



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809

February 12, 2013

TO: The Honorable Mele Carroll, Chair &
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1315 – RELATING TO FOSTER CARE**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 12, 2013; 9:30 AM
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 1315 is to 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.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates the intent of this bill but does not believe it is necessary. Former foster youth who are attending institutions of higher learning are already receiving financial and health benefits from the State and the federal government.

Currently, when a foster youth exits foster care and is enrolled in an institution of higher learning, the youth is eligible to receive State-funded \$529 monthly allowance (Higher Education Payment) until the youth reaches age 27. This payment may be used by the youth for housing, food or other basic necessities.

Also, former foster youth who are enrolled in higher education are eligible for federally-funded Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) which provide up to \$5,000 per year until age 23. This money may be used to cover essential costs of going to school,

including housing, food, transportation, child care, books, and computers. There are also scholarships, grants, and loans that former foster youth are eligible for to assist in defraying the costs of attending institutions of higher education (e.g. Geist Scholarships and Pell Grants).

Through CWS and its purchase of service contracts, the Department currently offers Independent Living Services to foster youth and former foster youth ages 12 – 26, which includes transition planning, case management, and Youth Circles. These comprehensive services are made available to former foster youth regardless of their enrollment in school.

For medical coverage, former foster youth will be covered fully by the QUEST program up to age 26, pending approval by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Approval is expected within the next several months.

The Department opposes the amending of Section 346-16 to redefine “former foster youth” with age specification. The Department believes that any child who aged-out while in foster care is considered a “former foster youth” regardless of current age; it is therefore unnecessary to extend the age limit to age 23.

The Department opposes the amending of 587A-4 to redefine “child” with age specification to include age 23. The Department does not believe that reports of child abuse/neglect in 587A should include reports about children who are legally adults (18 – 23). Also, with its current staffing, the Department will not be able to manage the intakes or caseload of children up to age 23.

The Department of Human Services respectfully requests that the Legislature consider H.B. 873, an Administration bill that proposes to add a new part to chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to establish a new program called the young adult voluntary foster care program. The young adult voluntary foster care program will support former

foster youth in achieving permanency in the transition to adulthood and in becoming independent and self-sufficient by extending voluntary foster care to age 21.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu
Big Island Substance Abuse Council
Blueprint for Change
Bobby Benson Center
Catholic Charities Hawaii
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC, Inc.
Family Support Hawaii
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
KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth)
Project
Kids Hurt Too
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Life Foundation
Marimed Foundation
Maui Youth and Family Services
Palama Settlement
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together (PACT)
Planned Parenthood of Hawaii
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
YWCA of Kauai

January 30, 2013

To: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Human Services

Testimony in Support of the Intent of HB 1315 Relating to Foster Care

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports the intent of HB 1315 Relating to Foster Care.

HYSN prefers HB 873 Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act because it allows a broader group of foster youth the option of remaining in care to age 21. In addition to youth enrolled in college, SB 1104 extends eligibility to youth who are enrolled in vocational training programs, those working 80 hours a month or more, and those who are incapable of participating in college/vocational programs or employment.

Young people who age out of foster care at age 18 face significant challenges. The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth showed that by age 24:

- 40% of young people had been homeless since leaving foster care;
- 1/4 did not have a high school diploma (compared to 7.35% of peers who did not experience foster care);
- Half were unemployed (twice as high as the general young adult population);
- 81% of males had been arrested (compared to 17% of all young adults);

Outcomes are much better for young people who stay in care to age 21 (from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief - :

- Those required to leave care at age 18 were 2.7 times more likely to have been homeless;

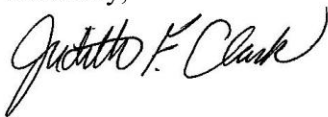
- Remaining in care more than doubled the odds that young people would be working or in school at age 19;
- Those remaining in care were twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21;
- Young women remaining in care experienced a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy before age 20;
- Those remaining in care were more likely to access independent living services.

Extending foster care to age 21 has financial benefits for both the young adult and society. Increasing opportunities to complete college and vocational programs results in higher earning potential over a lifetime. Extended foster care decreases costs to society from early child bearing as teen mothers are 2.2 times more likely to have a child placed in foster care than those who delay child bearing until age 20 or 21.

Most young people are not prepared to take on all of the responsibilities of adult living at age 18. Our youth in foster care deserve this support in making successful transitions to adulthood.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith F. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director

To: Rep. Mele Carroll, Chair, Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, and the Committee on Human Services

From: The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC)

Re: In support of HB1315, Extending foster care to 23 for youth in higher education

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 09:30 am, Conference Room 329

We, the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC), support HB1315. HFYC is a youth-led non-profit organization that empowers youth voice within the community and state to advocate and support current and former foster youth. Every year we reach at least 300 current and former foster youth.

We support HB1315 because we, as a group who have experienced life in the foster system, believe that extending foster care to the age of 23 for youth in higher education will allow the youth to succeed while gaining valuable life skills necessary for career success. The foster youth who are evicted at age 18 often do not have the financial, emotional, or housing support from their biological family. Rhonda Nichols, in 2001, conducted a study on "Identifying the Transition Needs of Foster Youth in Oahu and East Hawaii." She found that 20% of youth aged 18-24 were homeless within that year and that an additional 43% were at risk of becoming homeless. 33% of those youth's salaries (averaging \$717) were going towards their rent (average rent at the time: \$242). 24% of the youth had no health insurance. A group of aged 17-19 year old youth in that same study reported 28% homelessness within that year.

If foster parents are given the additional financial help from this bill then they will be better able to continue to support their foster youth, not only through the end of their high school graduation, but as they begin those first years of college. Within HFYC's own Oahu Board, we have five out of nine members who are currently enrolled in higher education. Three of our Board members are employed and two of those have multiple jobs. More than half of our salaries are allocated towards rent payment. Two of our Board members are living in the school dormitory, one youth lives in a group home, and the remaining members are renting shared rooms. Although some of the HFYC board members may no longer qualify for benefits from the passing of HB1315, we strongly believe that those who do and the upcoming generations of foster youth deserve this chance to have additional support because we don't want anyone to have to struggle and suffer the way that we did. Please vote yes on HB1315.

Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition

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To: Rep. Mele Carroll, Chair, Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, and the Committee on Human Services

From: Rochelle Coop

Re: In support of bill HB 1315, Extending foster care to 23 for youth in higher education

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 09:30 am, Conference Room 329

I am the Youth Outreach Coordinator for Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition on Maui. I am also a former Foster Youth.

At the time I was in Foster care there was no ILP, or “readiness for the world” training. I had moved into four different foster families in the last 4 years of high school, barely having time or courage to bond with the foster families. I went off to College at the age of 18 years old, without the support of a family. My foster parents, no longer supported by the state as I had turned 18, were unable to help me in times of need while I found my way in the big new world. It was “sink or swim”. And I struggled and really floundered around those first few years. Somehow I survived it all, but at the end of my stretched out 5 years of college to be a social worker, I quit just before earning my degree. That was only one of many choices I made along the way; that if I had the guiding hand of a parental figure to turn to, I would have made better choices and been so much happier, productive and healthier.....and I believe I would have an easier life even to this day. The tremendous stress and physiological impact I went through “going it alone” those first few years of adulthood, while recovering from a challenging childhood were very tumultuous. This suffering could be relieved and chances for success in building a healthy life would surely increase significantly with extended time with foster families and the support this bill, HB 1315, would bring. After all a foster youth goes through by the time they turn 18, it doesn't seem economical or thoughtful to have this support end abruptly without considering that healthy human development and needs required to grow up doesn't just END at 18. The opportunity this bill: HB 1315, has to make a monumental difference to countless youth is hopeful and exciting. I pray for this evolution passionately. Please vote yes on HB 1315.

Rochelle Coop

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To: Rep. Mele Carroll, Chair, Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, and the Committee on Human Services

From: Savannah Mariani

Re: In support of bill HB 1315, Extending foster care to 23 for youth in higher education

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 09:30 am, Conference Room 329

I am a former foster youth. While in care, my last placement was a very nurturing and supportive one. My guardians took the time to make sure I was prepared for adulthood and they supported all of my educational goals. I made the decision to leave my home with my foster parents just after graduating high school because I felt that I was well prepared. However, there were many struggles and obstacles that I faced that I was not entirely prepared for which included housing, employment, and learning to budget effectively. Also, the most challenging aspect of living on my own was not knowing who to talk to or what to do when I was having difficulty coping with stresses of my everyday life like relationships, financial stability, and school. I was fortunate enough to have had a wonderful foster parent who took her duties past my 18th birthday.

However, I am aware that many youth are not as fortunate to have a strong support system. Among the many youth who do not have continuous support after aging out were my siblings. My youngest sister had to move out of her foster home two weeks after graduation. She had a hard time finding stable housing and eventually came to stay with me. I supported my sister the best I could, especially since she ended up pregnant at 18. But I had a hard time supporting myself. Although things worked out for her and she now has a beautiful family with her boy friend and daughter I think that if she was able to stay in a stable supportive home things would have been easier. She needed the same support I had to prepare for adulthood, and she needed guidance for her future. I believe that if she was allowed to stay longer in her placement she would have gotten a better chance at getting into school and it would have given her the time she needed to prepare for independence. I am in full support of foster care being extended to 23 for youth in higher education, if a youth is in agreement. I believe it will give support and stability to the youth and help them become successful young adults. Please vote yes on HB 1315.

Savannah Mariani

Savannah.mariani@yahoo.com

808-756-5012

Date: February 12, 2013

To: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
And members of the Committee on Human Services

Testimony in Support of HB 1315 Relating to Foster Care.

I support HB 1315 because this bill will be beneficial for current foster youth.

I believe that having the opportunity to live at a foster home after age 18 will help support young people transitioning from foster care to independence in life: residence, employment, education, finances, romance, and possibly even parenting. This will also help fertilize vital interdependent relationships into adulthood.

At age 17, a foster youth has little control over decisions that impact their lives. Suddenly at 18, they are treated as fully capable adults who must fulfill adult responsibilities and expectations. Without strong preparation for this new adult role, young people frequently fall short of these expectations and lose the very support that is critical to successful transition to adulthood.

I went into foster care at age 7. I was very used to things being structured. When I got out of foster care at 18, I was very scared because I didn't have many people to count on, and it is scary going out into the world for the first time by yourself. Explaining to your potential landlord that you have no idea why you need a bank account to rent an apartment or have no idea what a deposit means isn't a fun conversation starter either.

I was 17 when I graduated from high school and first attended college. I turned 18 in the middle of my first college semester. The first thing my social worker did was make me an independent living plan for the future. How would you feel if I was to map out your life without knowing exactly what you were looking for?

Having the opportunity to stay in their foster homes during such a tough transition will help them pursue their post-secondary goals. I am positive that you will see more foster youth graduate from college or chosen vocational program. A higher education leads one to generate more earnings, which leads to higher tax revenue, and young adults will be less likely to become dependent on public assistance. There is a high probability they will not be homeless. And best of all, they will be better prepared to raise the next generation because they are better prepared to be self-supporting and care for their future children, so those children will not need to enter foster care.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Grace M. Houghton