

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809

February 10, 2011

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

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 718 - RELATING TO FOSTER YOUTH**

Hearing: Thursday, February 10, 2011; 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 718 is to require the Department of Human Services to develop and administer a program assisting former foster youth with housing options.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates and supports the intent of this measure; however, we must respectfully oppose this bill. Given the State's current fiscal difficulties it would not be prudent to pursue enactment of new general fund appropriation that would be required for this bill.

The Department believes that the creation of a new program and related rule changes are not needed to implement the intent of this bill because several of the bill's components are already addressed in our current purchase of services (POS) contracts relating to transition planning and the array of services for transitioning youth. The contracts for independent living services already include the

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requirement to provide youth with information and linkage to programs to obtain housing as well as a provision for transitional housing/rental support. This is reinforced by the requirement in the Foster Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act [Public Law 110-351] to develop a transition plan with youth in care during the 90-day period prior to their 18th birthday that will include specific options on housing.

Contract requirements will be clarified regarding the provisions to counsel youth regarding housing options and to assist with obtaining documentation and completing forms.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

House Bill 718

Submitted by: Alex J. Logan, Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition

P.O. Box 390-302 Keauhou, HI 96739

Hearing Date: February 10, 2011

Testimony in Support:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 718 requiring the Department of Human Services to establish and administer a program to assist former foster youth with housing options. I have the opportunity to work with current and former foster youth through the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition. Too many times have we encountered youth that have formerly been under the state's protection and are now currently homeless. I support the development of a program such as this one to assist as many former foster youth as possible in living in a safe and secure environment.

The only recommendation that I would propose to the department is the utilization of "Shaka" an online information system for foster youth that is currently being developed. Many of the components of this bill such as the registry, needed documentation and housing options could be uploaded to this online system once it has been activated.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alex J. Logan, Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition



Email to: HUSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Hearing on: February 10, 2011 @1:45 p.m.
Conference Room # 016

DATE: February 7, 2011

TO: **House Committee on Human Services**
Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Representative Jo Jordon, Vice Chair

FROM: Allen Cardines, Jr., Executive Director

RE: Support for HB 718 | Relating to Foster Youth

Honorable Chairs and members of the House Committee on Human Services, I am Allen Cardines, representing the Hawaii Family Forum. Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii, representing a network of various Christian Churches and denominations. We support the intent of this bill but leave the technicalities and process of implementation to the experts.

Hawaii Family Forum has worked very closely with HOPE In the Name of Christ (INC) foster care and adoption agency which has a contract with the Department of Human Services to recruit, train, and support adoptive parents for Hawaii's 'difficult to place' foster children.

This bill addresses the children that have been abused, neglected and/or abandoned by their birth parents, the very people who are supposed to protect them. Their birth parents parental rights had to be terminated so they would have a chance at a safe and happy life and some of them have been in more foster homes than anyone cares to count for more years than any child should ever endure. Currently they live in temporary foster homes, waking up every day knowing that one day they will age out of the system and be left without benefits, including healthcare.

These children are usually older and have special needs and challenging behaviors because of the trauma they have been through in their short lives. Because of this, we agree that increasing support for those who are older than 21 is vital. Given the start these kids have had in life, many need a little extra time to get their lives together.

Please support these changes and eliminate this inequity by extending these benefits to foster kids.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.