

Rep. Maile Shimabukuru, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chair
Committee on Human Services and Housing (HSH)

LATE TESTIMONY

Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan
Kupuna, Kanalm Maoli, Private Citizen

March 11, 2008, 8:30am Rm: 329

FULL SUPPORT OF SB2730 SD2:

R.elating to Child Protection, Preference to Grandparents and other family members.

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'm testifying in Full Support of SB:2730 SD2 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 you can be contacted at (808) 783-9302.

Mahalo,

Na Tutu, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

*Jacqueline T. Chong, Chair
48-488 Kamehameha Highway
Kaneohe, Hawaii. Hi*

Committee on Human Services & Housing
March 11, 2008

Testimony Re: SB 2730 SD2

Aloha, I am Jacqueline Chong, Chair of the Na Tutu, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, and am in support of SB 2730 SD2 which will require that children be placed in a grandparents' or relative's home, if its necessary to remove the child from their own home.

Grandparents have always been the mainstay of a family unit, where else would a child normally run to for comfort, but a grandparents warm and loving arms. And to place a child in an unfamiliar surrounding will cause great stress on a young child, especially at the particular time of removal, which is usually a traumatic scene of its own.

How many of us have watched tragic pictures of screaming children and parents on television news? We all feel a twinge in our hearts as we witness the tragedy of someone else's lives and hope that it never happens to us.

The reality of life, however, is with us today as we see more and more grandparents and relatives becoming full time parents to children that are in need of a loving, safe, and secure home. I have been mom, aunty, and now grandma to many of my own family and friends' children in their time of need, sometimes its only overnight, or a few days, or months, and sometimes they never leave. These kids have all grown to be law abiding citizens with families of their own, and, I am proud to say, still share their time with us on holidays and special occasions.

Is this a special family, a storybook family . . . I don't think so. In Hawaii, this is the only story . . . it's the hanai, or lawe hanai system that is so important to our culture.

SB 2730 SD2 requires placement of children in grandparents or relatives homes if a child is in need of safe environment. The Na Tutu asks for your support.

Thank you.