

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



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February 7, 2011

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

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 717 - RELATING TO MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD
ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Hearing: Thursday, February 7, 2011; 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 717 is to broaden the group of persons required to report child abuse and neglect to include family members, unless they are victims of domestic violence.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services supports this bill because it will help to ensure the safety of children.

Currently, the law does not require family members to immediately report any known or suspected child abuse or neglect to the department or the police. In many instances, the family has first-hand knowledge of abuse or neglect situations within their family not available to other persons who have no interactions within the family. However, because of the family's connection, the abuse or neglect is not reported, sometimes resulting in serious health and safety consequences for the child.

The Department appreciates the sensitive and volatile nature of domestic abuse, however, we cannot support the exclusion of victims of domestic violence - "under this section if the alleged perpetrator is actively abusing both the child and the family member." This is one of the most dangerous situations for a child and one that must be reported to help ensure the safety of the child. The current reporting process allows reporters to remain anonymous and/or to request that their identity be kept confidential and not shared with the perpetrator.

This amendment will help ensure that instances of known child abuse or neglect will be reported, as required by law, directly and without delay to CWS or the police by those who observe it including family members. This will also ensure that the best evidence of abuse or neglect is obtained because it is reported directly by those who observe it which will provide CWS and the police the opportunity to intervene to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.