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March 27, 2008

MEMORANDUM

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

Honorable Jill N. Tokuda, Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: S.C.R. 133 & S. R. 69 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE AND ESTABLISH A PILOT PROJECT TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN IN CHILD CUSTODY PROCEEDINGS

Hearing: Thursday, March 27, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to request the Department convene a task force to examine the possibility of implementing a Native Hawaiian Child Welfare Act and to jointly develop procedures and protocols and conduct a one-year pilot project to collaborate in case managing Native Hawaiian children in child welfare cases under the jurisdiction of the Department.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this resolution. We support the need for a task force to examine the feasibility and practicality of enactment of a Native Hawaiian Child Welfare Act. We are willing to participate on the task force, but with their concurrence, recommend that Na Kupuna O Waianae convene

the task force and bring the parties together. We are also willing to examine the feasibility of conducting a pilot project, but recommend that be a topic discussed in the task force as part of their work.

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.

H. C. R. 174, H. D. 1 “Requesting Na Kupuna O Waianae To Convene A Task Force To Address The Needs Of Native Hawaiian Children In Child Custody Proceedings” contains language and provisions that effectively address the Department’s concerns and suggestions.

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