



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary

The Hon. Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Hon. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 07, 2013
2:02 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

By

R. Mark Browning
Deputy Chief Judge/Senior Judge
Family Court of the First Circuit

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Purpose: Establishes a new Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care program.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports this bill.

We have long been aware of the barriers that youth face when they are in foster custody at the time they turn 18 years old. All of us who are parents of young adults know too well that there are barriers enough in this day and age even for children who have stable homes. To “age-out” without the benefit of a stable and committed loving family leads to high rates of homelessness and unemployment. We are hopeful that this bill will ease the journey for the youth who are willing and able to make use of it. We are also hopeful that the entire child protective network in the community can double their efforts to ensure that all youth will reach the threshold eligibility requirements at least by their 18th birthdays.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.



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

February 7, 2013

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 873 - RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY
FOSTER CARE ACT**

Hearing: Thursday, February 7, 2013; 2:02 p.m.
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 873 is to add a new part to chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to care for and supervise eligible foster youth until their twenty-first birthday. Chapter 346-A will 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 twenty-one.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services strongly supports this Administration bill. This legislation is necessary to extend foster care services for young adults in foster care with the DHS to age twenty-one. This bill would statutorily extend services such as independent living services, case planning, permanency planning, placement and judicial oversight for former foster youth up to age twenty-one. For the youth in foster care who have not been able to be reunified

with their family, adopted or obtain a legal guardian by age eighteen and are not ready to be on their own, extended care can provide safe and stable housing and prevent homelessness for these young people.

Studies have shown that young people who continue to receive services until age twenty-one have better outcomes in several areas including educational achievement and employment, thereby contributing to a more stable workforce and increased lifetime earnings. Increased support for transitioning youth will facilitate the youth's continued development and preparation for successful independence such as decreases in homelessness, dependency on public welfare benefits, and drug dependency, and incarceration.

The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351) allows states to claim federal reimbursement for the costs of caring for and supervising title IV-E eligible foster youth until their twenty-first birthday .

The funds requested are based on calculations prepared with support from consultants who have worked with other states. The figures include projected federal reimbursements. These funds will help to ensure that young adults have the supports they need at a critical point of transition: when they are seeking to complete secondary education; navigate admissions processes and complete postsecondary education and vocational training; and establish themselves in the workforce and adult relationships. Having the supports in place to complete these transition tasks successfully can lay the foundation for long-term positive outcomes for youth leaving foster care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



National Association of Social Workers Hawai'i Chapter

February 4, 2013

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Representative Della Au Belatti
Representative Tom Brower
Representative Rida T.R. Cabanilla
Representative Mele Carroll
Representative Ken Ito
Representative Derek S.K. Kawakami
Representative Chris Lee
Representative Clift Tsuji
Representative Jessica Wooley
Representative Bob McDermott
Representative Cynthia Thielen

February 7, 2013 2:02 Conference Room 325

FROM: Marty Oliphant, Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii Chapter

RE: HB 873 Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act - **SUPPORT**

Representative Karl Rhoads Chair, Representative Sharon E. Har Vice Chair, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary, my name is Marty Oliphant. I serve as the Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Hawai'i Chapter (NASW). NASW supports HB 873 Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Act.

Transition into adulthood could be a complex task for youth. With the support of caring and responsible adults, youth in foster care tend to have better outcomes. Providing youth the opportunity to remain in foster care until 21 years of age will have a significant positive impact on the lives of the young adults. Youth in foster placement may be faced with many obstacles and challenges. Having a home base with caring adults during the transitional period does increase the youth's chances of being successful later in life.

NASW believes this important legislation will provide young adults with the support they will need to move forward in becoming a vital part of our community.

I urge your favorable consideration of HB 873. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



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SOCIETY OF HAWAII

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Calvin Pang, Esq.
President, Board of Directors

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Esq.
Executive Director

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
HB873 - RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT

Committee on Judiciary - Room 325

Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon Har, Vice-Chair

February 7, 2013 at 2:02 p.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii submits testimony in support of HB873 – Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act. This bill would allow a foster child to voluntarily consent to continued foster care until age 21 in order to continue to receive support from the state.

Legal Aid is the only statewide provider of guardian ad litem services to children in foster custody. Since 1996, we have looked out for the best interest of over 3,000 children in the foster care system. We have worked with youth of all ages from birth to eighteen. Some of the most difficult situations are those where youth have remained under the jurisdiction of the Department of Human Services and “age out” because they have reached “adulthood.” For many of these youth, they might be given their very few personal items in a garbage bag and shown the way out the door of the foster home they are living to find themselves homeless on the streets. Others who are more lucky, are able to continue to live with their foster parents, but only while they are going to school.

This program would help to provide a bridge for those leaving the foster care system by providing critical support between ages eighteen and twenty-one. We applaud the Department of Human Services and its various partners for the development of this bill and the recognition that going to college or vocational education is not the only way in which a foster youth can be successful.

We ask for your support in passing this bill to provide foster youth additional opportunities to succeed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina
Executive Director

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii (Legal Aid) is the only legal service provider with offices on every island in the state, and in 2011 provided legal assistance to over 10,000 Hawai'i residents in the areas of consumer fraud, public assistance, family law, the prevention of homelessness, employment, protection from domestic violence, and immigration. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice through legal advocacy, outreach and education for those in need.

To: Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair, Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair, and committee members of the Committee on Judiciary

From: The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC)

Re: In support of bill HB873, Foster care to 21

Date: Thursday, February 07, 2013, 2:02 p.m., Conference Room 325

We, the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC), support HB873. 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 HB873 because we, as a group who have experienced life in the foster system, believe that extending foster care to the age of 21 will allow the youth the time they need to mature and gain valuable life skills necessary to succeed in life. 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 vital years of young adulthood. 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 may no longer qualify for benefits from the passing of HB873, 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.

Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition

245 N. Kukui St. Ste 102 Honolulu HI, 96817
(808)545-5683
fosteryouthspeak@gmail.com



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:02 pm
Conference Room 32r

FROM: Linda Santos, President & CEO
Family Programs Hawai'i

RE: HB 873 Related to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Representatives Rhoads and Har,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Family Programs Hawai'i specializes in services related to the child welfare system. Assisting youth successfully emancipate from foster care is one of our most important program emphasis. We operate 5 different programs working with this population. These programs are located on Oahu and in East Hawaii and are funded primarily by foundations grants or contracts. They were developed because of our concern for the poor outcomes we have seen for emancipating youth.

In the last 10 + years, the Federal Government, as well as the State of Hawaii, has recognized that youth in foster care need additional benefits and services since they are most often without resources when they become 18. New laws have been passed to assist them. The Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act provides states with the opportunity to improve the outcomes of these youth. Other states that have already enacted have reported success.

We strongly support this bill to set the requirements needed to extend the foster care to 21.



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LAURIE ARIAL TOCHIKI
President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:02pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Delia Ulima, Statewide Initiative Coordinator**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

Re: **In Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult
Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Aloha! My name is Delia Ulima and I am a Statewide Initiative Coordinator for the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative. We are the local site for the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and EPIC 'Ohana is the lead agency for this Initiative in Hawai'i. The Initiative works with systems, such as the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare, other service providers and partners within the public and private sector to create opportunities and support transitioning foster youth to successfully move into adulthood and become a contributing part of our community.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873, which provides young people with the voluntary option to remain in a developmentally appropriate foster care program up to age 21.

The State of Hawaii is the "parent" of young people who are in permanent foster care custody. As "wards" of the State, they are in a unique legal class. For those who exit out of this system at age 18, they often find themselves without the necessary supports that any 18-year old would need to survive, let alone thrive. Nationally, outcomes for transitioning foster youth are grim. By the time they are 24, one in four will experience homelessness, 77% of young women will become pregnant, only 3% will obtain a four year college degree, earn significantly less than their peers and 81% of males will be arrested. A Chapin Hall Study showed that the extension of foster care to 21 resulted in the following benefits: increased college attendance, increased earnings, decreased unintended pregnancies, decreased usage of public assistance, decreased homelessness and decreased incarceration.

States currently have the option to extend eligibility across certain Title IV-E programs. Under the 2008 Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, federal funds may be drawn down to support the extension of foster care when certain employment and education requirements are met. Currently, there are over 13 states that have opted to extend foster care beyond age 18.

In closing, I would ask this committee to consider what kind of future we would like these young people to look forward to. Think about what our own families provided for us in our very young adulthood? What do we expect to provide for our own biological children? Most in this room would find it unrealistic to expect our own 18 year old children to be completely financially, physically, mentally and emotionally on their own with no parental guidance, no financial supports for a first car, first apartment, support with college, spending money, medical coverage and basic love and encouragement. Providing an option for young people in our foster care system to have additional supports beyond 18 makes ethical and in the long run, financial, sense. We respectfully ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. Mahalo nui loa.



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President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, February 7, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Noy Worachit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Good afternoon members of the House Committee on Judiciary. My name is Noy Worachit, I am 19 years old and I am the Vice-President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative on Oahu. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 which supports the voluntary option to extend jurisdiction for foster youth beyond age 18. I support the intent of this bill to have foster care extended up to age 21.

For some of those who have aged out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own or they lack the support they need to be successful adults, which is why I feel it is important that we should have the option of being in foster care until the age of 21. When I was 18, I was a single parent to my 2 year old daughter. I was working two jobs and also attending school full-time. The support I received throughout my transition out of foster care is similar to what extended foster care would be like in a sense. For example, my foster parents allowed my daughter and me to stay in their home even after I turned 18. They also cared for my daughter while I went to work and school and eventually became temporary legal guardians of my daughter to allow me to pursue my dreams of having a career in the military. It gave me peace of mind as a mother to know that no matter what happened, my children and I will always have someone to lean on for support.

Currently, I am only a few semesters away from obtaining my Associate's degree in Administration of Justice and I have also been with the same employer for nearly 2 years. I truly believe that I would not be here today if it were not for the support of my foster parents.



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However, this is not the case for most foster youth. Many of them have very little or no support when they age out of foster care.

In Hawaii, 33% of former foster youth in a recent poll, ages 18 to 23, reported having couch-surfed or moved from home to home because they did not have a place to stay. That is more than the national average of 24% of former foster youth who experience some form of homelessness by age 24. In recent studies, 67 % of youth formerly in foster care are dependent on public assistance compared to only 7% of their peers who have never experienced foster care. And by age 23 and 24, youth formerly in care will earn a yearly median of \$8,000 compared to their peers at \$18,300. By extending foster care to 21, it will help increase positive outcomes in employment and decrease negative outcomes in the areas of homelessness and dependency on public assistance.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important **option** for youth, and that they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible.

In closing, I ask that you afford us the same opportunities as you would for your own children and I ask this committee to support the intent of and pass House Bill 873. Thank you very much.





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President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany Tuilata, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Good afternoon, members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Tiffany Tuilata and I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 and support the intent of the voluntary foster care act, which extends the option to remain in foster care up to age 21.

I'm 24 and I aged out of foster care while on the run. I immediately found myself homeless with no support or knowledge on the resources available. When you find yourself sleeping in public restrooms or beaches, you begin to wish you had someone you could rely on or someone who could lend a helping hand. Just thinking of where my next meal would come from or when it would be safe to sleep in the park, it isn't a feeling that any youth should endure. As recent as a year ago, I found myself homeless with two children.

Thankfully, I participated in the Opportunity Passport Program, a program through the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative which teaches financial literacy training, helps us open bank accounts and have our money matched for asset purchases. I was able to use my matched savings account to make my first purchase for a housing deposit and first month's rent. I was so happy to have a place for me and my children to call home.

Nationally, statistics show that 24% of former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. Unfortunately, I was one of those statistics and I don't wish any transitioning youth to experience the hardship of being without a home or a supportive adult.

In closing, I would humbly ask this committee to pass House Bill 873 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need to be successful adults in our community. Thank you very much.



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To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:02pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Filipe Tauaika, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

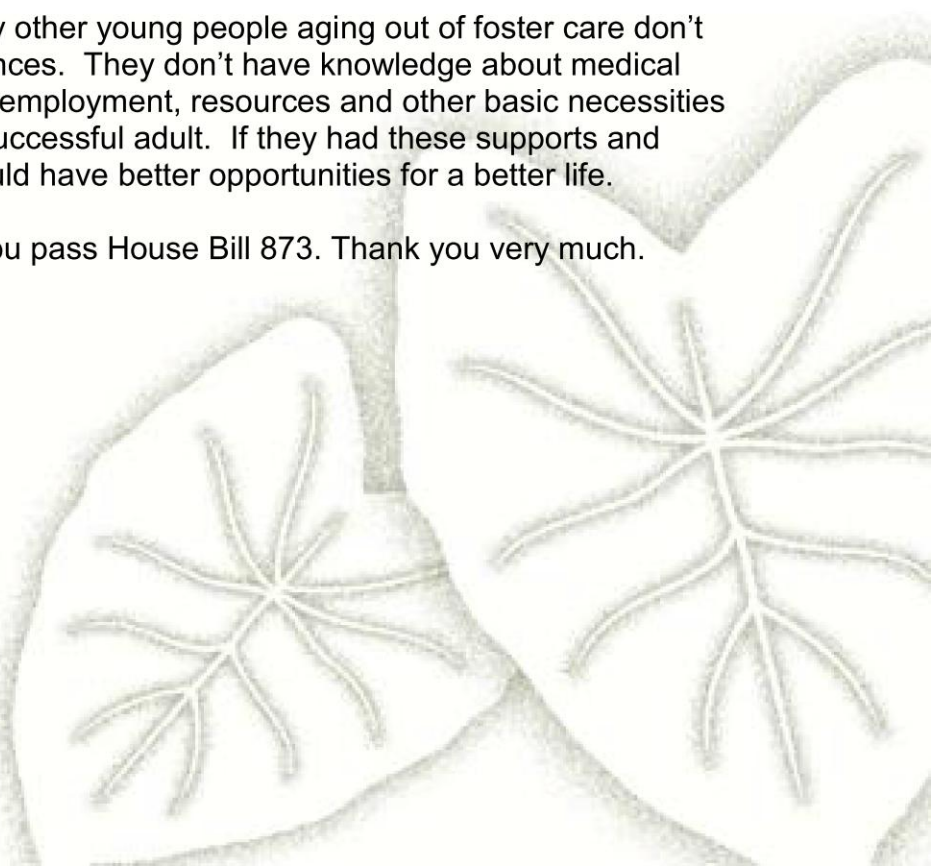
Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Good afternoon, members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Filipe Tauaika, I am 20 years old and a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Oahu.

I support House Bill 873 to provide foster youth with voluntary foster care to age 21. I was in foster care at a young age and aged out of the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facilities (Ko'olau) at the age of 18. I didn't have a plan for where I would live or what I would do. Fortunately, I found relatives and they helped me with housing, a job and guidance. I was also lucky I found something that I loved to do, boxing. It kept me out of trouble and gave me a goal to work towards, which is to be an Olympic boxer. With the support of my family, coach and others in the community and church, I was able to find resources and stay on track.

Unfortunately, many other young people aging out of foster care don't have the same chances. They don't have knowledge about medical coverage, housing, employment, resources and other basic necessities they need to be a successful adult. If they had these supports and resources, they would have better opportunities for a better life.

I humbly ask that you pass House Bill 873. Thank you very much.





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To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Gernani Yutob Jr., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)** Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Gernani Yutob, Jr. and I am the President of the O'ahu HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. The Initiative is a national and local effort to create and support successful outcomes for transitioning foster youth.

I aged out of the foster care system in 2008 at the age of 18 and will be turning 23 in April. I will be graduating with my Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration degree with Academic Distinction at the University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu in May. Did you know, only 3 percent of foster youth who age out of the foster care system at 18 will graduate with a four-year degree by the age of 25 compared to about 20 percent from the general population? I was very fortunate to have my resource caregiver take me under her wing after I graduated from high school. This meant that I had a place to stay and was able to fully concentrate on school and work without worrying about where I will spend my next night at. Had this not happened, I would be a 23 year old who would most likely not be graduating on time because my main priority would be to survive and figure out where I will get my next meal. Not a lot of foster youth who age out of care will have a supportive adult and the resources they need to guide them through one of the most difficult phases in life. Did you kick your child out of your home when they turned 18 without offering any type of support or guidance and expect them to make it out on their own? Even at the age of 18, when they are legally considered an adult, they are not ready for what lies ahead just yet. It is imperative that we have support and resources for youth transitioning out of care to become successful adults in the future.

In closing, I would like to humbly ask this committee to pass HB 873 and give foster youth to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition to adulthood.

Thank you very much.



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To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
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From: **Judy Adviento, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Judy Adviento, I am 21 years old and I am the Secretary of the Oahu HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit this testimony in support of HB 873 and its intent to provide the option to participate in voluntary foster care up to age 21.

Some foster youth are not prepared to go out on their own when they turn 18. There are so many negative statistics about youth who age out of care. For example, in a study of young people formerly in foster care, 24% have experienced homelessness at least once, and 81% of the males get arrested in comparison to 17% of their peers in the general population.

I went into foster care at the age of 16. Even before I went into care, I was quite independent. I worked and a lot of my paperwork by myself so when I went into foster care, I was ready to take on those obstacles. It also helped that I had a lot of supportive people around me. When I turned 18, I felt prepared but not every youth is as prepared as I was and it's expressed through the statistics.

I am currently my younger brother's resource caregiver (foster parent) and it would terrify me if I found out that my brother "fell through the cracks" because he was not ready to go on his own at the age of 18. Every youth matures at different rates. This is even true with our peers in the general population. The difference is that foster youth sometimes don't know/have anywhere and anyone to go to when they are in trouble and struggling financially, emotionally, physically, etc.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important option for youth, and they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible. In closing, I ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. Thank you very much.



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LAURIE ARIAL TOCHIKI
President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, February 7, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Princess Johnisa Lean, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)** Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Princess Johnisa Lean, I am 19 years old and I was born on the island of Oahu, and raised on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am the Vice President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. Although my mother had custody of me, I lived with family members and my godparents for majority of my childhood. As an adolescent I lived with my mother until I was placed in foster care in my sophomore year in high school. I was granted guardianship with my foster parent until I aged out of foster care.

I lost connections with my siblings and their children while I was in foster care. They remained in the custody of my mother when I was placed in my foster home. I was fortunate enough to remain in one placement throughout my experience in foster care. My guardian and I acquired a powerful bond that till this day has never changed. I still call her for advice and I am always welcomed in her home. She has given me a sense of stability, guidance and permanency. Besides her role as a mother to me, she is a Social Worker for Child Protective Services in Hawaii. She has supported me as a parent would their own child, she treated me no different from her biological children and helped me achieve a successful transition into adulthood.

I support HB 873 regarding Voluntary Foster Care Act to extend care to 21 in Hawaii. I believe that offering foster youth the option to remain in foster care up until the age of 21 would increase their chances of a positive and successful transition into adulthood. Youth that age out of care with no support, no social capitol, no guidance, no stability, and no sense of permanency will either become homeless, or incarcerated. I strongly feel that no 18 year old whether in foster care or



1130 N. NIMITZ HWY, SUITE C-210, HONOLULU, HI 96817
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not is ready to live on their own. As foster youth the state is our parent, so the option of foster care to 21 will help increase our success as adults. Many youth in the general population at the age of 18 can continue to live with their parents, therefore I believe that foster youth should have the same option to ensure successful transitions into adulthood.

I ask this committee to please pass House Bill 873. Thank you.





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President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Sharla-Ann Fujimoto**, Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative,
EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young
Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Aloha, my name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto and I work for EPIC Ohana, Inc. and assist with the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative and the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in West Hawaii.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873, which extends voluntary foster care to the age of 21. I have worked with youth in foster care and formerly in foster care for almost five years and I feel that this is a population in need of support.

Today, there is a youth turning 18, but they are not celebrating the way their peers normally would because this youth is a foster youth. This foster youth is packing their things (most likely into trash bags) while asking themselves the question, "Where am I going to go?" This youth will most likely end up homeless on the street or will end up going back to the biological family they were taken away from only to face the same traumas that that landed them in foster care to begin with. This youth will most likely face extremely poor outcomes because they do not have adequate support.

Those of us who have not been in the foster care system do not understand the true pressure behind turning 18. Most of us were excited at the prospect of turning 18. Most of us have had parents help us out get into college, buy a computer, help us with transportation, and maintain a stable living situation. Most of us that have not been in foster care were not expected to find a job, find housing, get into college, and find adequate transportation on the same day we turned 18. Most of us had a choice if we wanted to leave home or not. For our youth aging out of care, they have no choice and they are absolutely terrified of their 18th birthday—they are expected to make huge life



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LAURIE ARIAL TOCHIKI
President / CEO

decisions that they may not be developmentally able to make at such a young age and without adequate supports put into place.

I fully support this bill because if youth in foster care were given the option to remain in care up until the age of 21, they would have a few more years to build the adequate support they need to become successful, self-sufficient adults. They would be able to experience a different type of foster care that is developmentally appropriate for them. They would be given the chance to plan their life as they see fit for them because they would have more than just one day to make all of the huge life decisions.

In closing, I humbly ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. It would benefit the foster youth by supporting the notion that we believe in them and that supports do not end at the age of 18. Thank you.





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ARLYNNA HOWELL
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President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:02pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Arleen Kuwamura, Hale 'Opio Kaua'i**

Re: **Testimony In Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Arleen Kuwamura and I work for Hale 'Opio Kaua'i. I am the partner staff Kaua'i branch of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 which supports extended jurisdiction for foster youth beyond age 18. I support the intent of this bill to have voluntary foster care extended up to age 21.

For some of those who have aged out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own or they lack the support and often times the necessary skills needed to be successful adults. I have worked with foster youth for 18 years and have watched many of these youth struggle to make it on their own, many of them have very little or no support when they age out of foster care. If we could extend care during this crucial time of growth when they need services most, I believe we will not only be supporting the individual young person increase their full potential and social capital it will also strengthen the communities they live, work and go to school in.

In Hawai'i, 33% of former foster youth in a recent poll, ages 18 to 23, reported having couch-surfed or moved from home to home because they did not have a place to stay. That is more than the national average of 24% of former foster youth who experience some form of homelessness by age 24.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important **option** for youth, and that they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible.

In closing, I would ask this committee to support the intent of and pass House Bill 873.

Thank you very much.

Testimony in support of HB873

February 5, 2013

Honorable Congress:

In Hawaii, a growing percentage of the youth who are emancipated from the child welfare system at age 18 are becoming homeless. Once homeless, the chances youth have for getting a good job or safe home decrease dramatically. It is a vicious cycle that youth services professionals across the country want to break.

The State House should immediately act to allow the Department of Human Services to extend support for foster care youth to age 21, despite the political and funding hurdles such programming seems to require.

The argument to extend support for foster youth to age 21 rests on sound ethical grounds. Young people who have had challenges in their short lives that few of us can even imagine are forced to jump into a competitive, difficult job market, often without proper preparation. It is a mark of our decency as a community that we help them make this difficult transition in any reasonable way we can.

The argument rests on sound economics as well. The cost to society of allowing these youth to fail — in dollars as well as pain and suffering — is far greater than the cost of the programs to keep youth moving forward until they have a chance to get a foothold in the adult world.

Finally, the argument rests on good information. Any number of studies from groups across the country firmly demonstrate the positive effect of extending services to young people transitioning from youth to adulthood, and the negative effects of failing to do so. There are hardly more proven social measures you could point to than extending foster services to age 21.

It is simply the right thing to do on every level.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Ziegler', written in a cursive style.

Daniel Ziegler
Past Board Chair, It Takes An 'Ohana

Aloha, Representative Rhoads and members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 873 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

Those of us who have worked with teenagers in foster care have seen how some of them struggle to find a foothold in the adult world. Everyone faces challenges growing up, but youth who have been in foster care for prolonged periods usually haven't had the stability, family support and positive adult mentoring that is so important to guide young people from childhood to successful adulthood.

The research data documents what all of us have seen, which is that foster youth often need extra help with this critical transition period. We know that foster youths are less likely to have a high school diploma and more likely to have been arrested than their peers. We know they are less likely to be employed, and the girls are at higher risk for becoming pregnant.

In many cases, foster youths have experienced extremely chaotic lives through no fault of their own. A teenager who has spent years moving from house to house within the foster care system likely has spent little time making realistic plans for the future. He or she may not be ready at age 18 to survive alone in the adult world, but may not have anywhere to go.

House Bill 873 will provide these youths with additional time to organize their lives and prepare for productive adulthood. Extending state support to these youths for just a little longer can help them get firmly established at work or school, and set them on a positive path.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Kevin Dayton, foster parent

90 S. Wilder Road

Hilo, Hawaii

Aloha, Representative Rhoads and members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 873 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

I worked in Foster Youth services as a case worker at Foster Family Programs of Hawaii for four years. I was also the Program Administrator for Child and Family Service's Foster Youth home for five years. My wife and I adopted two children that were ages 4 and 5, fifteen years ago.

Fortunately my daughters and the youth that have biological (or other types of) families had and have the support of the adults who assisted them into adulthood.

Unfortunately all too often Foster Youth are "cut off" from the support and care that were given to them until they turned eighteen as the foster parents decide that since no more foster board payments are being supplied by DHS, they no longer want to provide financial or other support services to the youth. The youth are left on their own after high school is completed. There are other situations where youth that have been difficult because of the issues they deal with by their biological parents not choosing to raise them. I am not blaming the parents for the child's behaviors, but all youth that are not raised by their biological parents "Test" the adults who care for them to see if they are "going to give me up too". The research shows that as the youth develop and enter new developmental stages and have new views of relationships and understandings of love and commitment they have to see if the foster parent still loves them and will stick with them and they end up testing the foster parents by testing the limits. Youth are going through developmental stages at a rapid rate until age twenty one. Unfortunately the youth might be subconsciously testing the foster parents right around the time school is finishing and they are turning eighteen,

The foster parents take this transition to adulthood as a chance to end the testing and tell the youth "get out we are done". No youth can support themselves without support of living arrangements or financial assistance when they are fresh out of high school. They need support to get on their feet and get settled into their adult lives.

House Bill 873 will provide these youths with additional time to organize their lives and prepare for productive adulthood. Extending state support to these youths for just a little longer can help them to get firmly established at work or school, and set them on a positive path.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Lee Lord

Volcano, Hawaii

Bill: HB 873

Date: February 7, 2013

Time: 2:00pm

Place: Room 325

Committee: Judiciary

Chair: Representative Rhoads

Vice Chair: Representative Har

I Strongly Support this bill

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Curtis and I am the current Board Chair for Family Programs Hawaii (FPH). We are a non-profit agency that provides services to prevent children from entering foster care; support children and families involved in the foster care system; and assist youth transitioning out of care.

There is a growing emphasis on successful transition to adulthood among child welfare professionals. This has led to Federal programs providing the option to extend care to the age of 21 from the current standard of 18. I encourage you in the strongest terms to follow their lead here in our state.

Just take a moment and consider yourself, or your kids, at the age of 18. Were you truly prepared to head out on your own and be completely independent...capable of fending for yourself without any mentors or services? Then add to that natural immaturity the challenges that young people face when they come from broken homes. Without adequate support during this crucial time, they are vulnerable to despair and the influence of those who would exploit them.

I urge you to support us in our call to provide services that will help these kids make a successful transition to adulthood. My belief is that we will reap the rewards of our investment many times over, in the form of better-integrated, productive citizens on the one hand, and reduced crime, public assistance and other societal costs on the other.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Mike Curtis
Board Chair
Family Programs Hawaii

To: Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair, Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair, and committee members of the Committee on Judiciary

From: Rochelle Coop

Re: In support of bill HB873, Foster care to 21

Date: Thursday, February 07, 2013, 2:02 p.m., Conference Room 325

My name is Rochelle Coop. 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 873, 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: HB873, has to make a monumental difference to countless youth is hopeful and exciting. I pray for this evolution passionately. Please vote yes on HB873.

Rochelle Coop

32 Alanui Place, Kula, HI. 96790

(808) 280-2666

Rochellecoop@gmail.com

Aloha, Representative Rhoads and members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

I strongly support House Bill 873 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

As a foster parent, I am very aware of the struggles some foster youth have at they begin their adult lives. It's hard enough for kids who have more normal lives. Foster youth transitioning into adulthood need mentors and 'parents' to support them as they gradually become independent. They need extra time to establish themselves as adults with a job or education and a place to live. More time to transition will result in more productive, happier adults. Let's give these children a better chance and show them that they continue to matter.

House Bill 873 will provide these youths with additional time to prepare for a productive adulthood.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sandi Dale, foster parent

Kailua

har2-Vincent

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2013 9:24 PM
To: JUDtestimony
Cc: Haku1234@aol.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB873 on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM

HB873

Submitted on: 2/5/2013

Testimony for JUD on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sharon tanaka	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Working with special needs students under foster care, I've seen dramatic positive changes and a need to assure that by age 21 they will be a contributing addition to our community. Please support HB 873.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing , improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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har2-Vincent

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2013 11:41 AM
To: JUDtestimony
Cc: arlenehws@hotmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB873 on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM
Attachments: Bill 873.docx

HB873

Submitted on: 2/6/2013

Testimony for JUD on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Arlene Seymour	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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02/06/2013

RE: House Bill 873

RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Har and Judiciary Committee Members

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit my testimony in strong support of House Bill 873 to increase the age for foster care from 18 to 21 years old.

I am a parent of three adult children. I have fostered teens for many years. I have taught in the DOE system at the high school level and have also had the experience of working with foster youth in the classroom setting. I have seen the struggle that these children experience after high school as they stumble along without any safety nets to support them in the form of a loving family. I have received the telephone calls requesting help from my former students that have no family to back them up or be there for them in their times of need. I have had former students that were foster children come to stay with our family as they have no home to call their own upon aging out.

I strongly support House Bill 873 to help to continue the support to our foster youth to help them get a stronger start on their road to independence as adults. The transition from teen life to adult life is a difficult time for most youth that have had the stability and support from their families. Foster youth face a more difficult transition having the added trauma of their past family life and the likelihood of no family support as they make the transition to independency. Adult life becomes a day to day survival mode for them.

Extending the age for foster care to 21 through House Bill 873 would give the foster youth additional time to adjust to adult responsibilities, choices and life in general as they work to become independent, contributing members of our community and society. The additional support will give them a better chance at the successful futures they all dream of and deserve.

Again, I strongly support House Bill 873 to extend the age of foster care to support our keiki to become the leaders of our future.

Mahalo,

Kau'i Keola

har2-Vincent

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2013 2:00 PM
To: JUDtestimony
Cc: Bobbohn@earthlink.net
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB873 on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM*

HB873

Submitted on: 2/6/2013

Testimony for JUD on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Robert C. Bohn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2013 1:58 PM
To: JUDtestimony
Cc: Yukikos@cbpacific.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB873 on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM*

HB873

Submitted on: 2/6/2013

Testimony for JUD on Feb 7, 2013 14:02PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Yukiko Sato	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:02pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Ashley Slater, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)** Hawaii
Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult
Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Ashley Slater and I am the President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative in West Hawaii. I am for the House Bill 873 Extension of Foster Care to age 21 in the State of Hawaii. There are many reasons that I think this Bill should be passed.

One of my reasons is that I feel with this extension, foster youth have more time to grow and learn what they need to, to survive in the real world. I also feel that it gives them a little extra time to connect with that foster family and to safe and comfortable to contact them when exiting out. I feel that every foster youth deserves some one they can fall back on for help and support. Granting this bill allows the foster youth the time they need to build supportive relationships. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, February 7, 2013

2:02pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Chardonnay Rosa-Arango, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**

Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Chardonnay Rosa-Arango and I am the President of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of HB 873 and its intent to provide the option of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

I am very fortunate to say that at the age of 16 my foster parents at the time took legal guardianship of me. They not only provided me with security but they assured me that I had a family I could always be a part of. Because I was given a stable home past the age of 18, I was able to transition into adulthood very efficiently. Knowing that I had support and stability in my life, I was able to live out my dream and go to Southwestern Assemblies of God University, a private Christian university, in Waxahachie, Texas. I attended school there for a year and a half and now, at the age of 19, I am at Kauai Community College living with my former foster parents. If I had been completely cut off at 18, I know that the choices I made would have been very different. I believe that if foster care is extended up to 21, many foster youth will be given the opportunity and support in order to transition into adulthood more efficiently.

Statistics show that former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. In closing, I would ask this committee to pass HB 873 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition into adulthood. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany "Ipo" Lynch Ma'e, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Tiffany "Ipo" Lynch Ma'e and I am the president of the East Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board.

I would like to submit testimony in support of HB 873 and the option it provides for voluntary extended foster care up to age 21.

1 in 5 youth who age out of care become homeless. And only 3 percent of youth who aged out of care graduate with a bachelor's degree. It's a haunting future. The extension of foster care to 21 as an option promotes a healthy transition into adulthood for my foster brothers and sisters in care.

Without a shadow of a doubt, I feel that with the passing of this bill the negative statistics that haunt youth in care will change from negative to positive. Where only 3 percent of foster youth DON'T graduate with a college degree and 97% complete one.

We are taken into care by the State, who becomes our 'parent', and promised a better life than the ones our families are able to provide us. When my peers turn 18, their parents don't stop loving or supporting them. Why then, are foster youth expected to survive on our own with little or no preparation or supports when we turn 18?

In closing, I humbly ask that this committee passes HB 873 and give my foster brothers and sisters the continued support they need and deserve through their transition to adulthood. Mahalo nui loa.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Karen Hagopian, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)** Hawaii
Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult
Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Karen Hagopian, and I am 19 years old. I am the Vice-President of the West Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board. I support House Bill 873 to the fullest extent. By extending foster care to the age of 21, it gives the foster youth a better chance to get a support system such as building a family relationship, obtaining knowledge of schooling, having a housing system in place, and being able to balance school and work without having to fret about where they are going to sleep that night.

For me when I aged out of foster care at 18, it was hard to focus on school and work because I knew that I would have to move out of my foster home and find a place to live. Because of that my grades slipped in college and I had to focus more on work. This is why I think extending foster care to 21 is important. I humbly ask that you pass House Bill 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Keola Limkin, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)** Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC `Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Keola Limkin, I am 22 years old and I was born and raised on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am the Secretary for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. During most of my childhood I lived with my mother and my five younger siblings. When I was a sophomore in high school, my siblings and I were placed in foster care until I aged out of child welfare services.

My younger siblings frequently moved between foster homes until my mother regained legal custody of them. I was fortunate to remain with the same foster parent during my entire experience. I developed a strong relationship with my foster dad to the point where I felt permanence. Immediately after graduating from high school, I lived at the University of Hawaii at Hilo dormitory while attending school. Our bond did not wither and he allowed me to live with him during summer break.

I support HB 873 regarding Voluntary Foster Care Act to extend care to 21 in Hawaii. I believe that allowing foster youth to have an option to remain in foster care up until the age of 21 would nurture positive community members. The age group of 18-21 years is a window where healthy risk taking can take place. These young adults will face many new experiences and a foster parent could provide both support and counseling. Foster parents should also be trained to parent these young adults in this specialized period if policy is to change. Foster parent guidance during this critical period for learning will ensure that they succeed in their future endeavors. Please pass HB 873.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Michael Masulit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My Name is Michael Jay Masulit and I am a Member of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 which supports voluntary foster care up to age 21 in Hawaii.

For those who age out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own because of the lack of support that they need to be a successful adult. I've seen many of my fellow board members who aged out of foster care deal with a lot in their lives. Many of them had very little or no support. I am one of the fortunate ones. When I aged out of foster care, I was able to complete a college degree in culinary arts with the help of an aunt. If it wasn't for this one caring adult who provided housing and college support, I don't know where I would be today.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important option for youth, and they should have the choice to remain in foster beyond 18, as long as they want to and are willing to meet the requirements of the program.

In closing, I would ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Rachel Burke, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)** Hawaii
Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult
Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Rachel Burke and I am 19 years old. I am part of the West Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board. I fully support House Bill 873.

Extending voluntary foster care to the age of 21 is very important for several reasons. At age 18 most youth are not able to support themselves. It takes a while to get a job, buy a vehicle, find a place to live, and still be able to save money. By extending the age to 21, it gives young people an opportunity to have the support system they need to get these things done. This gives them a chance to slowly start doing things on their own but also being able to turn to someone for help. I think this bill is crucial to the success of foster youth in Hawaii.

When I aged out of foster care I had a great support system. I had my foster family who told me multiple times that I would always have a place to stay; that they weren't kicking me out at 18. They helped me with transportation, finding a job, getting a place to stay, buying groceries etc. To be honest, I would not have been able to accomplish anything without my support system. I am very thankful that I have them and I can always turn to them for help.

I ask your support in passing House Bill 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Samantha U'u, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Maui)** Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Samantha U'u, I'm 18, and I am a member of the Maui HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunity Initiative. I would like to submit a testimony in support of House Bill 873. The Bill supports the extension of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

I aged out of the foster care system when I turned 18 last February. I knew what I wanted, but I didn't know how to achieve it. I didn't have the knowledge of where to go or what to do because nothing was planned out. I was lucky enough to be guided through the process of what I wanted for my future because I continued on with my schooling.

My brother on the other hand struggled much more. He was homeless at one point because he did not receive the necessary support that he needed. Statistics show that many former foster youth experience a form of homelessness and my brother was one of them. To get out of the state of being homeless he decided to continue on with his schooling in college. He received the support that he needed, but later found out that school wasn't for him. When he dropped out of college, the support stopped, as well. I feel that if he had a planned out future along with support of other people he wouldn't have been homeless at the time, with nothing other than school support to rely on.

In closing, I would like to ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. To help other foster youth out there to receive the necessary support they need to plan out their future. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, February 7, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany Darragh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Maui)** Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Tiffany Darragh, I am 19 years old and a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Maui. I recently aged out of foster care on Maui.

I support House Bill 873 to extend voluntary foster care to 21 because I know many youth who have aged out who have absolutely no place to go. They are living at the park or jumping from friend's house to friend's house. If foster care was extended to the age of 21 there would be less worries about where the youth are going with their lives.

When my brother aged out, he was kicked out of my grandparent's house. My brother had never had a job and he didn't do much thinking on how he would find housing. So aging out was a big shock for him. My brother was homeless for a while. He decided to go to college to make his life better. Our independent living worker helped him find a cheap place that he could afford with money he received for higher education every month. My brother is on food stamps. Then he also lost that place he was staying at. Once again, he was on the streets. I felt bad for him but there was nothing I could do. If the system extends care to the age of 21 then no youth in the future would have to go through what my brother and many others have gone through.

Please support House Bill 873. Mahalo.

