



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

February 12, 2013

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

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

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

Hearing: Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 986 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, February 12, 2013
9:30 am
Conference Room 329

FROM: Judith Wilhoite
Family Programs Hawai'i

RE: HB 986 – Relating to Foster Care Services

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.

The \$529 per month reimbursement rate that Hawaii resource caregivers receive to cover their foster children's costs has not been changed since 1990. Per the Hawai'i State Data Center, the 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 alone has risen 100% while the reimbursement has not budged.

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.



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 9:30 am
Conference Room 329

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

RE: HB 986 Relating to Foster Care Services

Senators Chun Oakland and Green,

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.

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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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

February 8, 2013

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

Testimony in Support of HB 986 Relating to Foster Care Services

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 986 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.



Aloha United Way

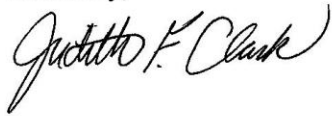
Foster parents are already donating their time to take care of foster youth, if this bill passes, they won't need to donate their savings too.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

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, stylized initial 'J'.

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director

Sonnette Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Aloha Representative Carroll and Members of the House Human Services Committee. 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. If you have ever attempted to board a dog, you probably know that boarding kennels in Hawaii charge \$25 to \$40 per day to board an animal.

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

Aloha Representative Carroll and members of the House Human Services Committee. 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

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

Feb. 12, 2013

RE: House Bill 986, RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Aloha, Chair Carroll and members of the House Human Services Committee. Thank you for allowing me to submit these comments in favor 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

Page 2

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 have 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 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

(808) 960-5007

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

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, 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 Representative Mele Carroll, Chair, Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, and the Committee on Human Services,

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.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. 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)

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, February 12, 2013
9:30 am
Conference Room 329

FROM: Chiyomi Chow

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 this bill.

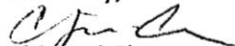
As an adoptive parent, who previously provided foster care, I can tell you that providing foster care is not an easy calling. It takes a lot of patience, adjusting of parenting skills, time and energy, willingness to work with others on the team, unconditional love, and finances.

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

I am writing to support and increase in foster board payments and an increase in the age to 21 as an upper limit for foster care. When I began my professional social work career in 1996 with Child Welfare, the foster board payment was the same as it is now. There have been no substantial increases while cost of living has dramatically changed. It is very important to maintain a qualified, caring group of foster parents in our communities. I have worked with foster parents at CWS where I was the sexual abuse specialist (those foster parents really had to be on their toes), at DOE in many IEP meetings (which required specialized knowledge), at DDD/DOH (where a foster parent had to advocate for a severely disabled child) and as a therapist in the Hilo area. I have also been a foster parent and currently take short-term emergency placements in my retirement.

Being a foster parent is a full-time job and the pay is pathetic. Our children are worth much more than what is paid for their care. It should be just fine for families to make some profit from their work, although this is currently almost impossible. Many foster FAMILIES have continued to assist their children past the age of 18 because the need is clearly there. Please seriously consider a reasonable compensation for important and valuable work that helps to provide options for a good future for children in our communities.

Karen L. De Soto, QCSW

35 Hokulani St.

Hilo, Hawaii 96720

kobayashi1-Joni

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2013 6:58 PM
To: HUS testimony
Cc: lethadecaires@hotmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Feb 12, 2013 09:30AM

Categories: Yellow Category

HB986

Submitted on: 2/10/2013

Testimony for HUS on Feb 12, 2013 09:30AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Letha DeCaires	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: My name is Letha Sundquist DeCaires. I fully support an increase in the foster board payment. I was a foster parent for many years. I was finally able to adopt my foster children. They are now both adults. I fully support raising the payment for foster children. These children need many things in addition to a roof over their head and food to eat. I so appreciate the dialogue that you are having about this matter today. Thank you.

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.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 9:30 am, Conference Room 329

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 concern stated by Ms. McManaman at the Senate hearing on January 29, 2013 that the budget for Child Welfare Services would need an increase to cover the cost. 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. I have information that States may apply for a waiver of the Title-IV foster care funding to divert those funds to family preservation/in-home services. Although applying for a waiver will give more

flexibility in spending, there needs to still be a plan in place so that the contracted services are more cost efficient.

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