

SB921,SD1

Testimony

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Alan Shinn, President

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Adolescent Services Program, Kaiser
Permanente Medical Care System

Aloha House

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii

Assistive Technology Resource Ctrs. 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

Kama'aina Kids, Inc.

KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth)
Project

Kids Behavioral Health

Kids Hurt Too

Kokua Kalihi Valley

Kula No Na Poe Hawaii

Lanai Community Health Center

Life Foundation

Marimed Foundation

The Maui Farm, Inc.

Maui Youth and Family Services

Palama Settlement

P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.

Parents and Children Together (PACT)

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

Susannah Wesley Community Center

The Catalyst Group

The Children's Alliance of Hawaii

Waikiki Health Center

Women Helping Women

YouthVision

YWCA of Kauai

February 22, 2011

To: Senator Clayton Hee, Chair
And members of the Committee on Judiciary and Labor

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 921 SD1 RELATING TO MINORS

Hawaii Youth Services Network, a statewide coalition of more than 50 youth-serving organizations, strongly supports SB 921 SD1 Relating to Minors.

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.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director