

LATE

HB 1354

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
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April 6, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1354, H.D. 2, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO CHILDREN**

Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2009; 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of S.B. 1354, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, is to appropriate Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) opposes this measure.

The Healthy Start program has been associated with prevention of child abuse since its inception as a pilot program in 1985. However, a Federal review of Hawaii's Child Welfare program in 2003 showed that Hawaii's rate of child re-abuse was no lower than the rest of the nation.

Since that 2003 Federal review, the Department has been able to successfully utilize its TANF funding in developing and implementing contractual services that began

putting more emphasis on strengthening families and addressing risk factors before they led to abuse. The results of these efforts have been:

- a) The number of children in State care has decreased by half, from about 3,000 children in 2005 to just 1,500 children today. This is the lowest number since 1993; and
- b) Hawaii currently has one of the lowest rates of child re-abuse in the country. The child re-abuse rate dropped from 6% in 2003 to just 3.1% in 2008, which is far better than the nationally accepted standard of 6.1%.

It should be noted that during this same period of time, the Healthy Start program was experiencing a reduced presence in the community due to reductions in State general revenue funding.

DHS firmly believes in the wisdom and cost-effectiveness of supporting a diverse array of poverty prevention programs using our annual block grant of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Federal funds.

We do not believe that expanding our investment of TANF funds in Healthy Start, a Department of Health program, would be the best use of our limited TANF Federal funds.

It is important to note that Healthy Start already receives about \$1.7 million in TANF Federal funds each year under Act 107, which Governor Linda Lingle signed into law in May 2007. Also, we already invest \$3.2 million of TANF Federal funds in Enhanced Healthy Start, which targets families reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) for child abuse or neglect.

To provide some background, DHS has invested Federal TANF funds in a wide range of family strengthening and positive youth development initiatives across the State for families, keiki and youth. These include programs that help youth succeed in school

and prepare for rewarding careers, while deterring substance abuse, truancy, crime and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Other TANF-funded programs improve parenting skills and help prevent domestic violence.

All our TANF-funded poverty programs are having a positive impact on reducing child abuse and neglect. Among these programs is Enhanced Healthy Start, which is based on Healthy Start and designed exclusively to help at-risk families who are involved in Child Protective Services. DHS provides Enhanced Healthy Start with \$3.2 million in TANF Federal funds each year to promote healthy childhood growth and improve parenting skills and parent-child interactions.

Our investment of TANF Federal funds in a wide range of anti-poverty initiatives is already producing significant results. As cited previously, since 2005, the number of children removed from their biological parents and placed in foster care has declined by half to just 1,500 children – the lowest number in 16 years. More importantly, the child re-abuse rate has also fallen by half since 2005, meaning that Hawaii's keiki are now among the safest in the nation.

The success of these anti-poverty programs would be undercut if additional TANF Federal funds are diverted into the Healthy Start program. This would likely, and paradoxically, lead to a rise in child abuse and neglect cases, along with an increase in foster care placements. It should also be noted that Healthy Start, a voluntary program, had greater funding prior to 2005, but our child re-abuse rates and the number of foster care placements continued to rise during that time.

In conclusion, funding for Healthy Start should not come at the expense of anti-poverty programs that are producing significant results. Diverting additional TANF funds would also be contrary to the DHS mission of helping our most vulnerable residents, including at-risk families and children.

The Department also respectfully requests that the \$28.2 million in TANF Federal funds restricted in the current State fiscal year 2009 budget be restored for the biennium so that we can continue to fund the programs, services and benefits that have, among other positive outcomes, strengthened families and contributed to the reduction, by half, of child re-abuse and neglect since 2005. This is neither the time to freeze Federal funds nor divert Federal funds from the investment we have made that is working so well.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

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CPS VISITATION CENTERS

EARLY HEAD START/
HEAD START

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CENTER

FAMILY PEACE CENTER

FAMILY VISITATION CENTER

HANA LIKE HOME
VISITOR PROGRAM

HAWAII FAMILY SUPPORT
CENTER

INTENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

KANEOHE COMMUNITY
FAMILY CENTER

KPT FAMILY CENTER

OHIA - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SHELTER

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RESPIRE CARE

MAUI COUNTY PROGRAMS

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TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Julie Falicki, Program Director
Parents And Children Together
Hana Like Home Visitor Program

DATE: April 6, 2009

**RE: HB 1354, HD 2, SD 1
In Support of Funding for Healthy Start**

My name is Julie Falicki. I am the Program Director for PACT's Hana Like Home Visitor Program. Hana Like is a member of the statewide Healthy Start Network. I have worked in the Healthy Start program in a variety of roles since 1993. PACT is one of Hawaii's leading not-for-profit human services providers, with 12 programs statewide serving over 9,000 clients annually. I am submitting testimony **in support of funding for Healthy Start.**

The importance of the first three years of life has been well established. The years from birth to three lay the foundation for each child's cognitive and emotional development. The quality of the child's early environment, including their relationship with their parents and the provision of early learning experiences, is predictive of that child's later success in areas such as school performance and social adjustment.

It is the mission of the Healthy Start program to optimize each child's development during these critical years by providing at-risk families with the skills and support needed to nurture their child's development and to avoid setting patterns of parenting which may lead to child abuse and neglect and poor developmental outcomes. This is done through regular home visitation by a Home Visitor, developmental screening to identify and address developmental concerns, the provision of information on effective parenting techniques and child development, and referral to community resources to reduce family stress. The services provided by the paraprofessional Home Visitor are supported by professional Child Development Specialists, who address developmental concerns, and Family Specialists, who address risk factors such as mental health issues and substance abuse.

During these tough economic times, it is tempting to drastically reduce or eliminate programs that may be viewed by some as non-essential. Families referred to Healthy Start are those determined to be at risk for



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child abuse and neglect, as measured by a validated tool. The Healthy Start program has proven to be effective in ameliorating those factors associated with child abuse and neglect, such as unrealistic expectations of children, lack of knowledge of child development, history of abuse and neglect in the parents' own childhood, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, social isolation, and limited resources. This is accomplished through direct services by the Healthy Start team, as well as referrals to community resources. The program aims to build supports and reduce stressors, thereby promoting each family's capacity to foster their child's development as well as the family's self-reliance and resilience. The program also promotes the use of a medical home, immunizations, family planning and prenatal care to avoid costs associated with crisis care.

Drastic reduction to or elimination of Healthy Start will take away this safety net for vulnerable families, which will result in increased costs elsewhere, such as Child Welfare Services and foster care, and costs associated with developmental delays such as special education. Additional short-term costs of significant program reduction or elimination include unemployment for Healthy Start employees statewide and loss of income to the state from Medicaid reimbursements drawn down by the program.

Long-term costs associated with child abuse and neglect include school failure, substance abuse, an unprepared work force, mental health treatment, crime, as well as illnesses now known to be associated with early trauma and neglect. Healthy Start has been a national leader in prevention services for over 20 years, and has been a model for similar programs in over 35 states. Let us continue to be a model for protecting our most vulnerable citizens.

kim2 - Arline

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, April 06, 2009 10:42 AM
To: WAM Testimony
Cc: colleen@mfss.org
Subject: Testimony for HB1354 on 4/6/2009 9:30:00 AM

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Testimony for WAM 4/6/2009 9:30:00 AM HB1354

Conference room: 211
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Colleen Welty
Organization: Individual
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Phone: 808-572-0964
E-mail: colleen@mfss.org
Submitted on: 4/6/2009

Comments:

Dear Legislators, Please earmark TANF and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs so that these "up and running" programs can maintain their current staff, hire additional staff (those who have already been laid off or had their hours cut), and to provide additional training in domestic violence, maternal depression, and substance abuse training. These programs have family support workers who go into the homes and can spot these and other problems before they escalate into societal problems that cost much more to fix. Mahalo.