

HB 986, HD1

Measure Title: RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES.

Report Title: Foster Care Services; Monthly Board Rate; Increase; Appropriation (\$)

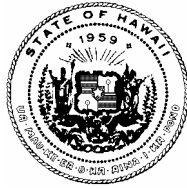
Description: Increases the monthly board rate distributed by the Department of Human Services for foster care services for children. Effective July 1, 2050. (HB986 HD1)

Companion:

Package: None

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): CARROLL, ING, MCKELVEY, MIZUNO, SOUKI, Belatti, Evans, Woodson



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

March 12, 2013

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

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

Hearing: Tuesday, March 12, 2013; 1:45 p.m.
Conference Room 016, 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, effective July 1, 2050.

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

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 stakeholders this summer to further assess the feasibility of adjustments to the monthly board rate, including sliding scale adjustments, and to report back to the legislature next session.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 986: Relating to Foster Care Services

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair, Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Human Services

FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Social Policy Director, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Tuesday, March 12, 2013, 1:45 pm, Conference Room 016

Chair Chun Oakand, Vice Chair Green, and Members, Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 986, which increases the rate of monthly board payments for foster children in Hawai'i. I am Trisha Kajimura, Social Policy Director for Catholic Charities Hawaii. **I am testifying in support of HB 986.**

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 60 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, developmentally disabled, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. This bill speaks directly to our advocacy priority of reducing poverty in Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of working with children in foster care and their families. Currently, we provide training to foster families and work with biological families to maintain custody of their children or become reunified with them. We also provide residential, counseling and therapeutic services to children who have been neglected and abused. We have an in-depth, professional understanding of the dynamics of child abuse and neglect and the resources it takes for foster parents to effectively parent foster children. Many of these resources are mental and emotional and really cannot be defined by a pricetag or sufficiently reimbursed. However, it is easy to understand that with the high cost of living in Hawai'i, \$529 per month is not enough to cover the costs of caring for a foster child.

Foster families, also called resource families, are an extremely valuable asset in keeping children safe and preparing them for adult life. We need to cultivate more resource families and give them our adequate support.

Please help us continue to support foster families in caring for Hawai'i's children. Catholic Charities Hawaii urges you to pass HB 986.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808)527-4810 or trisha.kajimura@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.



HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 702 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 531-2198 Fax: (808) 534-1199

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Daryl Selman, President
Judith F. Clark, Executive Director
Aloha House
American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii
Bay Clinic, Inc.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu
Big Island Substance Abuse Council
Blueprint for Change
Bobby Benson Center
Catholic Charities Hawaii
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC, Inc.
Family Support Hawaii
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.
Hawaii Behavioral Health
Hawaii Student Television
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition
Hina Mauka Teen Care
Hui Malama Learning Center
Kahi Mohala Behavioral Health
KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth)
Project
Kids Hurt Too
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Life Foundation
Marimed Foundation
Maui Youth and Family Services
Palama Settlement
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together (PACT)
Planned Parenthood of Hawaii
REAL
Salvation Army Family Intervention Svcs.
Salvation Army Family Treatment Svcs.
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community Center
The Catalyst Group
The Children's Alliance of Hawaii
Waikiki Health Center
Women Helping Women
YWCA of Kauai

March 6, 2013

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Human Services

Testimony in Support of HB 986 HD 1 Relating to Foster Care Services

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 986 HD 1 Relating to Foster Care Services.

Our current foster care rates do not cover the actual costs of caring for young people in the foster care system. \$529 a month does not adequately cover the growing costs of food, clothes, and utilities. This makes it difficult to recruit and retain foster families.

Families who are interested in caring for foster children are telling youth workers that they cannot afford the costs that they themselves would have to contribute from their personal funds. They do not choose to become foster families for the money; the issue is that the amount of the board payment does not cover the cost of caring for a child's basic needs.

We can increase the stability of young people in care by increasing the foster care rates because children will be more likely to live with one stable family throughout their time in foster care. When foster children are moved around to multiple homes, they cannot form trusting relationships with caregivers, they have more difficulty in school, and they are more likely to have emotional and behavioral issues.

By maintaining a larger pool of foster families to match with the children, we also increase the probability that the foster family will have similar culture, values, and interests to the child. The child will be more likely to live in a familiar community and continue to attend the same school.

Increasing the stipend for foster care will also help the transitioning foster children who participate in the higher education program. By increasing the funds they have for basic expenses, they will be able to work fewer hours, allowing more time to concentrate on their education. This will increase college graduation rates, leading to greater self-sufficiency and less future dependence on public assistance.

Foster parents are already donating their time to take care of foster youth, if this bill passes, they won't need to donate their savings too.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

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

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, March 12, 2013; 1:45
Conference Room 016

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

RE: HB 986 Relating to Foster Care Services

Senators Chun Oakland, Josh Green and Members of the Committee on Human 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 have 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.



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, March 12, 2013
1:45 pm
Conference Room 016

FROM: Judith Wilhoite
Family Advocate
It Takes An `Ohana

RE: HB 986

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the Family Advocate for Family Program Hawaii's It Takes An `Ohana (ITAO) program and a resource caregiver, formerly referred to as foster parent. I, along with my Advisory Committee, strongly support this bill.

In return for the federal reimbursement to the states for a portion of foster care costs, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act requires states to reimburse resource caregivers, formerly known as foster parents, for their foster child's cost of food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, personal incidentals and childcare. This rate was last changed in 1990 – over 22 years ago. *Below are examples of price changes in Hawai'i since the 1990's for some of these costs:*

Food:

Cost for a basket of food to be prepared at home in 1990 was \$24.71

In 2011, the cost for that same basket of food was \$53.75. That cost has risen 100%.

Source: Hawai'i State Data Center

Shelter:

The 1990 median sale price, island wide, for a single family home was about \$300,000 while the price for condos was close to \$150,000. Today those numbers are \$595,000 for a single family home and \$ 315,000 for a condo. That is a 98% increase on single family homes. For condos that is a 110% increase.

Source: Honolulu Board of Realtors – compiled from MLS data

Childcare:

In 1994 the cost for all day care at Angels at Play Preschool in Honolulu for a 3.5 year old was \$500. Today that same program costs \$935. That is an 87% increase

Source: Angels at Play Preschool

Consumer Price Index:

For all urban consumers, all items, for Honolulu in 1990 was 138.10. That same cost, in 2010, was 234.87. That is a 70% increase.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index

In hard economic times like we are in now, this can prevent good families from becoming resource caregivers and at the same time, force good resource caregivers out of the system.

I strongly support this bill to adjust the foster care reimbursement rate so that it adequately covers the needs of our children in foster care.

Kevin D. Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

March 12, 2013

RE: House Bill 986, RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Aloha, Chair Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Committee on Finance. Thank you for allowing me to submit these comments in strong support of House Bill 986, which instructs the state Department of Human Services to increase state payments to support children in foster care in Hawaii.

I know all of you recognize that our children are our most valuable resource, and safeguarding the well-being of our children today prepares Hawaii for a better future. Properly caring for our foster children is particularly important because these children are especially vulnerable. Many are victims of abuse or neglect, which can put them at high risk for all kinds of problems as they reach adolescence and adulthood. Intervening early and effectively in their lives is critical.

Foster parents are one of the primary tools available to the state to help these children. These children often arrive at our homes in times of crisis. We show them what a safe and stable home looks like, which is something some of them have never seen before. We model healthy adult relationships, provide structure and order in their lives, teach them good habits to help prepare them for work and school, and give them hope for a better future for themselves. Most importantly, we give them love. People become foster parents because they love children, and because they want to help children.

No one does this for the money, but difficult economic times such as these bring financial concerns sharply into focus. The state has frozen reimbursements for foster parents for the past 22 years, and we all know that prices dramatically increased during the last two decades for food, diapers, toys, preschool, rent, electricity, school supplies and all of the many items that our families purchase every day. The foster board reimbursement today is about \$17 per day, which means foster parents must routinely reach into their own pockets to cover the cost of caring for their foster children. This puts extra pressure on these households, and it forces some to reassess whether serving as foster parents is in the best interests of our own families.

House Bill 986

Kevin Dayton

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Please also consider that foster children often require extraordinary investments of attention and time, which can make foster parenting a 24-hour job. Some foster children are drug-exposed or come to us with emotional disorders that require therapy. Some foster children need very intensive supervision to keep them safe. Foster parents often must navigate the complexities of public school special education programs. Teenagers placed in our care may need to participate in drug treatment or attend Family Court hearings.

The Department of Human Services is also making new demands on foster families. Today the department often asks foster parents to have more frequent contact with birth parents to assist with visitation and help the birth families prepare for reunification. This year the state also established new mandatory, ongoing training for licensed foster families. While I agree with both of these DHS initiatives, they are examples of the state asking for more and more, while providing less and less financial support to our foster families.

The state has made great progress in recent years in recruiting and training caring, capable foster parents so that foster children will have stable, safe places to stay in times of crisis. However, we know that recruitment of foster families becomes much more challenging, and retention of foster families becomes far more difficult when foster board payments do not cover the cost of caring for these children.

Experienced foster parents have skills that are critical for the welfare of foster children, and it is extremely important that we retain them. Veteran foster parents have helped guide children through feelings of abandonment and crisis, and learned to watch for signs of still-undetected sexual or other abuse. They have learned to navigate the state system to help connect their foster children with the services they need. These experienced foster parents have coped with child-raising challenges that many parents never experience, and they make an enormous contribution to our community.

We respectfully ask that you approve House Bill 986 to increase foster board payments and provide foster parents with the financial support they need to continue this important work for the state. Thank you for your consideration.

Kevin Dayton

Foster parent

(808) 960-5007

Sonnette Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

March 12, 2013

Aloha Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony strongly in favor of House Bill 986, to increase the foster board payments that support our foster children after they are placed in state custody.

When my husband and I became foster parents in December 2009, we were assured that the state would provide appropriate financial support for the children placed in our care. We later realized this was not the case. Foster parents are expected to pay for all kinds of costs that simply cannot be covered by the basic \$529 per month the state provides to support foster children.

Newborn children, infants and toddlers in particular are extremely expensive to care for because of the supplies, formula, crib, bottles, diapers, powder, strollers, car seats and an array of other items that parents need to properly care for a small child. My family and I love to fuss over the newborns, and I don't mind the midnight feedings, but I eventually had to tell my licensing social worker we could no longer care for infants and newborns because of the out-of-pocket costs. I am a stay-at-home mother with five children of my own, and we all live on my husband's income. We love caring for foster children, but it has become a financial burden on my family because the support payments are too low.

We were shocked to learn that the state has not increased foster board payments in 22 years. The \$529 per month works out to about \$17 per day to care for a child. By comparison, kennels in Hawaii charge \$25 to \$40 per day to board an dog.

Foster children and foster families urgently need your help. Please pass House Bill 986 to increase foster board payments.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Sonnette M.M Dayton

Brittany W.R. Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

March 12, 2013

Aloha Senator Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 986.

I became a “foster sister,” when my parents became licensed. My parents have always managed in some form or another, to attract more children to our home. Even though I am the eldest of five, my family has always seemed so much bigger because our home was open to anyone who needed a place. When our relatives fell on hard times, my cousins would spend their break at our house. Despite the financial expense these visits incurred, my parents have taken these losses in stride, because they love children.

In my home, no one feels unwanted, abused, ignored or abandoned. Food is readily available, love freely given, and we are encouraged to pursue our passions. Our lives are structured with chores and academic responsibilities, but there is always enough time in the day to pursue the creative and athletic endeavors that strike our fancy. This same lifestyle is extended to any child who takes up residence in our house, relation or not. It takes a lot of love to make a house a home, where everyone is accepted and made to feel like a real member of the family. Somehow, despite the financial burdens of child raising, my parents continue to do just that.

The start-up costs of fostering a child are steep. We usually find out we're getting a baby on the day it needs to be picked up, and have to scramble to get everything in time. Almost always, the child's family is unequipped with the necessities, like diapers, formula, clothing and carriers. Unable to shop ahead of time, when things are more affordable, means my parents have to front more money when we buy these things.

Foster families deserve a pay increase in these tough economic times, especially since the cost of living is so high in the state. If the minimum wage increases, why shouldn't foster care payments? Twenty years ago, the \$17.00 per day boarding payment stretched a lot farther. The cost of shelter, utilities, transportation and groceries gobbles up this pittance.

Increasing the foster board payments may encourage more families like mine to foster, once they see it will not be a financial constraint on their own families. The more families we attract to the system means less overcrowding of foster children in the same home, allowing for more individualized attention. This added attention may be just what the child needs. Directed, loving

attention and a set schedule seems to work wonders with the kids who've come through my home. The great thing about being young is the ability to forget, and I believe that under the right influence any child can move past the ghosts of their past, once they have assimilated to their new, positive living environments. This won't happen if the state doesn't do more to attract and retain foster families.

Families like mine are helping to define the future of a whole generation. We are loving and rehabilitating lost children, trying to instill in them a sense of stability, positivity, and drive to live productive lives. If a few more dollars a day helps to make this happen, the money was well spent. The ones we save now will determine how we live later, so as much as possible, I believe any and all support that can be made available to fostering families should be done so, post-haste. My foster siblings always enjoy the time spent with my extended family, and they hate to leave. Parting is often the hardest part of this process, and the only consolation is knowing that we've done these kids a good turn, and look forward to helping another.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and please support House Bill 986.

Sincerely,

Brittany Waipulani Dayton

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, March 12, 2013
1:45 pm
Conference Room 016

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 for just food alone. 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 2011*, the price for “all items” for Honolulu residents rose 76% from 1990 to 2011. 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

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: Kaumana16@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Mar 12, 2013 13:45PM
Date: Sunday, March 10, 2013 5:02:08 PM

HB986

Submitted on: 3/10/2013

Testimony for HMS on Mar 12, 2013 13:45PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Karen De Soto	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Previously submitted comments apply. I feel very strongly as both a retired CWS social worker and as a foster parent that financial support for foster families must increase. The children need quality care and good foster parents must be attracted to do this job.

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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Bill: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, March 12, 2013
1:45 pm
Conference Room 016

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. **I Strongly Support this bill**

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.

Sincerely,

Mike Curtis
Board Chair
Family Programs Hawaii

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: Haku1234@aol.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Mar 12, 2013 13:45PM
Date: Sunday, March 10, 2013 8:39:32 PM

HB986

Submitted on: 3/10/2013

Testimony for HMS on Mar 12, 2013 13:45PM in Conference Room 016

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

Comments: I'm in support of hb986. Foster care should be until age 21 to be put in coordination for special needs student until age21 whom many of our foster students fall in this category.

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: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, March 12, 2013
1:45 pm
Conference Room 016

FROM: Michael P. Dale

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

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

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony in favor of HB 986, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. All of Hawaii's families have been under pressure since DHS adopted two fundamental changes recently.

First, they stopped providing transportation to neutral sites for the visitation rights of the biological parents. The foster / resource caregiver now must adjust their work or home schedules around this, and often take time off without pay to meet this new requirement.

Further, they are also being put at risk by DHS as DHS now request's the Foster / resource caregiver to use their personal phone(s) AND act as a call mediator during calls to the biological parents.

DHS does NOT offer any legal protection for the foster / resource parents with regard to these fundamental changes. Changes which could end up costing the foster / resource caregiver extraordinary expenses.

Of course there is the never ending costs of care, expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades on the cost of living alone, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics for foster children in their care.

As a foster parent myself, my wife and I do everything we can to love the children in our home and to give them as close to a normal life as they can have. We strive to let them know they are loved, and we give them many good experiences so they can see a different way of living. They typically need extra therapy and to attend special programs to help them heal from their 'scars'. By helping them in all these ways, we are helping to stop the bad patterns of their families and to reduce the chances of them and THEIR future children to be in 'the system'.

People like us sign up to be foster parents because we love children and want to contribute to our communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and

retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments along with a realistic review of their newer policies.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Dale

Foster Parent (aka Resource Caregiver)

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of HB 986, to increase the monthly board rate distributed by the DHS for foster care services for children. I strongly support HB 986.

Not only has foster board reimbursements not increased in 22 years, but all of Hawaii's families have been under pressure as the cost of housing, utilities, food, transportation and other expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics, and extra services, for foster children in their care.

As a foster parent myself, my husband and I do everything we can to love the children in our home and to give them as close to a normal life as they can have. We strive to let them know they are loved, and we want to give them as many good experiences they can have to know a different way of living. They also need extra therapy and to attend special programs to help them heal from their 'scars'. By helping them in all these ways, we are helping to stop the bad patterns of their families and to reduce the chances that they and their future children will be in the system.

With my husband's support, I take leave without pay (LWOP) from work to attend meetings and therapies for our foster child, such as: additional school meetings (for being new and for behavior concerns), court, meetings with their guardian ad litem, OHANA conferences, visits with biological families, specialized doctor appointments in other parts of the island from where we live, special assessments...

Until several years ago, other organizations took our foster child to many of these appointments but not anymore. Now that is our responsibility, and my husband and I voluntarily give up part of my income to help give our foster child the opportunities he needs to heal and thrive

Some people now feel forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest because of the additional things we must pay for AND because of the things that the \$529 reimbursement doesn't cover.

Again, I strongly support HB 986. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sandra Dale
Foster Parent (aka Resource Caregiver)