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MĀNOA

January 25, 2010

Representative John Mizuno, Chair  
Representative Scott Nishimoto, Co-chair  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HB 2138, Relating to Healthy Start

Dear Representatives Mizuno, Nishimoto and Committee Members:

I am Gail Breakey, Executive Director of the Hawaii Family Support Institute at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work testifying in support of HB 2138. The purpose of this legislation is the exempt the Healthy Start child abuse prevention intensive peri-natal home visiting services from (will look for and insert bill language). There are extremely important reasons for doing so:

- (1) About 80% of all serious abuse occurs among children under age five; around 43% of deaths occur among children less than one year of age.
- (2) While we are very fortunate in Hawaii to have a good differential response system, this is tertiary intervention after the fact, and very different from secondary prevention with high risk families to avert abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place. We know that abuse, neglect and poor parenting of very young children can continue for long periods of time before being observed and referred by the community. The impact on brain development in the first weeks and months of life can be severe and long-lasting
- (3) The social and economic consequences of early neglect and abuse far outweigh the costs of prevention. The National Institute on Trauma has published results of many studies showing high correlations between early trauma and neglect with substance abuse, mental illness, school failure, juvenile and adult crime. The ACE study shows correlations of adverse childhood experiences with a range of chronic health problems, including those causing greatest cost burden on the health care system. The US has the highest per capita incarceration rate among developed countries; largely related to substance abuse.
- (4) The universal screening and early intervention components of Healthy Start not only supports efforts to prevent child abuse before it occurs; it also is an entry point for high risk infants and toddlers into an Early Learning system. Hawaii has extremely high percentages of children entering kindergarten who do not meet school readiness assessments. In some neighborhoods the percentage of kindergarten age children who possess the cognitive and social-emotional skills to succeed in school is very low- less than 25% of those entering kindergarten. This is a major reason why school systems are failing.

- (5) Business communities across the country are understanding that early child development means community development; that success in school is a pre-requisite for an adequate workforce of competent adults.
- (6) The issue of young adult competency is now a concern of the military and our national security. The military recently published information that as many as 75% of young men applying for military service do not meet minimal requirements related to reading and writing.

Given the severe current economic crisis, we believe it is possible to achieve the goal of this bill without placing undue stress upon the state budget. During the last legislative session, the home visiting service providers developed a plan for sustaining a framework for a state-wide program in each community by maintaining a more streamlined hospital based assessment process and for providing intensive home visiting for only the highest risk families, those with assessment scores of 40 on a scale of 0-100. Initial research on the assessment instrument showed that the actual abuse rate among these families was about 50%. All of these children would be at risk for attachment and other parenting problems. This plan was supported and funded by the legislature, but funding but not released resulting in almost total collapse of the program.

The following is proposed for implementation of this legislation within the current fiscal environment:

- (1) In 2010, 2011, maintain existing services, and if possible support services that have been continued in Maui and by PACT on Oahu with short term private funds.
- (2) In 2010-2011, conduct planning for assessment and home visiting as part of the Early Learning Councils plan for a comprehensive early childhood system, which will further insure that this is an integrated system.
- (3) In 2011-2012, begin implementation of this plan for only the highest risk infants and their families, which limits the budgetary requirement.

These recommendations would result in zero or minimal fiscal impact now, would direct integration of these services into the larger early childhood initiative and cap the state's future required responsibility for these services. While provision of services beyond the core of services to the highest risk are needed, only the core of "highest risk" would be a required service. We hope that you will give serious consideration to this legislation.

Sincerely,

Gail Breakey, Executive Director  
Hawaii Family Support Institute

**Testimony on HB 2138, Relating to Healthy Start**

Chair: Rep. Ryan I. Yamane

Vice Chair: Scott Y. Nishimoto

Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 9 a.m.

Conference Room 329

Testimony submitted by: Howard S. Garval,

President & CEO, Child & Family Service

Good morning, Chair Yamane and Vice Chair Nishimoto and Committee members. I am Howard S. Garval, President & CEO of Child & Family Service, Hawaii's oldest and largest human service nonprofit organization with services on every island and touching the lives of 40,000 Hawaii residents from keiki to kupuna each year. I am testifying in support of HB 2138.

Last session the Legislature responded to the Administration's proposed elimination of the Healthy Start program by appropriating \$3 million a year over the two years of the biennium in tobacco funds in addition to \$1.5 million in TANF funds. Unfortunately, by July 2009 the Department of Health decided not to release the tobacco funds for Healthy Start and the \$1.5 million from the Department of Human Services in TANF funds was reduced to \$1.3 million as part of a 12% cut to all TANF funded programs. Currently, the only state funded Healthy Start programs that remain are one on Oahu that Child & Family Service operates and one in Hilo/Puna that is delivered by the YWCA of East Hawaii. While we certainly appreciate that DHS continued to support Healthy Start even though there were no funds provided by DOH, the model has been changed in at least three important ways that further reduce both the quantitative and qualitative impact. The three key changes are:

1. Currently only families with children birth to 6 months vs. the previous birth to 3 years are eligible for services. This is too narrow an eligibility criteria.
2. Referrals can only come from Child Welfare Services (CWS) or providers of such services (e.g. Enhanced Healthy Start, Family Strengthening Services, Domestic Abuse Shelters, Comprehensive Counseling Support Services and Voluntary Case Management). This is very significant since Healthy Start intervened before families were ever reported to CWS. Now with the exception of Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Maui Family Support Services that are funding a pure Healthy Start model with limited private funds that will not last much longer, the State has abandoned what I believe should be its responsibility to prevent child abuse before it happens. This would be secondary child abuse prevention vs. the tertiary prevention (i.e. after the fact) that CWS provides.
3. The major source of referrals to the Healthy Start program has been eliminated. There is no universal screening of all newborns which was the EID component of Healthy Start in which family assessment workers screened all parents of newborns for risk of child abuse.

I urge you to make child abuse prevention a state mandate for at least the highest risk families who we used to reach before they were reported to CWS. In fact, one rationale the Administration offered last session for eliminating the Healthy Program was that it was not a mandated service. It ought to be mandated and should be protected from budget cuts and restored when the economy improves to a statewide program for the highest risk families.

Mahalo for providing the opportunity to submit testimony.

Howard S. Garval, President & CEO, Child & Family Service



**PACT**

**PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER**

*A Family Service Agency*

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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

OHA - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SHELTER

PU'UHONUA DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE CENTER

RESPIRE CARE

**MAUI COUNTY PROGRAMS**

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INTENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

LANAI INTEGRATED SERVICES

FAMILY VISITATION CENTER

**KAUAI COUNTY PROGRAMS**

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INTENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

**MEMBER:**

CWLA

ALOHA UNITED WAY

COA

**TO:** Rep. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice-Chair  
Committee on Health

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

**DATE:** January 25, 2010

**RE: HB 2138**  
**In Support of Permanent Healthy Start Services**

My name is Julie Falicki. I am the Program Director for PACT's Hana Like Home Visitor Program. Hana Like was a member of the statewide Healthy Start Network for 20 years before it was de-funded by the Department of Health in 2009. 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 14 programs statewide serving over 9,000 clients annually. I am submitting testimony **in support of permanent Healthy Start services, which shall not be diminished or eliminated due to budgetary shortfalls.**

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 that 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 were supported by professional Child Development Specialists, who addressed developmental concerns, and Family Specialists, who addressed risk factors such as mental health issues and substance abuse.



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- INTENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

**MEMBER:**

- CWLA
- ALOHA UNITED WAY
- COA

During tough economic times, it is tempting to eliminate programs that may be viewed by some as non-essential. Families who were referred to Healthy Start were those were determined to be at risk for 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 was accomplished through direct services by the Healthy Start team, as well as referrals to community resources. The program aimed 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 promoted the use of a medical home, immunizations, family planning and prenatal care to avoid costs associated with crisis care.

Elimination of the Healthy Start program in 2009 took away this safety net for vulnerable families. We anticipate that this 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 elimination of the program include unemployment for Healthy Start employees statewide.

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 numerous medical problems 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 and wisely investing in our state's future.



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**TO:** Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair  
Representative Scott Nishimoto, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Health

**FROM:** Haaheo Mansfield  
Vice President of Programs  
Parents And Children Together

**DATE:** January 25, 2010

**RE:** In Support of HB 2138, Relating to Healthy Start

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**HAWAII ISLAND PROGRAM**

KEONEPOKO PRE-PLUS CHILD CARE

**MEMBER:**

CWLA  
ALOHA UNITED WAY  
COA

My name is Haaheo Mansfield. I am the Vice President of Programs at Parents And Children Together. PACT is one of Hawaii's leading not-for-profit human service providers, with 14 programs statewide providing services to over 9,000 individuals annually. PACT has been a member of the statewide Healthy Start Network since 1981. With the exception of universal screening at hospitals, our Hana Like Home Visitor Program remains the only program that provides services utilizing the original Healthy Start model. The program is currently supported by private funds that are projected to run out by June 2010. I am testifying in strong support of HB 2138 that exempts Healthy Start from the state allotment system and establishes the program in statute.

A year and a half ago, the PACT Board made the bold and visionary decision to commit private funds in support of Hana Like because it recognized that 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. The Board's decision about our agency budget was based on the values embedded in our mission and vision statements.

The PACT Board recognized that the integrity and strength of families is core to Hawaii's overall community wellness. The work of Healthy Start is to ensure each family has sufficient skills to provide their newborn with the kind of quality care and environment that promotes and sustains successful outcomes, for the newborn as well as for the family. It is important work. It is work that promotes our stated values.

In years past, this Committee has heard testimony regarding the effectiveness of the original Healthy Start model. The scientific community has deemed the model to be effective, consumer voices have echoed their agreement with the research findings and a number of high profile citizens have come forward to leverage their reputations in support of Healthy Start.

We are here once more. I strongly urge you to make child abuse prevention a state mandate by establishing Healthy Start in statute through HB 2138. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this important issue.