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April 16, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair
House Committee on Health

Honorable Maile S. L. Shimabukuro, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: S.C.R. 105, S. D. 1 – CALLING ON THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO ESTABLISH PROTOCOLS AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS IN CHILD PROTECTIVE AWARENESS SKILLS.

Hearing: Wednesday, April 16, 2008, 11:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to request the Department of Human Services to convene a task force to establish protocols and training programs for first responders, including the county police departments, the sheriffs and other law enforcement agencies, the fire department, and emergency medical personnel, to use when coming into contact with children who may be victims of or who are at risk for child abuse.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this resolution to enhance the current protocols and training for first responders to reports of children who have been harmed or are at risk of abuse or neglect.

The Department currently provides training on the physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse, neglect and threatened harm, for the Honolulu Police Department recruits and for staff of the Department of Public Safety. Similar information and training is available to other individuals who are required by chapter 350, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to report suspected child abuse and neglect. This includes individuals who have contact with children as professionals, officers or employees of organizations or agencies that provide services for children, including but not limited to medical, health and mental health staff, school personnel, law enforcement personnel, child care providers, and recreational and sports activities staff.

The Department plans to incorporate first responder protocols and training as an area to be assessed in our upcoming statewide self-assessment process prior to the 2009 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). Following the CFSR, we shall also include these protocols and training issues in our Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

We would also suggest that the timeframe for completion of the task force is insufficient for such a significant and potentially far-reaching issue. We would recommend a two-year task force with a progress report due prior to the convening of the 2009 Legislative session.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this concurrent resolution.