

hscadv **HAWAII STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Date: February 9, 2009

To: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair and Representative Tom Brower, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

From: Carol Lee, Executive Director

Re: HB 571 RELATING TO CHILDREN

Hearing Date and Time: Monday, February 9, 2009, 8:15 am

Good morning Representative Mizuno, Representative Brower, and Committee members. The Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony relating to HB 724. We support the intent of this Bill, and have concerns.

As a statewide coalition of domestic violence programs, the Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence mission is to ensure the safety and protection of women in intimate relationships by coordinating domestic violence prevention and intervention services, affecting public policy, and establishing coordinated and consistent procedures and actions by the civil and criminal justice systems in Hawaii. We are concerned about budgets for core services for domestic violence programs and agencies throughout Hawaii.

While HSCADV wholeheartedly supports holding parents accountable to court orders regarding child visitation, we recognize that the parent who fails to make the notification may be an abused partner, for whom any contact with the perpetrator may increase the risk of harm to her or her child(ren). Re-scheduling the visit may pose the same danger.

Historically, the time of visitation exchanges has been used by perpetrators of abuse to further abuse their former partners. In recognition of this, supervised visitation centers have been cultivated throughout the United States and here in Hawaii. Due to the loss of federal funding, visitation center services have been and are being further reduced on Oahu and the Big Island and eliminated on Kauai and Maui. Since it is likely that other visitation arrangements will be ordered by the courts, victims need to be given the right and opportunity to protect themselves and their children from abuse at the time of exchanges.

While we recognize that failing to appear for and not rescheduling visits are problems, there needs to be an "out" for battered women.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

~ Together we can do amazing things ~