

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 702 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 531-2198 Fax: (808) 534-1199

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

LATE Testimony

March 14, 2011

To: Representative John Mizuno, Chair
And members of the Committee on Human Services

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 921 RELATING TO MINORS

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of more than 50 youth-serving organizations, strongly supports SB 921 Relating to Minors.

HYSN worked with the Department of Human Services on their proposed amendments to the bill and we fully support them.

This bill will increase the safety of minors who are runaway or homeless by allowing them to consent for admission to an emergency youth shelter if their parents/guardians cannot be reached to provide consent or the parent refuses consent but will not allow the youth to return home.

The number of youth who cannot obtain parental/guardian consent for shelter admission is small, but the consequences when youth are forced to remain on the street are severe. These youth are at high risk for physical or sexual assault, poor nutrition, inadequate health care, and inability to attend school. Child Welfare Services is usually unable to intervene as it has very specific criteria for opening a case and these situations do not usually meet the threshold.

Admitting a youth to shelter not only assures a safe place to stay, it allows shelter staff to begin the process of addressing the family issues that led to the youth's leaving home. Family counseling can be initiated to facilitate the minor's safe return home and, if that is not in the best interests of the child, alternative housing can be arranged.

This bill grew out of the work of the Safe Shelter for Youth Work Group, established by legislative resolution in 2008. All members of the Work Group agreed that allowing youth to provide consent for shelter was a key action to increase the safety of homeless youth.

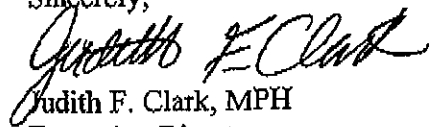
Alan Shinn, President
Judith F. Clark, Executive Director
Adolescent Services Program, Kaiser
Ferdinand Medical Care System
Aloha House
American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii
Assistive Technology Resource Ctr. of HI
Bay Clinic, Inc.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu
Big Island Substance Abuse Council
Blueprint for Change
Bobby Benson Center
Catholic Charities Hawaii
Central Oahu Youth Services Assn.
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii
College Connections
Community Assistance Center
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC, Inc.
Family Support Services of West Hawaii
Friends of the Missing Child Center of HI
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.
Hawaii Behavioral Health
Hawaii Student Television
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition
Hina Mauka Teen Care
Hui Malama Learning Center
Kahi Mohala Behavioral Health
Kaunakakai Kids, Inc.
KEY (Kaula-Heia Ecumenical Youth)
Project
Kids Behavioral Health
Kids Hurt Too
Kokua Kahi Valley
Kula No Na Poe Hawaii
Lanai Community Health Center
Life Foundation
Marina Foundation
The Maui Farm, Inc.
Maui Youth and Family Services
Palama Settlement
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together (FACT)
Planned Parenthood of Hawaii
Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center
Kona Unit
REAL
Salvation Army Family Intervention Svcs.
Salvation Army Family Treatment Svcs.
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susanah Wesley Community Center
The Catalyst Group
The Children's Alliance of Hawaii
Waikiki Health Center
Women Helping Women
YouthVision
YWCA of Kauai



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Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director