

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

March 22, 2013

TO: The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

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

Hearing: Friday, March 22, 2013; 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211, 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.

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 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 HD1: Relating to Foster Care Services

TO: Senator David Ige, Chair, Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Ways and Means

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

Hearing: Friday, March 22, 2013; 9:00 am; Conference Room 211

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

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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 20, 2013

To: Senator David Ige, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Ways and Means

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.

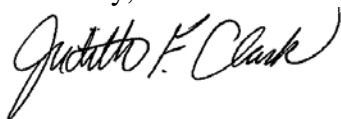
By maintaining a larger pool of foster families to match with the children, we also increase the probability that the foster family will have similar culture, values, and interests to the child. The child will be more likely to live in a familiar community and continue to attend the same school.

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

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

March 22, 2013

Aloha Senator David Ige and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. 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

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: pixijenny@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Mar 22, 2013 09:00AM
Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2013 8:28:52 PM

HB986

Submitted on: 3/20/2013

Testimony for WAM on Mar 22, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jennifer O'Donnell	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments: Aloha, For the past 8 years I have worked for non-profits tasked with helping teens in foster care on Oahu make successful transitions into adulthood. I care about these youth and want them to do as well as your kids. Raising the board rate will improve their lives in significant tangible ways. Every dollar will go to the families that feed, clothe, and shelter these youth. That's money that directly stimulates Hawaii's businesses while helping it's most at-risk population of children. Raising the board rate will also make a huge difference to the former foster youth who are pursuing their college goals via the DHS Higher Ed program that continues the board payments while the youth attend college. Most of my clients use the \$529 to pay rent while they attend college. Having a more generous payment would increase the housing stability of these vulnerable students and therefore improve their chances of earning a degree and having careers that pay a living wage. That's what often breaks the cycle of generational poverty and child neglect. These young people are our future workforce and future taxpayers. A modest increase from \$529 is still a good deal for our state budget. If we neglect these kids their outcomes are poor. If we invest in them it pays dividends. It is vastly cheaper to educate them than to incarcerate them. Mahalo

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

March 22, 2013

RE: House Bill 986, RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Aloha, Chair Ige and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. 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

Hilo foster parent

(808) 960-5007

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: shanz72@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Mar 22, 2013 09:00AM
Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2013 5:45:41 PM

HB986

Submitted on: 3/20/2013

Testimony for WAM on Mar 22, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shannon Magnuson	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please support Hawai'i's foster youth and resource caregivers. Anyone living in this state can understand how expensive it is to provide housing and adequate support to children due to the extremely high cost of living. Housing and groceries are well above the national average, making becoming resource caregivers cost prohibitive to many caring, quality families who would otherwise be willing to open their homes to children in need. Of all of the things that money could be spent on, this is an area which is worthy of the investment and which I feel is a moral obligation. It is our kuleana to malama Hawai'i's children and to adequately support them and the families who care for them. Please vote your conscience and do what is right and honorable.

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Sonnette Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

March 22, 2013

Aloha Senator David Ige and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. 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 a 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