



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

February 21, 2013

TO: The Honorable, Sylvia Luke, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 986, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES**

Hearing: Thursday, February 21, 2013, 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308 , State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 986, H.D. 1, is to increase the monthly board rate distributed by the Department of Human Services for foster care services for children.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill but is concerned about its fiscal impact. It would require an additional appropriation of State general funds.

The DHS estimates that if the board rate were to be raised by \$75 per month, an additional \$5,298,300 per year in State general funds that would need to be appropriated. The foster board rate is the benchmark for adoption assistance, permanency assistance and higher education board allowance payments. An increase in the basic foster board rate requires an increase in the benefit amounts for each of these programs.

The Department is willing to work with the stakeholders in the interim this summer to further assess the feasibility of adjustments to the monthly board rate while considering the overall fiscal impact on the other assistance payments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Bill: HB 986 HD1 – Relating to Foster Care Services

Date: Thursday, February 21, 2013

Time: 11:001m

Place: Room 308

Committee: Finance

Chair: Representative Sylvia Luke

Vice Chair: Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto

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.

What has happened to our foster children is not their fault, but they often pay the highest price for our social ills. More than anyone else in our society, it is our children who pay the price for problems such as adult joblessness or adult drug addiction or adult mental illness. We all recognize that we have a responsibility to these children, and the state of Hawaii has made great progress in recent years in recruiting and training caring, capable foster parents, so these children will have stable, safe places to stay in times of crisis.

However, State foster board reimbursement rates have not been increased for 22 years and we all know that during the last 22 years, the price of food, and diapers, and toys, and preschool, and rent, and electricity, and school supplies and all of the many, many items that our families purchase every day have soared.

I urge you to support us in our call to provide these additional resources to help these families and kids. My belief is that our island communities 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



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, February 21, 2013
11:00 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Linda Santos
Family Programs Hawai'i

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Family Programs Hawai'i specializes in services related to the child welfare system. As a partner of the DHS contract, Hui Ho'omalua, FPH provides training and support to resource caregivers statewide. It Takes an Ohana, the "voice of resource caregivers," is one of Family Programs Hawai'i programs.

The state can be very proud of the reduction in the number of children in foster care which has occurred because of the implementation of new programs and best practice. The number of licensed resource caregivers has also declined, but the expectations for these dedicated families has increased.

Support for Resource Caregivers is crucial to the foster care system and the best interests of our children. Reimbursement to Resource Caregivers has not been increased in 22 years while the cost of raising children has dramatically increased. To adequately care for these children, the foster board rate must be increased. Without adequate reimbursement, it is difficult to recruit quality Resource Caregivers.

We respectfully support an increase to the reimbursement rate.

hale `opio kaua'i,

February 19, 2013

TO: Committee on Finance
Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

FROM: LaVerne Bishop, Executive Director
Hale `Opio Kaua'i, Inc.

RE: HB986 HD1 Relating to Foster Care Services

HEARING: DATE: February 21, 2013
TIME: 11:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM: 308

I urge you to increase the foster board payment for youth in the state's care. Hale `Opio Kaua'i, Inc. has provided services for foster youth on Kaua'i since 1975, and sees first-hand the effects on youth who are taken away from their families and placed with others who want to do the right thing and who need financial resources to help.

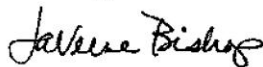
Five hundred and twenty-nine dollars each month goes to families who open their homes to young people, who, through no fault of their own, are unable to live with their family and who often are unable to see their parents or siblings. These young people have often lost their innocence, their family, their community, their school, and have few personal belongings.

This board payment has not increased in twenty-two years, whereas the cost of fuel, and therefore everything else, has doubled in just the past few years. We as a state are taking on the parenting of these young people and need to keep pace with the cost of goods and services so as not to create further hardship for these displaced young people and the open-hearted families that take them into their homes.

I appreciate your careful consideration of this bill; we want these children to have equal advantage, and we do not want the cost of living to be a barrier to families who otherwise may provide care, consistency, and support for youth unable to live with their parents. As their parent, the state needs to align foster board payments with current costs so that more families will be able to help.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



LaVerne Bishop
Executive Director

Board of
Directors

Curtis Law
President

Gregory Meyers
Vice President

Mark Hubbard
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Tom Lodico
Treasurer

Hartwell H.K.
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Fitchett

Carol Furtado

Phyllis Kunimura

Orianna
Skomoroch

LaVerne Bishop
Executive
Director

Lenie Nishihira
Controller

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2013 8:18 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: kenordenstein@aol.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM

HB986

Submitted on: 2/19/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ken Ordenstein	Olomea	Support	No

Comments: My name is Ken Ordenstein. I am executive director of Olomea, a non profit formed to help young people, particularly Hawai'ian youth leaving foster care become self sufficient, successful adults. Reimbursement rates to support foster children have not been increased in 22 years. The CPI-U for Honolulu has moved significantly upward in 2 decades. We can measure the percentage increase of the various commodities and services we typically purchase in Honolulu. We've all struggled with it. We pay more on average for food, shelter and apparel, all things that foster children need. After nearly a generation it's time for our community to increase the reimbursement rates to support our foster children.

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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TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, February 21, 2013

11:00 am

Conference Room 308

FROM: Tiffany and Roy Marrotte

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony to you. We are in support of House Bill 986 - Relating to Foster Care Services.

It has been with great pleasure to be a part of the foster care system. For the past three and a half years, we have been fostering children on Kauai. Most of our children whom are placed with us are considered high risk. These children have "lost" their families due to abuse and/or neglect. Many are truly alone in the world. We foster mostly teenagers whom are harder to place within the system compared to a newborn. As a teen, they already face many challenges and pressures. But some of our children have experienced and/or witnessed situations no one should have to. We need to remember that it is not any fault of the child. We must continue to support the foster care system so that these children have a safe place to stay, a place to regain trust and self-confidence, a place to instill the importance of an education and a place just to be a child.

The cost of living has increased over the past twenty years, however payments to care for these children have remained the same. Monies received pay for housing, food, clothing, transportation, activities and much more. We humbly ask for your support of HB 986.

Sincerely,

Tiffany and Roy Marrotte

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 9:17 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: fotsismith@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM

HB986

Submitted on: 2/20/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Deborah Smith	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please pass HB 386 and increase the monthly stipend paid to foster parents in the state of Hawaii. As you know the current rate doesn't cover the cost of taking care of a child and children are our resources of the future. Also, do not wait until 2050 - raise the payments immediately so that they can do the most good. Mahalo

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TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, February 21, 2013
11:00 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Jamie and Jeremy McOuat

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We strongly support this bill.

Foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. Besides the obvious cost of living increase in over 2 decades in the most expensive state in the nation, I did a quick calculation on diapers and formula alone for a 3-month-old baby X, currently in my care. He is a typical drug-affected infant, commonly placed throughout the system at 2 days old. A conservative count of 10 diapers per 24-hour cycle, 36 for \$10.99 on sale, is \$91.58. A 12.4 oz can of Similac powder formula covers 3 days and comes to \$152.63 a month. This totals \$244.21 before added costs of laundry detergent, water and electricity for 2 loads a day, utilities or batteries to run a baby swing, the only option for consoling to allow sleep for this baby who suffers from acid reflex syndrome; housing costs in a neighborhood that understands and tolerates the piercing screams of withdrawal throughout the day and night, transportation and expenses from clothing to special equipment needed. Like most resource care givers, we did not consider the monthly payment when deciding to give back to the community and help change the lives of our most vulnerable children, aged 0-5. However, I did not assume I would use my own money to assure that their basic needs were met.

A 1993 report, Improving Treatment for Drug-Exposed Infants Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 5, reported that the per-day cost of caring for a drug-exposed infant in a neonatal intensive care unit ranged from \$750 for a mild case to \$1,768 for a severely affected infant in California. 20 years later, I can only imagine the cost saving to the state of Hawaii. Foster families are now expected to also provide many of the services previously provided by social workers: transport and monitoring of ohana visits - i.e. supervision of visits with drug addicted, alcoholic and often mentally unstable and undiagnosed birth parents; coordination and transport to occupational, physical therapy, speech classes, and psychiatry/psychology visits.

Anecdotal evidence from local support groups suggests that Hawaii is losing many of its long term foster families and inadequate foster board payments is a contributing factor. This issue

must be addressed if Hawaii is to continue to retain loving foster families to care for our children.

We have been general resource care givers since November 2011 and as of this month have become an emergency shelter for two intakes slots for 0-3 year olds. Only by severely adjusting our personal budgets do we have the means to continue. Many families throughout the islands have the space, the time, the energy and the love to do the same but will never realize their possible lasting contribution to a child's life because of the financial burden. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jamie and Jeremy McOuat

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, February 21, 2013
11:00 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Chiyomi Chow

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support this bill.

As an adoptive parent, who previously provided foster care, I can tell you that providing foster care is not an easy calling. It takes a lot of patience, adjusting of parenting skills, time and energy, willingness to work with others on the team, unconditional love, and finances.

According to the United State Department of Agriculture, the cost to feed a child 9-11 years old on a “thrifty food plan” went from \$166 in 1999 to \$261.80 in 2012. That is an increase in almost \$100 within 13 years. Unfortunately, the information did not go back 22 years, but if it had I’m sure that it would show an even bigger increase.

We also all know that food is not the only thing that has increased in the past 22 years. According to *The State of Hawaii Data Book 2010*, the price for “all items” for Honolulu residents rose 70% from 1990 to 2010. With this in mind, the compensation given to resource families must increase as well.

Again, I strongly support this bill and urge you to increase the foster board payment. Resource families should be given adequate funds to care for the children that they open their homes to. It shouldn’t be a financial hardship upon them.

Sincerely,

Chiyomi Chow

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee of Finance

Hearing: Thursday, February 21, 2013

11:00am

Conference Room 308

From: Tamme C. Geurts

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support this bill.

I write this testimony as a foster parent. I love what I do and know it is what we, as a family, are called to do. It brings no greater joy than to help children in need of love, support and structure. So many do not want to discuss financial concerns no matter what the initial reason may be. However, this is how our society operates. As a foster mom that truly loves all the children in my home, it can become a hardship to not always be able to do as other families do. An example is going out to eat. We are currently a family of 8. We do not do this often (we do this on each child's birthday). Can you imagine the bill, as well as the fact that the establishment also automatically includes gratuity? We don't allow any of our kids to "go without" but it is difficult trying to provide for a child on \$529 a month. I encourage you to calculate for one month, EVERY PENNY you spend on your child (provided you have a child). Below are a few bullets I have included.

- Instinctively, you understand how important it is to make these children feel welcome, feel loved, and feel safe. No institution can do that. Only a family can do that, which is why our foster families are so critical to the welfare of these children. It is difficult work, but it is incredibly rewarding, and foster families are very proud of what we do.

-More and more, our state relies on our foster families, which have become a lynchpin of our child welfare system. But we as a community have neglected our responsibility to our foster children, and to our foster families.

-State foster board reimbursement rates to support our foster children have not been increased for the past 22 years.

-We all know that during the last 22 years, the price of food, and diapers, and toys, and preschool, and rent, and electricity, and school supplies and all of the many, many items that our families purchase every day have soared. The cost of some of these items has surely doubled in the past 22 years, but state support for our foster children has remained the same for more than two decades.

-What we have done is shift much of the financial burden for caring for Hawaii's foster children from the state to our foster families. We know many, many foster families reach into their own pockets each day to pay for school supplies or diapers or football uniforms for their foster children. They feel have no choice. We have left them no choice.

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 4:28 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: okayamac001@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB986 on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM*

HB986

Submitted on: 2/20/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Chet Okayama	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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TO: Finance Committee

HEARING: Tuesday, February 21, 2013, Conference Room 308

FROM: MARILYN YAMAMOTO

RE: HB 986 – Increases the monthly board rate distributed by the DHS for foster care services for children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support the bill.

I would like to address the fact that Ms. McManaman stated that this measure would create the need for an additional 5 million dollars to the annual DHS budget. I believe that this figure is highly inflated for two reasons. There are too many out-of-home placements that could have been avoided by in-home services for families with issues. I believe that savings from expenditures in three areas of the program would provide funds to divert to the foster care increase and that a reduction in foster placement is not only necessary but appropriate.

1. I believe that making “**reasonable efforts**” to keep children in homes where there is no imminent danger from abuse or neglect could be greatly improved and streamlined, thereby avoiding the necessity of child removal to foster care and the associated costs of that care.
 - a. I have the information your department reported to the federal government, that less than 10 of every 100 children in foster care have no other alternative but out-of-home care due to the seriousness of a parent offense of abuse and neglect. In those cases, a police officer is the most likely to take the first call and makes the removal decision. Many others included in the remaining 90% could reasonably be left in their own homes with services to the family. (See National Coalition for Child Protection Reform research at NCCPR.org)
 - b. I have information and belief that children are too often removed from their homes based upon the “err on the side of the child” philosophy and not on factual evidence. That mindset is flawed in that child removal creates a lifetime trauma for the very children you seek to protect, making the agency part of the problem. I would suggest that “to err on the side of family preservation” should replace that philosophy with the knowledge that credible statistics say that “child welfare workers are between 2 and 6 times more likely to wrongly label an innocent family guilty of child abuse”.
 - c. I believe that too much latitude to make removal decisions is placed in the hands of a few child welfare workers without comprehensive training, rather than a wider perspective of professional opinion. A CWS caseworker should be required to **document**, via photos and recordings, the assessment of at least 2 other professionals to include a police officer and/or medical/mental health professional before taking any steps to obtain a removal order in a non-emergency report. Since child neglect is the highest percentage of child welfare cases, I would suggest that clear and convincing evidence be present on the record. I would suggest that imminent danger be properly defined, as imminent means “now”, not within 90 days, per Hawaii Statute.
 - e. Child Welfare Services has indicated to me that they applied for the Title IV E waiver to use foster care federal funding for in-home services as of January 2013. There is a reasonable assumption that

the monthly stipend for foster caregivers is considerably higher than maintenance of family stability, even without the Title IV waiver.

- f. A February 2013 article from Kern County, California states that, in the aftermath of a parent lawsuit for wrongful removal, the number of foster children has been reduced from 800 in 2011 to 400 in 2012, simply because child protective services implemented a mandate to demand a warrant for child removal. That requirement was always in place. Is Hawaii CWS in compliance with the 4th Amendment and state law that requires a warrant to enter a home for search and seizure?
2. **Case Planning** for parents whose children are in foster care has some flaws that unnecessarily prolong the time that children are in out-of-home care, thereby increasing the cost to the government.
 - a. Every parent who is involved with a CWS case appears to have been assigned a cookie-cutter service plan in order to reunite with a child. I am suggesting that taking the time to assess cases individually will pare down services to only those needed. Is it reasonable to order a parent into couples counseling when there's a restraining order in place and the victim parent has left the abuser? Is it OK to order a 5 month parenting class when a parent has been accused of neglect due to failure to pay an electric bill? Payment of the electric bill and enrollment in a budgeting class would have cost less than one month's foster care bill. Unnecessary service plan requirements prolong a child's out-of-home stay and can drag a case on for literally years when review hearings are held only once every six months.
 - b. Caseplanning is described in the parent handbook and federal guidelines as a joint effort between caseworkers and parents. Hawaii CFSR and State assessment reports indicate that parents feel this does not happen often. Planning is done by the agency, and handed to the parents without any input from the parents.
 - c. When a case plan is devised, referrals to contract providers should be issued within 5 days to expedite correction of the issues that need to be addressed. When all services have been completed, a court hearing needs to be scheduled immediately to close the case and return the children to the family.
 - d. When families with CWS cases are handled with a one-size fits all criteria, caseworkers procrastinate on case progress, foster care costs remain steady and prolonged and the children suffer needless harm due to separation from their family. This causes a backlog in needed services, and an inflated demand, causing a high cost.
3. **False allegations** via the child abuse hotline cost wasted man hours in investigation with no productive results.
 - a. More than twice the number of calls received in Hawaii are unsubstantiated for abuse and neglect. The hotline is well-known to be an avenue for harassment by vindictive parties.
 - b. The child abuse hotline should eliminate the anonymous reporting and substitute confidential reporting. All reporters should be required to give their names with the understanding that if the report is found to be deliberately false, the victim family will be notified and the agency

will pursue prosecution. The voice message on the hotline should include a warning that knowingly false allegations will have consequences, and repayment will be sought.

I firmly believe that foster caregivers should be well compensated for their sacrifices on behalf of abused children. However, parents who are not criminally abusive should be given help to resolve family issues while keeping the family together. "Hands on" learning with the family in place is much more beneficial and the tracking of progress more efficient, saving time and, therefore, money. I am of the belief that Hawaii's foster program could be about half of the numbers that it is with half of the current expense to the taxpayers.

Implementation of the suggestions for reasonable efforts, case planning and the child abuse hotline would cut costs that could be diverted to an increase in the foster care payments while at the same time reduce the number of "resource families" needed to care for Hawaii's keikis.

Child abuse is a crime. Is CWS willing to attest to the fact that the parents of nearly 1500 children in the State have been charged with a crime? If not, why have those families been separated?

I SUPPORT THIS BILL TO PROVIDE THE BEST OF CARE TO CHILDREN WHO HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE OTHER THAN FOSTER PLACEMENT.

Sincerely,
Marilyn Yamamoto