



**HB 1039**  
**RELATING TO FOSTER CARE**  
House Committee on Human Services

February 14, 2013

9:30 a.m.

Room 329

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB1039, which would allow former foster youth who are attending an institution of higher education as a full-time student, to stay in the foster care system until the age of 23.

According to a 2012 Department of Human Services (DHS) report, approximately 46 percent of the children placed in foster care in Hawai'i are of Native Hawaiian ancestry. We are primarily concerned that when foster youth exit the system, they no longer have a safety net to ensure a successful transition to adulthood. At the same time, we encourage these youth to pursue a higher education as it is considered one of the pathways to become self-sufficient, earn a higher salary, and a better quality of life. Permitting former foster youth to stay in the system until the age of 23 while they earn a college degree would give them equal footing amongst their peers.

OHA also supports HB873 and SB1104 which would set the requirement for extending the age of foster care to age 21.

Therefore, OHA urges this committee to **PASS** HB1039. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.