

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR



LILLIAN B. KOLLER, ESQ.  
DIRECTOR

HENRY OLIVA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 22, 2010

TO: Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.C.R. 165 - REQUESTING AN AUDIT OF THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM IN PROCESSING AND INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND MISUSE OF CHILD SUPPORT**

Hearing: Monday, March 22, 2010, 10:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this resolution is to request the Auditor to conduct an audit of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Child Welfare Services program in processing and investigating complaints of child abuse and neglect and misuse of child support.

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

The statement in this resolution that child welfare services is responsible for investigating complaints of the misuse of child support payments is not correct. The Child Support Enforcement Agency is in the Department of the Attorney General.

The Department is responsible for investigating complaints of child abuse and neglect. There is also ample evidence that, contrary to the allegation that complaints of

abuse or neglect were ignored, we have successfully implemented a Child Welfare System that has greatly improved our response to report of abuse and neglect as a result of the aggressive systemic changes implemented by the Department.

- The Department has been audited as recently as June 2009 by the Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), who acknowledged the progress the Department has made in decreasing the time between the assignment of a report for investigation and a face-to-face contact with the alleged victim.
- The Department successfully implemented a statewide centralized intake process that uses an intake tool and protocol that was developed in collaboration with the National Resource Center for Child Abuse that has gained national recognition for its success in assessing and responding to reports of abuse or neglect.
- The Department provides voluntary services without child welfare services intervention to families to assist them in maintaining children in safe homes.
- The number of children in foster homes has been decreased by one-half since 2004.
- Hawaii's recurrence rate of abuse or neglect, 3.9% for SFY 09 and 1.8% for the most recent quarter is one of the lowest in the nation.

Hawaii, including all the other states in the nation who were audited by the ACF, is required to participate in a federally approved Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address any areas needing improvement found in the federally-mandated Child and Family Services Review. This means that Hawaii's program and outcomes will already be closely monitored by the Federal Government for the next two years as they were during the last PIP.

This audit is an unnecessary waste of limited State resources at a time when the State is facing a \$1.23 billion shortfall because it is duplicative of what the Federal Government is already doing and has been doing for the past several years and also this audit will divert the time and attention of child welfare services staff whose primary responsibility is to ensure the safety, permanency and well being of children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**March 19, 2010**

**The Honorable John Mizuno,  
Chair Committee on Human Services  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 436  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813**

**Re: H.C.R. 165 - REQUESTING AN AUDIT OF THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM IN PROCESSING AND INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND MISUSE OF CHILD SUPPORT.**

**Hearing: Monday, March 22, 2010 at 10:30 a.m.**

**Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Brower, and Members of the Committee on Human Service:**

**Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure. I work in Representative Yamane's Office, but I am testifying as a private citizen. I strongly support H.C.R. 165.**

**Growing up I was abused. At the time, I didn't know it though. I learned to endure the pain, and accept it. I did not think I was eligible to receive help from government agencies that handled complaints of child abuse because I did not recognize my mother as an abuser. As a child, the only right I thought I had was the right to complain about the misuse of the child support money my father provided while my mother starved and abused me.**

**In 2005, when I was 17-years-old I called the Hawaii Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services Program for help. By that time, things had gotten so bad that I didn't think I would see my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. But instead of helping me find a way to escape my mother's abuse or receive the monetary support that was rightfully mine, the Child Welfare Services Program only referred me to the Child Support Enforcement Agency, which was unable to help me. This not only reaffirmed my belief that I did not deserve the help I needed to escape my abuser, but it also left me helpless as the abuse intensified.**

**The efficiency and effectiveness of the Child Welfare Services Program needs to be investigated and improved so that children do not have to suffer through abuse without receiving assistance.**

**Thank you,**

**Maria Grant**