



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

January 29, 2008

TO: Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

FROM: Joy Lacanienta, Program Director II
Catholic Charities Hawai'i

SUBJECT: S.B. 2730 Relating to Child Protection

Hearing: Thursday, January 31, 2008, 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of S.B.2730 is to establish a grandparent preference for out-of-home placement of children needing child protective services.

POSITION:

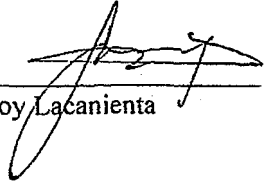
Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH), is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 60 years. CCH is also one of the partner agencies representing Hui Ho'omalua, which is a statewide collaboration composed of various community and faith-based agencies working together in partnership to address the needs of Hawai'i's children in foster care.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i works closely with the Department of Human Services - Child Welfare Services focusing on Child Specific foster/resource families including Special Licensed Relatives (SLR). A great majority of the foster/resource families we serve are grandparents. This is also a reflection of our State, which has a higher percentage of grandparents raising children compared to the national average.

Kinship connection has been proven to be an important factor for foster children to thrive in their home environment. Allowing grandparents to be the first priority for out-of-home placement is a culturally sensitive and sound idea that can only bring a stronger support system for Hawai'i's foster children.

Again, Catholic Charities Hawai'i strongly support(s) Senate Bill 2730 to give preference to grandparents for out-of-home placement of children needing child protective services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify


Joy Lacanienta

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing, who have scheduled a public Hearing on Thursday, January 31, 2008, @ 1:30 p.m., in Room 016.

Aloha Kakou,

I am in support of S.B. 2730, which establishes a grandparent preference for out-of-home placement of children needing CPS and of S.B. 2731, which permits a child's grandparent to participate as a party at certain child protective hearings. The Older Americans Act, as reauthorized and amended in 2006, identifies grandparents who are raising grandchildren as legitimate and effective family caregiving, especially when the child's biological parents are absent from care. These bills will allow kupuna, who are raising their mo'opuna, to be a legitimate and interested party to the overall best interest of the child and his/ her social and familial rehabilitation. More often than not, the presence of an interested, willing and capable grandparent is more than therapeutic. The grandparent(s), in many cases, are the "glue" that keep the 'ohana together.

Me ka mahalo pono,
John A. H. Tomoso, MSW, ACSW, LSW
Maui County Executive on Aging
808-270-7350
john.tomoso@mauicounty.gov

TESIMONY

To the Committee on Human Services and Public Housing, Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair, and Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair, for Hearing on Thursday, January 31, 2008, in Conference Room 016, at the State Capitol.

From Patricia Urieff, MSW, ACSW, LSW, with twenty-four years of experience providing social work services to children and families.

SB 2730 RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION.

Establishes a grandparent preference for out-of-home placement of children needing child protective services.

Regarding *What* Should Happen When Children Taken into DHS-CPS Custody.

When Child Protective Services Investigations show child (ren) at risk of harm to the degree that the child must be removed, assessment for placement of the child must include the biological grandparents. There is a natural connection between biological grandparents and the child (ren).

Regarding *How*

- Heavy responsibility lies with the DHS Worker and Supervisor to assess for safety, bonding, and capacity to provide fulltime care to each child. An important factor to determine is which grandparent does the child (ren) feel bonded to, with whom does the child have a strong relationship?
- The DSH-CPS assessment should be extended whenever the child(ren) had been left with a hanai grandparent for a period of time that resulted in the child (ren) feeling a strong bond to that caregiver.
- `Ohana Conferencing should include both biological and hanai grandparents for discussion about *Best Interest of Child (ren)*.