

**testimony**

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**From:** Twylah Evans [twylah@hawaii.edu]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 25, 2008 6:20 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** Testimony Related to Child Protection

February 24, 2008

**To:** Senator Colleen Hanabusa, Chairwoman  
And members of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Committee

**From:** Twylah Evans

**RE:** SB2730 SD1 Relating to Child Protection

Tuesday, February 26, 2008  
10:00am in conference room 016.

Chairwoman Hanabusa and members of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Committee, my name is Twylah Evans and I am a student at Honolulu Community College. I am testifying in support of SB2370 SD1 Relating to Child Protection.

I feel that if children are taken away from their natural parents for whatever reason, if suitable grandparents are available to take the children, they should be given preference. When I was younger my brother and me were taken away from my mother and taken straight to a foster home. My grandmother was not even notified until we were placed. Social workers gave her a hard time to get us placed with her because of her age.

While we were waiting to be placed with my grandmother, the foster mother we were placed with got mad at my brother for vomiting. She had given him regular milk even though I told her it made him sick. She became so angry with him that she threw him against the wall and then she threw my two year old brother over her stair case. He was unresponsive for hours. I told my mother what happened and we were picked up by the Social worker immediately. We had to go through court battles etc. She was arrested and so on. This all could have been avoided if we were placed with my grandmother from the beginning.

Again I urge you to support SB2370 SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Twylah Evans  
Student at Honolulu Community College  
808-456-7032

**LATE****Joy Lacanienta**

**From:** Joy Lacanienta  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 27, 2008 5:38 AM  
**To:** 'sentaniguchi@capitol.hawaii.gov'  
**Cc:** David Drews; Stella Wong  
**Subject:** OHA bill—Senate 2730 /Purpose: To establish a grandparent/relatives preference for out-of-home placement of children needing child protective services.

Aloha Senator Taniguchi:

I'm a Program Director with Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH), a 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 I Hui Ho'omalu, which is a statewide collaboration composed of various community and faith-based agencies working together in partnership to address the needs of Hawaii'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. According to DHS, In 2005 alone, eleven states created or revised provisions of their state law relating to relative placement for abused or neglected children. Allowing grandparents and relatives 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 Hawaii's foster children. We would also like to urge you to include the amendments as proposed by DHS to include the following:

- 1) Extending the Ohana preference to Grandparents and Relatives
- 2) Strongly support the identification effort/preference to the upfront work with Child Welfare Services

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

Mahalo for your time and service to our community.

Joy Lacanienta  
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To: 5866461

From: FEB-27-2008 09:20



**FOSTER FAMILY PROGRAMS  
OF HAWAII**

February 27, 2008

**To:** Honorable Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
**FROM:** Linda Santos, President & CEO, Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i  
**RE:** Senate Bill 2730: STRONG SUPPORT FOR BILL SB 2730 WITH DHS  
 AMMENDMENTS  
 Hearing: February 27, 2008, 10:00 AM

**Purpose:** Senate Bill 2730 – Establishes a grandparent preference for out-of-home 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, 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 grandparents' involvement is critical especially in the beginning of the process and during assessments, placement, and concurrent planning. In the last couple of years, DHS have put great effort in early identification and placement of children with kin.

Additionally, grandparents are already a part of the child's family system and can provide support and continuity to a traumatic out-of-home placement. Grandparent 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. Lastly, 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.



**LATE**

**LATE**

**Sen. Brian Taniguchi, Chair  
Judiciary**

**Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan  
Kupuna, Kanaka Maoli, Private Citizen**

**February 27, 2008 10:00am Rm 016**

**FULL SUPPORT OF SB2730 SD1:  
Relating to Child Protection, Preference to Grandparents and other family  
members.**

Aloha 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'm here 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. I mention SB2731 as both measures should be considered at the same time with the same importance.

**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 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 the language to include a timeline for locating and offering preference to the 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 placing them in the care of others rather than their primary providers who we identify as the parent(s).

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,

