

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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LATE

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 21, 2013

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Finance

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

Raelene Tenn
P.O. Box 283195
Honolulu, Hawaii 96828

2/20/2013

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Representative Aaron Ling Johnson, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee

Bill No. and Title: **HB 986 Relating to Foster Care Services**

Purpose: Increase monthly board rate distributed by the department of Human Services for foster care services for children.

Aloha and Thank you all for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 986.

There is mixed feelings on this bill and it is with a heavy heart that this testimony. Yes, \$529 in 1989 is now worth well over \$1000 today. \$529 represents a stipend amount to the Resource or Foster families that **willingly** take on the task of being a Foster parent.

With that said, I must also add that during the process of the licensing application, financial information is gathered on the potential Foster family and the household must be able to show that regular household expenses do not exceed monthly household income. Meaning, the household must be able to stand on it's own income without the needs of any foster board payments to financially support the child or children.

There are mixed feelings as to this bill.

Yes, it should be increases as cost of living has increased. A possible solution or consideration be given to increasing board payments based upon age group. A child entering into the teens can cost more than an infant. DHS has special funds for activities, clothing allowances etc **but not for food or start up costs related to bringing a child into ones' home. ie: car seat, strollers, crib and the never ending need for diapers.**

No, it should not. Unfortunately, we have seen the bad side of the foster board payments. It is not always used for the purposes of the child.

Here is one example: a family that had fostered 5 children, then adopted the children. 9 years later the children were removed and they no longer can maintain the \$1700.00 monthly Mortgage payments. Today they are facing foreclosure.

Another example of where a family refinance their mortgage. They needed the foster board payments included in the income as that was the only way they could qualify. This is one of many.

We asked that there be an accountability as to the use of funds. Yes, there is a clothing allowance or purchase order that is given for Ross Stores. The approx. \$250.00 allowance must be used all at once. Most of us know that when going to Ross Stores it is a hit or miss as to whether one can spend all that money in one day.

February 20, 2013

In regards to HB986

Aloha Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Nishimoto and Members of the Finance Committee,

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit my testimony and share mana'o in support of House Bill 986, to increase the foster board payments that support all of the children in foster care in Hawai'i.

We opened our home and family thirteen years ago to children needing a safe environment, supportive adults and a loving, caring family. Foster care has truly been a rewarding experience over these years. We have been blessed many times over by the presence of these children in our home. The children become our family the moment they step into the door. They have become our extended family, through continued contact after their departure from our home to be reunified with birth parents, family members or permanent foster placement. We have become part of their village.

In our thirteen blessed years of caring for the children in the foster care system, the cost of life's necessities have increased tremendously. Yet, we have and will continue to provide for these children on what has been provided to us for their support.

Some of the basic expenses that are standard for a home like ours for children ages 0-3 years old include: diapers, wipes, infant formula, baby food, and car safety seats. There is also the cost of day care so we may continue to work and earn an income to support the entire family. I currently pay \$450 per month for day care at a special needs program. After that expense, it doesn't even leave \$100 for additional needs. This is just a typical financial situation for younger children. The needs of the older youth and teens are even greater. Another example of the expenses incurred along with the normal maintenance of the home is repairing or replacing what is damaged. Just in the last year, we have had to replace our television, window coverings, shoji doors and room rugs because of damage. None of these expenses are covered by the board payment nor are they reimbursed from any fund.

I assure you that foster families will continue to provide for the children as best we can, as we have done these past many years, with or without Senate Bill 59.

But I ask you, for the sake of all the children in out of home care and for the loving families that open their hearts and homes to become 'ohana to these children, to please support House Bill 986 and help us to give them the homes, the lives and the opportunities that they so long for and deserve. As it takes a village to raise a child, I ask you to be part of our village and help us to raise these children, the future of Hawai'i.

Me ke aloha,

Kau'i Keola
Resource Caregiver

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

Aloha Representative Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance. 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

Dear Representative Carroll and Members of the House Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of House Bill 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 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 for foster children in their care.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their 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.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ana Maria de la Peña

Sonnette Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Aloha Representative Luke and Members of the House Committee on Finance. 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

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

Feb. 21, 2013

RE: House Bill 986, RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Aloha, Chair Luke and members of the House 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 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 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

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2013 6:16 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: analupe59@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB986 on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM

HB986

Submitted on: 2/21/2013

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ana Maria dela Pena	Individual	Support	No

Comments: It is very hard for us foster parents meet all the needs that these very special children need with the amount given for the last 22 years. Life needs have been increase and these children count on us to protect, love, feed all the physical and emotional needs, including keep them safe. Please help us to be the safe place for these special children by helping us.

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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