

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 2735 RELATING TO MINORS.

Allows minors to consent to entering into emergency shelters or other homeless facilities when minors do not have a parent or guardian to consent on their behalf.

If minors could enter into emergency shelters or other homeless facilities when they do not have a parent or guardian to consent on their behalf, that gives those minors an option for safety, supports, and opportunity to learn about available options for them.

Without a safe refuge and supports, those minor have to find their way on the streets. Consequences impact the rest of their lives.

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Adolescent Services Program, Kaiser
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American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii

Bay Clinic, Inc.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu

Big Island Substance Abuse Council

Blueprint for Change

Bobby Benson Center

Boys and Girls Club of the Big Island

Catholic Charities Hawaii

Child and Family Service

Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii

Domestic Violence Clearinghouse
and Legal Hotline

EPIC, Inc.

Family Support Services of West Hawaii

Foster Family Programs of Hawaii

Hale Kipa, Inc.

Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.

Hawaii Behavioral Health

Hawaii Island YWCA

Hawaii Foster Parent Association

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition

Hina Mauka Teen Care

John Howard Association

Kahi Mohala Hospital

Kahuku United Methodist Church

Kama'aina Kids, Inc.

Kids Behavioral Health

Kids Hurt Too

KMC Teen Intervention Program

Life Foundation

Marimed Foundation

The Maui Farm, Inc.

Maui Youth and Family Services

Palama Settlement

Parents and Children Together (PACT)

Queen's Medical Center, Family
Treatment Center

Rainbow House

Salvation Army Family Intervention Services

Salvation Army Family Treatment Services

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Sisters Offering Support

Susannah Wesley Community Center

Surfing the Nations

The Center

Turning Point for Families

Waikiki Health Center

Women Helping Women

World Healing Institute

YWCA of Kauai

1/31/08
January 27, 2008

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

Testimony on SB 2735 Relating to Minors

Hawaii Youth Services Network, a statewide coalition of more than 50 youth serving organizations, supports the intent of SB2246 Relating Minors.

Current Hawaii law requires parents or guardians to provide consent before a minor may be admitted to an emergency shelter. There are times when consent cannot be obtained because a parent/guardian cannot be reached or refuses consent. At that point, unless Child Welfare Services opens an abuse or neglect investigation, the shelter cannot admit the youth and he or she will remain on the street.

Runaway and homeless youth on the streets are at high risk for assault and sexual victimization, have no safe or appropriate place to sleep, and lack adequate nutrition.

Enabling youth to provide consent for shelter when parental/guardian consent cannot be obtained will increase the safety and well-being of these youth.

HYSN believes that further discussion is needed to address the following concerns:

- An emergency shelter provides only short-term shelter (usually 14 days or less). What services and resources will be available to these youth following the shelter stay?
- What is the role of Child Protective Services in such situations?
- How may we address the legal liability concerns of shelter providers?

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director