AM
To: JUDtestimony; elijah_davenport@hotmail.com
Subject: Testimony SB 2730 HD 1

LATE TESTIMONY

Chair Waters
Vice-Chair Oshiro
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
Elijah Davenport
Tuesday March 25, 2008

Support of SB 2730 H.D. 1

Greetings and thank you for allowing me to make a stance. I am a graduate student in the Social Work program at the University of Hawaii. Prior to my educational journey, I worked as an investigative social worker for Child Welfare services, with children placed in group homes, and with at-risk youth. One thing that I have observed first-hand in my career is that children are extremely effected when removed from their homes. It makes no sense to have a child in the foster system when there are perfectly capable relatives willing to care and raise a child. I also believe that social workers need to make more efforts to find appropriate relatives. Every family tree may have some "bad" apples but we have to also know and believe that "good" apples can be found.

In efforts to create suitable homes for children who have been removed from their home due to abuse; it is of most importance that they be placed with relatives. An abused child has been exposed to trauma, why continue to traumatize a child by placing them in unfamiliar homes with strangers. Child Welfare Services should should make it first priority to make diligent efforts in placing children with relatives, biological or Hanai.

The children are the future so lets take care of them. Lets not overlook relatives because "it's too much work". We are responsible for the youth, so if some feel that children in the foster care system become "economic burdens on the State" you must first think of why. Is it that they never knew there families, were they deprived of their cultural beliefs, were they miss treated in foster placement because they were different. Now wonder why a child raised in the foster system grows into an adult within the mental health system, the juvenile justice system, or the criminal justice system. It is our responsibility as citizens to nurture them so they can be productive adults. Children are our most valuable resource and I believe that a child should never be stripped of his or her family.

I strongly support the committee in passing SB 2730 H.D. 1.

Mahalo

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Chair Waters

Vice-Chair Oshiro

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

Robyn Kikumoto

Tuesday, March 25, 2008; 4:05 PM

LIVE TESTIMONY

Support of SB 2730 H.D. 1, Relating to Child Protection

Aloha. My name is Robyn Kikumoto and I am currently working on my Masters Degree in Social Work at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. As member of the Hawaii Child Welfare Education Collaboration, funded under Title IVE of the Legislature, I am currently doing my internship at Catholic Charities where I have had the pleasure of working with families who are involved in the foster care system. Once I obtain my degree I am contracted to be employed with the Department of Human Services, specifically Child Welfare Services, for a minimum of 2 years. I am testifying in support of measure SB 2730 H.D. 1 relating to child protection.

It is never easy to make the decision to remove a child from their parent (s); however, many home situations leave you no choice. It should be an expectation that if the child must be taken from their home that they would be able to heal and rebuild their lives in a safe, loving, and hopefully familiar environment. Kinship placements provide this type of environment. Such placements help the child to, among other things, maintain family and often community connections.

Children in kinship care experience greater stability. If the child is placed with their family you would hope that the amount of placements would be reduced. The probability of the child being moved from placement to placement is lessened. If the child is in a placement that they are comfortable with and people that they find familiar they are more likely to view their foster experience as positive and therefore have less behavioral problems. By placing the child in kinship care you show that you are respecting their cultural and familial traditions. The child is able to bond and connect with people who understand their family and cultural dynamics.

Kinship caregivers provide stability to children and youth who are unable to live with their biological parents. It is necessary that the policies and laws that we have clearly state the need for the Department of Human Services and related agencies to make it a priority to seek out appropriate kinship placements for foster children prior to placing these youth in general licensed homes. I urge the committee to pass SB 2730 H.D. 1. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan

**To: Rep. T. Waters, Chair Committee on Judiciary
Rep. B. Oshiro, Vice-Chair Committee on Judiciary**

**Fr: Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan,
Kanaka Maoli, Part Hawaiian and a Private Citizen**

Date: March 24, 2008

**Re: Hearing Date: March 25, 2008
Time of Hearing: 4:05pm
Place of Hearing: Rm 325**

LATE TESTIMONY

**FULL SUPPORT OF SB2730 SD2 HD1
Relating to Child Protection – Placement Preference to relatives**

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the committee:

My name is Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan. I'm a grandmother, a Kanaka Maoli and a private citizen with over 2 decades of experience in family preservation and cultural practices in strengthening families. I am also a staff member of Rep. Karen Awana. However, my views, opinions and statements are of my own personal experience and preference. I'm testifying in Full Support of SB:2730 as well as SB:2731 relating to Child Protection, Preference to Grandparents and other family members for placement consideration in addition to providing notice of hearings for proceedings that involve the placement and care of children being removed from their parental care as long as the initial intent is preserve in this bill. I mention SB2731 as both measures should be considered at the same time with the same importance. Considering that this bill has now gone through several changes, I'd like to focus on the general intent of this bill as it is to respect and recognize that family is the most important connection to any child. **There are many interpretations of what this measure will mean to children and families. What it really does is give rightful recognition and respect to the family structure by allowing the grandparent(s) or family members who are willing and able to care for their children who may be in harm's way a safe, familiar and nurturing home while the primary caretaker(s) get the skills and services needed to assure wellness in the family. To fully**

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understand the impact of this measure is to understand and respect the right of Ohana in addressing the care of their members. If the department is to conform to its policy to consider and locate “Kin” in the placement consideration of the child, this measure MUST BE PASSED. This will assure that Ohana members are sought during the initial placement. I do agree there should be a timeline the department must adhere to when locating Ohana, this time period should not take years but only days as we are a small island state that operate under the values of Ohana. There is always a family member that will know family members who are willing and able to care for a child within the family while the parent(s) engage in services. We need to realize that this measure is more of a Cultural sensitive approach in which our Hawaiian Traditional values are respected. People in this society make statements that require much understanding, “it takes a village to raise a child”. What village are we speaking about? I understand my village to be my ancestors, my Kupuna, my Makua, myself, my keiki, my mo’opuna, my extended Ohana and my hoalauna (neighbors). In what order do we place the care and responsibility of our children? I believe this measure will force the department to be true to its policies and procedures when they are considering the placement of a child. I would encourage in fact demand that the department locate and give preference to grandparent(s) or other family members who are willing and able to care for the child WELL BEFORE CONSIDERING PLACING THE CHILD IN A NON-RELATIVE HOME. If we do anything for the betterment and in the best interest of our children, we need to do it right when we take them from their primary providers (the parent(s)) and place them in the care of others. Our community has many needs and challenges. The bill identifies the concerns and solutions in addressing the barriers to assuring we have a healthier community and thereby reducing the need for continued government interventions. We need to preserve families by utilizing the strengths in protecting and taking responsibilities for their Ohana. We need to enforce and support what works best for the betterment of all.

Thank you for allowing me this time to submit my testimony and request your favor to FULLY SUPPORT THIS MEASURE. For more information I can be contacted at (808) 783-9302
Mahalo,



FOSTER FAMILY PROGRAMS
OF HAWAII

March 24, 2008

To: Honorable Representative Tommy Waters, Chair

FROM: Linda Santos, President & CEO, Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i

RE: Senate Bill 2730: STRONG SUPPORT FOR BILL SB 2730, SD2, HD1

Hearing: March 25, 2008, 4:05 pm

Purpose: Senate Bill 2730, SD2 – Establishes a preference for placement of children needing child protective services.

Introduction: I am Linda Santos, President and CEO of Foster Family Programs of Hawaii. We provide services to prevent foster care placement; support children and families involved in out of home placement; and assist young adults emancipating from the foster care system.

Agency Position: Foster Family Programs supports the intent of this bill, which gives preference to a child's grandparents and other appropriate relatives, when a child under the jurisdiction of the Department of Human Services, is being placed in out-of-home care due to abuse/neglect. Our support is based on the fact that relative involvement is critical for assessments, placement, and concurrent planning. In the last couple of years, DHS has put great effort in early identification and placement of children with kin.

Relatives, particularly grandparents, are already a part of the child's family system and can provide support and continuity to a traumatic out-of-home placement. Relative placement can ensure that children continue relationships with family members and siblings and provide safety, stability and familial support. Grandparents also support the child's identity, history and family traditions and customs. Most importantly, grandparents are the often the most willing family member to take grandchildren into their home.

There is much evidence based practice and research that supports the long term benefits of placement of children with relatives. This research shows that kinship care is less traumatic and disruptive than non-kin foster care and provides more stability and fewer placement changes for the child. Additionally, kinship care provides more continuity in family relationships, community ties, and can offer growth and development within the child's culture and community. Research concludes that children placed in out-of-home care over 12 months maintain a higher stability rate with kin than non-kin.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.