



The Judiciary, State of Hawaii

Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 21, 2013, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

by

R. Mark Browning
Deputy Chief Judge/Senior Judge
Family Court of the First Circuit

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 1340, S.D.2, H.D.1, Relating to Foster Care.

Purpose: Establishes a new Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care program.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary continues to support this bill except for its failure to grant legal counsel to the youth. The Judiciary also supports the companion bill, House Bill No. 873, H.D.2, which does ensure legal counsel.

House Bill No. 873, H.D.2 (page 5, line 13 and page 11-12, lines 19-22 and 1-5) gives the judge discretion to appoint counsel for the young adult and to pay for such appointment:

§346-N Court-appointed attorneys. The court may appoint an attorney sua sponte or at the request of any party to represent a young adult who is eligible under section 346-E and has signed the voluntary care agreement as described in section 346-G if it is deemed to be in the young adult's best interest. Attorneys who are appointed by the court to represent a qualifying young adult may be paid by the court, unless the young adult for whom counsel is appointed has an independent estate sufficient to pay fees and costs.



Senate Bill No. 1340, S.D. 2, H.D. 1, Relating to Foster Care
House Committee on Judiciary
Thursday, March 21, 2013 at 2:00 p.m.
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Senate Bill No. 1340, S.D.2, H.D.1 does not include this language. We respectfully suggest that Senate Bill No. 1340, S.D.2, H.D.1 should include this or similar language. Because this is not a Judiciary bill, this bill lacks an appropriations request. We are hesitant to propose one because we are uncertain about projected costs.

In these cases, the Department of Human Services is fully and effectively represented by the Office of the Attorney General. If the youth do not have access to legal representation, then there exists an inherently inequitable system that may thwart the intent of this bill. To assume that these youth will be able to find legal representation on their own through other avenues is not realistic given the overall burdensome volume that Legal Aid already has to bear. Although domestic violence victims also have a difficult time securing counsel, there are at least a few additional non-profit resources open to that population. There are none for the youth impacted by this bill. On a case by case basis, the court must have the discretion to appoint counsel to the young adults covered by this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.



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

March 21, 2013

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 1340, S.D.2, H.D.1 - RELATING TO FOSTER CARE**

Hearing: Thursday, March 21, 2013; 2:00 pm
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of S.B. 1340, S.D. 2, H.D. 1, is to add a new part to chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to care for and supervise eligible foster youth until their twenty-first birthday. Chapter 346-A will establish a new program called the young adult voluntary foster care program.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services strongly supports this bill. The young adult voluntary foster care program will support former foster youth in achieving permanency in the transition to adulthood and in becoming independent and self-sufficient by extending voluntary foster care to age twenty-one.

The DHS strongly supports the H.D. 1 amendment to section 346-C which allows participating young adults to choose whether they want to be present at court hearings or reviews. This provision reflects the strong preference of foster and young adults who worked together with the DHS to develop this proposal.

Studies have shown that young people who continue to receive services until age twenty-one have better outcomes in several areas including educational achievement and employment, thereby contributing to a more stable workforce and increased lifetime earnings. Increased support for transitioning youth will facilitate the youth's continued development and preparation for successful independence such as decreases in homelessness, dependency on public welfare benefits, and drug dependency, and incarceration.

This legislation is necessary to extend foster care services for young adults in foster care with the DHS to age twenty-one. This bill would statutorily extend services such as independent living services, case planning, permanency planning, placement and judicial oversight for former foster youth up to age twenty-one. For the youth in foster care who have not been able to be reunified with their family, adopted or obtain a legal guardian by age eighteen and are not ready to be on their own, extended care can provide safe and stable housing and prevent homelessness for these young people.

The funding necessary to implement this bill is based on calculations prepared with support from consultants who have worked with other states. The figures include projected federal reimbursements. The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351) allows states to claim federal reimbursement for the costs of caring for and supervising title IV-E eligible foster youth until their twenty-first birthday .

Projections for the initial year total \$983,043 of new state dollars (HMS 301 \$556,433 and HMS 303 \$426,610). Federal reimbursements from Title IV-E include \$401,133 for HMS 301 and \$551,079 for HMS 303. The funds will support 135 young adults with foster care maintenance, independent living and case

management services. A gradual increase is expected due to the increase in participants, with the cost of this program leveling off in the fifth year at \$1,949,444 new state dollars to support 175 young adults.

These funds will help to ensure that young adults have the supports they need at a critical point of transition: when they are seeking to complete secondary education; navigate admissions processes and complete postsecondary education or vocational training; and establish themselves in the workforce and in adult relationships. Having the supports in place to complete these transition tasks will successfully lay the foundation for long-term positive outcomes for youth leaving foster care and result in a substantial cost savings in future government services.

The DHS respectfully requests that the effective date of January 1, 2014 be reinstated for this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Bill: SB 1340

Date: March 21, 2013

Time: 2:00pm

Place: Room 325

Committee: Judiciary

Chair: Representative Rhoads

Vice Chair: Representative Har

I Strongly Support this bill

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

My name is Mike Curtis and I am the current Board Chair for Family Programs Hawaii (FPH). We are a non-profit agency that provides services to prevent children from entering foster care; support children and families involved in the foster care system; and assist youth transitioning out of care.

There is a growing emphasis on successful transition to adulthood among child welfare professionals. This has led to Federal programs providing the option to extend care to the age of 21 from the current standard of 18. I encourage you in the strongest terms to follow their lead here in our state.

Just take a moment and consider yourself, or your kids, at the age of 18. Were you truly prepared to head out on your own and be completely independent...capable of fending for yourself without any mentors or support services? Now add to that natural immaturity the challenges that young people face when they come from broken homes. Without adequate support during this crucial time, they are vulnerable to despair and the influence of those who would exploit them.

I urge you to support us in our call to provide services that will help these kids make a successful transition to adulthood. My belief is that we will reap the rewards of our investment many times over, in the form of better-integrated, productive citizens on the one hand, and reduced crime, public assistance and other societal costs on the other.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Mike Curtis
Board Chair
Family Programs Hawaii



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

HEARING: Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325

FROM: Judith Wilhoite, Family Programs Hawai'i

RE: SB 1340 - Related to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

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 strongly support this bill.

The text of SB 1340 names many of the needs of former foster youth as well as some of the positive impacts that extending foster care from 18 to 21 will provide. The following table showing outcomes for young people formerly in foster care compared to the general population of young people further illustrates why this legislation is so important:

Outcome	Foster Care	General
No high school diploma or GED	24.4%	7.3%
Not employed	52%	24.5%
Average income from employment	\$12,064	\$20,349
Have health insurance	57%	78%
Males who have been arrested	81.2%	17.4%
Females who have been pregnant	77%	40.4%

Courtney, et al. (2010)

Allowing foster youth to continue to receive support until 21 will help bring better outcomes for our foster youth and thus for all of us. In fact, there is research that shows the financial benefits of extending foster care – both for the individual youth and for society – outweigh costs to government by a factor of approximately 2 to 1.

I applaud this DHS initiative and strongly support this bill that will extend foster care in Hawai'i from age 18 to 21.



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President / CEO

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Delia Ulima, Statewide Initiative Coordinator**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

Re: **In Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

Aloha! My name is Delia Ulima and I am a Statewide Initiative Coordinator for the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative. We are the local site for the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and EPIC 'Ohana is the lead agency for this Initiative in Hawai'i. The Initiative works with systems, such as the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare, other service providers and partners within the public and private sector to create opportunities and support transitioning foster youth to successfully move into adulthood and become a contributing part of our community.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340, which provides young people with the voluntary option to remain in a developmentally appropriate foster care program up to age 21.

The State of Hawaii is the "parent" of young people who are in permanent foster care custody. As "wards" of the State, they are in a unique legal class. For those who exit out of this system at age 18, they often find themselves without the necessary supports that any 18-year old would need to survive, let alone thrive. Nationally, outcomes for transitioning foster youth are grim. By the time they are 24, one in four will experience homelessness, 77% of young women will become pregnant, only 3% will obtain a four year college degree, earn significantly less than their peers and 81% of males will be arrested. A Chapin Hall Study showed that the extension of foster care to 21 resulted in the following benefits: increased college attendance, increased earnings, decreased unintended pregnancies, decreased usage of public assistance, decreased homelessness and decreased incarceration.

States currently have the option to extend eligibility across certain Title IV-E programs. Under the 2008 Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, federal funds may be drawn down to support the extension of foster care when certain employment and education requirements are met. Currently, there are over 13 states that have opted to extend foster care beyond age 18.

In closing, I would ask this committee to consider what kind of future we would like these young people to look forward to. Think about what our own families provided for us in our very young adulthood? What do we expect to provide for our own biological children? Most in this room would find it unrealistic to expect our own 18 year old children to be completely financially, physically, mentally and emotionally on their own with no parental guidance, no financial supports for a first car, first apartment, support with college, spending money, medical coverage and basic love and encouragement. Providing an option for young people in our foster care system to have additional supports beyond 18 makes ethical and in the long run, financial, sense. We respectfully ask this committee to pass Senate Bill 1340. Mahalo nui loa.



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President / CEO

March 21, 2013

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 1340

Voluntary Foster Care to 21

I am Laurie Arial Tochiki and I have the honor and privilege to serve as President and CEO of EPIC, 'Ohana. Since 1997, EPIC 'Ohana has been a non-profit partner to the Department of Human Services providing 'Ohana Conferencing and Family Finding to the families in the child welfare system throughout the state of Hawai'i. Since 2004 we have also provided Youth Circles for transitioning youth. In a Youth Circle we work with a foster youth transitioning to adulthood to help them develop and execute a plan for their future. We help youth connect to the resources they need to make a successful transition. But we know that even with the transition plan in place, foster youth are not ready to be independent at 18. Actually very few children are ready for independent at 18 – even those children who have intact families and have not faced the issues and challenges of being a foster child.

The foster youth in Hawai'i are OUR children, and deserve the love and support that we give the children in our own biological families. It is our duty, but it is also a very good investment for the future. It is the goal of the child welfare service and family court to find permanent homes and connections for children who cannot be reunified with their parents. Even though this is the goal, each year more than 100 children "age out" of the system without permanent family and connections. This bill gives the state the tools it needs to help young people develop better paths to adulthood. It gives the state tools that will help develop the network of support young people in foster care need in order to succeed. It is an investment to minimize the homelessness, premature parenthood, poor educational outcomes, and criminal justice involvement that we know this population experiences without support.

This is not just a wild guess that with the support we may be able to avert the negative outcomes these youth experience. There is formidable research about the adolescent brain and development that tells us that youth are still developing and maturing during this time



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President / CEO

frame. Positive supports during this time can help to alleviate some of the harmful consequences of early trauma. Also, the Jim Casey Initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the federal Children's Bureau and many other agencies have demonstrated best practices in services that improve outcomes for youth. The Department of Human Services has made tremendous strides to work with families, protect children and improve outcomes. I believe that the DHS, with the strong community partnerships it has built, is ready to extend care to foster youth, and do it right.

Thank you so much for your attention to this important measure.

Aloha

Laurie Arial Tochiki



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: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Judiciary

Testimony in Support of SB 1340 SD2 HD1 Relating to Foster Care

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 1340 SD2 HD1 Relating to Foster Care.

Young people who age out of foster care at age 18 face significant challenges. The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth showed that by age 24:

- 40% of young people had been homeless since leaving foster care;
- ¼ did not have a high school diploma (compared to 7.35 of peers who did not experience foster care);
- Half were unemployed (twice as high as the general young adult population);
- 81% of males had been arrested (compared to 17% of all young adults);

Outcomes are much better for young people who stay in care to age 21 (from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief - :


- Those required to leave care at age 18 were 2.7 times more likely to have been homeless;
- Remaining in care more than doubled the odds that young people would be working or in school at age 19;
- Those remaining in care were twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21;
- Young women remaining in care experienced a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy before age 20;
- Those remaining in care were more likely to access independent living services.

Extending foster care to age 21 has financial benefits for both the young adult and society. Increasing opportunities to complete college and vocational programs results in higher earning potential over a lifetime. Extended foster care decreases costs to society from early child bearing as teen mothers are 2.2 times more likely to have a child placed in foster care than those who delay child bearing until age 20 or 21.

Most young people are not prepared to take on all of the responsibilities of adult living at age 18. Our youth in foster care deserve this support in making successful transitions to adulthood.

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 initial 'J' and a distinct 'F'.

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



HAWAII COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

March 20, 2013

The Honorable Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice- Chair
House Committee on the Judiciary
Hawaii House of Representatives
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chairman Rhoads, Vice-Chair Har and Committee Members,

SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care

The Hawaii Community Foundation is writing in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 1340, which provides young people with the voluntary option to remain in developmentally appropriate foster care until age 21.

Foster youth who turn 18 no longer receive support from the foster care system. "Aging out" affects all of us. Young people who transition to adulthood without the needed network of support experience very poor outcomes compared to their peers: More than one in five will become homeless after age 18; 71% of women are pregnant by age 21; one in four will be involved with the criminal justice system within two years of leaving foster care; and fewer than 3% will earn a college degree by age 25.

The reform represented in this bill is manageable and achievable with only 100 young people aging out of care each year in Hawaii. If voluntary care is an option for young people, we avoid significant social costs due to increased homelessness, emergency health care, and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Hawaii Community Foundation has supported the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, working with the HI HOPES Board of young people and the State Department of Human Services to improve outcomes for these young people. As a community, these are our children and we need to provide support for them as we would our own 18 year old child to help them become successful adults.

We urge you to pass SB 1340 out of committee.

Sincerely yours,

Amy S. Luersen
Director of Philanthropic Services

LATE



SB1340 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO FOSTER CARE
House Committee on Judiciary

March 21, 2013

2:00 p.m.

Room 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1340 SD2 HD1, which establishes the young adult voluntary foster care program to care for and supervise eligible foster youth until their twenty-first birthday.

OHA supports this measure as it will significantly impact our beneficiaries who age out of the foster care system. According to a 2012 Department of Human Services (DHS) report, approximately 46 percent of the children placed in foster care in Hawai'i are of Native Hawaiian ancestry. When foster youth exit the system at the age of eighteen, they no longer have a safety net to ensure a successful transition to adulthood. Permitting former foster youth to stay in the system until the age of twenty one would provide these youth with a mechanism to develop a foundation for independent living, and give them equal footing amongst their peers.

Therefore, OHA urges this committee to **PASS** SB1340 SD2 HD1. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

COMMENTS ON
SB1340 SD2 HD1 - RELATING TO FOSTER CARE

Committee on Judiciary - Room 325

Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon Har, Vice-Chair

March 21, 2013 at 2:00 p.m.

LATE

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii submits comments on SB1340 SD2 HD1 – Relating to Foster Care as it specifically relates to the possible funding of the provision of legal counsel to foster youth through the Indigent Legal Assistance Fund. Earlier this session, this Committee heard HB873 which was the administrative version of this bill and amended it to allow foster youth to request competent counsel.

We understand that it has been recommended that funds from the Indigent Legal Assistance Fund be used to require legal services organizations like the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i to provide counsel as requested to the foster youth. While clearly foster youth would qualify for services under the parameters of the Indigent Legal Assistance Fund, the state should not forego its responsibility to pay for competent counsel for foster youth by attempting to access a fund which helps to provide access for all indigent individuals with civil legal services.

The Indigent Legal Assistance Fund is a fund shared by all eligible legal services based on a pro rata basis and there are no requirements in the statute which prioritize certain types of cases over others. The sole requirement is whether the client is indigent. Currently, eight providers benefit from this fund which is expected to generate at most \$1.5 million. Each provider is allowed to prioritize their use of this funding for the populations that they serve and the needs that they see in the community. Part of the genius of this fund is that it is flexible and allows agencies, in a day and age where funding is so heavily limited, to truly respond to the requests and needs of the public. Locally, we are still only able to meet about 20% of the legal needs of poor people in the state which is similar to national figures and not all of these needs fit into existing funding sources. Further, restricting legal service agencies to certain specific populations at the expense of others should not be done without clear study and decision that the legislature is no longer interested in providing general legal services to the indigent – only to certain specific groups.

DHS estimates that up to 135 youth would be eligible in the next year for this program with that number rising to 175 in the following year. Since 1996, Legal Aid has provided guardian ad litem services to over 3,000 in the foster care system. In this work, we regularly assist foster teens who are in permanent custody of the state of Hawai'i. These cases are not the easiest of cases can demand up to 50 hour per year of assistance. Currently, rates for handling a guardian ad litem cases differ from Circuit to Circuit. The average cost is about \$1,764 which is approximately \$35.28 per hour. At this rate, the expectation to represent 135 youth would be \$238,140 or tantamount to 15.87% of the total Indigent Legal Assistance Fund. This would increase in the following year to \$308,700 or 20.58% of the Fund.

Further, at times, there are also conflicts of interest and while Legal Aid has a contract on Oahu to pay attorneys who assist in conflict of interest guardian ad litem cases, funding from ILAF would not be able to be used for this purpose as private attorneys are not qualified to receive ILAF funds.

While we do believe that it is important the legal counsel be provided to youth who decide to avail themselves to continued foster care, the cost of legal counsel should not be expected to come at the expense of others in the community who need civil legal services. We recommend that at least \$240,000 be set aside in FY14 and \$300,000 in FY15 to provide contracts through the Judiciary to provide legal counsel services.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,



M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina
Executive Director

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii (Legal Aid) is the only legal service provider with offices on every island in the state, and in 2012 provided legal assistance to almost 10,000 Hawai'i residents in the areas of consumer fraud, public assistance, family law, the prevention of homelessness, employment, protection from domestic violence, and immigration. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice through legal advocacy, outreach and education for those in need.

LATE

To: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

Hearing: Thursday, March 21, 2013, 2:00 pm.
Conference Room 325

From: The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC)

Re: In support of SB 1340, relating to foster care

We, the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC), support SB 1340, SD1. HFYC is a youth-led non-profit organization that empowers youth voice within the community and state to advocate and support current and former foster youth. Every year we reach at least 300 current and former foster youth.

We support SB 1340, SD1 because we, as a group who have experienced life in the foster system, believe that extending foster care to the age of 21, or the age of 23 for youth who are pursuing higher education, will allow the youth the time they need to mature and gain valuable life skills necessary to succeed in life. The foster youth who are evicted at age 18 often do not have the financial, emotional, or housing support from their biological family. Rhonda Nichols, in 2001, conducted a study to Identifying the Transition Needs of Foster Youth in Oahu and East Hawaii. She found that 20% of (a group of 25) youth aged 18-24 were homeless within that year and that an additional 43% were at risk of becoming homeless. 33% of those youth's salaries (averaging \$717) were going towards their rent (average rent at the time: \$242). 24% of the youth had no health insurance. A group of aged 17-19 year old youth in that same study reported 28% homelessness within that year.

If foster parents are given the additional financial help from this bill then they will be better able to continue to support their foster youth, not only through the end of their high school graduation, but as they begin those first vital years of young adulthood. Within HFYC's own Oahu Board, we have five out of six members who are currently enrolled in higher education. Three out of six of our Board members are employed and two of those three have multiple jobs. More than half of our salaries are allocated towards rent payment. Two of our Board members are living in the school dormitory, one lives in a group home, and the remaining three members are renting shared rooms. Although the HFYC board would no longer qualify for benefits from the passing of SB 1340, SD1, we strongly believe that the upcoming generations of foster youth deserve this chance to have additional support because we don't want anyone to have to struggle and suffer the way that we did.

Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition
245 N. Kukui St. Ste 102 Honolulu HI, 96817
(808)545-5683
fosteryouthspeak@gmail.com



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1340 SD2 HD1: Relating to Foster Care

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair, Representative Sharon Har, Vice Chair, Members of the Committee on Judiciary

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

Hearing: Thursday, March 21, 2013, 2:00 pm Conference Room 325

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of SB 1340**, which establishes the young adult voluntary foster care program which will support former foster youth in their transition to independence and self-sufficiency until the age of twenty-one.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 60 years. CCH has programs serving families, elders, children, developmentally disabled, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable of the people in Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii has many years of experience in working with foster youth and currently has several programs serving foster youth and resource families. CCH also has a program called Horizons that provides housing and independent living skill development services for young adults age 18 – 25 who are transitioning out of the foster care or juvenile justice systems. We recognize that services past the age of 18 for this group of young people are critical to their prospects for successful independence.

There are many reasons why foster youth are usually not ready for independence at age 18. One important reason is that foster youth have all experienced trauma at some point in their young lives. Trauma affects emotional development, arresting aspects of development at the age in which the trauma occurred. This constriction of normal emotional development can negatively impact learning, judgment, self-image and decision-making. The added disadvantage of not having a sound support system in place leaves these young people vulnerable to the greater hazards of independent living.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. **We urge your support for SB 1340.** Please contact me at (808)527-4810 or trisha.kajimura@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808)527-4810 • trisha.kajimura@catholiccharitieshawaii.org



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Alana Kipili'I, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

Aloha, my name is Alana Kipili'i and I am the Secretary of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative in West Hawai'i.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340 to provide youth with the option of extending foster care up to the age of 21.

I think that foster care needs to be extended from 18 to 21, for age does not make a person an adult. Not every foster youth gets the adequate amount of support needed to be financially and mentally stable after aging out of the foster care system. The world can be very overwhelming and without the proper help and guidance, the youth may not be entirely prepared for life. It also leaves them vulnerable to a lot of 'real-life issues of the world', which can come with many consequences. I believe that with a sufficient amount of time, guidance and support, Hawai'i's young people can break the cycle and any derogatory connotations that follow the label "foster care."

My grandmother was my foster parent and adopted me after I turned 18. She has always taken care of my siblings and me, even before we were put into foster care. With my grandmother I was given somewhere to sleep, food and clothes, but truthfully I got more than just shelter- she gave me a home. Though people doubted me, my grandmother believed in me and I graduated high school on time and even walked the line. In the Fall semester of 2011 I got my Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts. I am now 23 years old and I still reside with my grandmother and will continue to until I get my B.A. I thank her every day for her unconditional love, support, guidance and faith in me, for I don't know who or where I'd be if it wasn't for her.

Statistics show that 25% of young people formerly in foster care between the ages of 18 and 24 lack a high school diploma or GED compared to the 7% of their peers in the general population. Also, only 6% of young people formerly in foster care obtain a 2 or 4 year degree by age 23 and 24. And 24% will become homeless at least once by the age of 23 and 24.

I strongly believe in the importance of Senate Bill 1340 to give foster youth the option of getting the support and care beyond age 18. For with these hard and troubling times, it is imperative that the transition from foster care to adulthood be met with extra support and guidance to ensure a stable and promising future.

In conclusion I simply and modestly ask that this committee support and pass the crucial Bill of 1340. Mahalo.

To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Apuauro Turano, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill SB 1340, Relating Foster Care**

Aloha my name is Apuauro Turano and I am 22 years old. I am a new member of the Oahu HI H.O.P.E.S youth leadership board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. I am submitting my testimony in support of extending Hawaii's foster care from the age of 18 to 21. I believe if Hawaii's foster youth are given the opportunity for voluntary extended care, they would be more successful in transitioning into adulthood.

At age 11, I lost my father to cancer and I ran away from my mother's because the living arrangements were not safe. I ran away to a friend's house, whose family became my first foster home. However, I felt I wasn't getting the proper treatment. I wasn't provided with enough clothes and items I needed for football. I was treated like an outsider. I met another friend who told his family about me and asked if they could take me in. I asked my social worker if I could go with my friend's family and that request changed my life. In my sophomore year of high school, I was taken in by my friend's grandparents and they became like my own grandparents. They showed me love and gave me the guidance I needed as a teenager. They taught me responsibility which helped me graduate from high school and join the Hawaii Air National Guard. Even though I aged out of foster care at age 18, my grandparents are still an active role in my life now at the age of 22.

I learned a lot while I was a part of the foster care system, both good and bad. I understand that other youth who experience foster care face difficult challenges and are not fortunate enough to have a family to love and help them as they become young adults. They, in turn, suffer from poor outcomes, like homelessness and unemployment. If optional foster care is extended to 21, more young people will have opportunities and hope for a better future. I humbly ask that you pass Senate Bill 1340. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Room 325, State Capitol
From: **Arleen Kuwamura**, Hale 'Opio Kauai

Re: **Testimony in Support of SB 1340, Relating Foster Care**

My name is Arleen Kuwamura and I work for Hale 'Opio Kaua'i. I am the partner staff Kaua'i branch of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340 which supports extended jurisdiction for foster youth beyond age 18. I support the intent of this bill to have voluntary foster care extended up to age 21.

For some of those who have aged out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own or they lack the support and often times the necessary skills needed to be successful adults. I have worked with foster youth for 18 years and have watched many of these youth struggle to make it on their own, many of them have very little or no support when they age out of foster care. If we could extend care during this crucial time of growth when they need services most, I believe we will not only be supporting the individual young person increase their full potential and social capital it will also strengthen the communities they live, work and go to school in.

In Hawai'i, 33% of former foster youth in a recent poll, ages 18 to 23, reported having couch-surfed or moved from home to home because they did not have a place to stay. That is more than the national average of 24% of former foster youth who experience some form of homelessness by age 24.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important **option** for youth, and that they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible.

In closing, I would ask this committee to support the intent of and pass Senate Bill 1340.

Thank you very much.

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Ashley Slater, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Ashley Slater and I am the President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative in West Hawai'i. I am for the Senate Bill 1340 Extension of Foster Care to age 21 in the State of Hawai'i. There are many reasons that I think this Bill should be passed.

One of my reasons is that I feel with this extension, foster youth have more time to grow and learn what they need to, to survive in the real world. I also feel that it gives them a little extra time to connect with that foster family and to safe and comfortable to contact them when exiting out. I feel that every foster youth deserves some one they can fall back on for help and support. Granting this bill allows the foster youth the time they need to build supportive relationships. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Chardonnay Rosa-Arango, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**

Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Chardonnay Rosa-Arango and I am the President of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 1340 and its intent to provide the option of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

I am very fortunate to say that at the age of 16 my foster parents at the time took legal guardianship of me. They not only provided me with security but they assured me that I had a family I could always be a part of. Because I was given a stable home past the age of 18, I was able to transition into adulthood very efficiently. Knowing that I had support and stability in my life, I was able to live out my dream and go to Southwestern Assemblies of God University, a private Christian university, in Waxahachie, Texas. I attended school there for a year and a half and now, at the age of 19, I am at Kauai Community College living with my former foster parents. If I had been completely cut off at 18, I know that the choices I made would have been very different. I believe that if foster care is extended up to 21, many foster youth will be given the opportunity and support in order to transition into adulthood more efficiently.

Statistics show that former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. In closing, I would ask this committee to pass SB1340 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition into adulthood. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Filipe Tauaika, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**

Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

Good afternoon, members of the House Committee on Judiciary. My name is Filipe Tauaika, I am 20 years old and a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Oahu.

I support SB 1340 to provide foster youth with voluntary foster care to age 21. I was in foster care at a young age and aged out of the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facilities (Ko'olau) at the age of 18. I didn't have a plan for where I would live or what I would do. Fortunately, I found relatives and they helped me with housing, a job and guidance. I was also lucky I found something that I loved to do, boxing. It kept me out of trouble and gave me a goal to work towards, which is to be an Olympic boxer. With the support of my family, coach and others in the community and church, I was able to find resources and stay on track.

Unfortunately, many other young people aging out of foster care don't have the same chances. They don't have knowledge about medical coverage, housing, employment, resources and other basic necessities they need to be a successful adult. If they had these supports and resources, they would have better opportunities for a better life.

I humbly ask that you pass SB 1340. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Gernani Yutob Jr., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**

Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Gernani Yutob, Jr. and I am the President of the O`ahu HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. The Initiative is a national and local effort to create and support successful outcomes for transitioning foster youth.

I aged out of the foster care system in 2008 at the age of 18 and will be turning 23 in April. I will be graduating with my Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration degree with Academic Distinction at the University of Hawai`i – West O`ahu in May. Did you know, only 3 percent of foster youth who age out of the foster care system at 18 will graduate with a four-year degree by the age of 25 compared to about 20 percent from the general population? I was very fortunate to have my resource caregiver take me under her wing after I graduated from high school. This meant that I had a place to stay and was able to fully concentrate on school and work without worrying about where I will spend my next night at. Had this not happened, I would be a 23 year old who would most likely not be graduating on time because my main priority would be to survive and figure out where I will get my next meal. Not a lot of foster youth who age out of care will have a supportive adult and the resources they need to guide them through one of the most difficult phases in life. Did you kick your child out of your home when they turned 18 without offering any type of support or guidance and expect them to make it out on their own? Even at the age of 18, when they are legally considered an adult, they are not ready for what lies ahead just yet. It is imperative that we have support and resources for youth transitioning out of care to become successful adults in the future.

In closing, I would like to humbly ask this committee to pass SB 1340 and give foster youth to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition to adulthood. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany "Ipo" Lynch Ma'e, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Tiffany "Ipo" Lynch Ma'e and I am the president of the East Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 1340 and the option it provides for voluntary extended foster care up to age 21.

1 in 5 youth who age out of care become homeless. And only 3 percent of youth who aged out of care graduate with a bachelor's degree. It's a haunting future. The extension of foster care to 21 as an option promotes a healthy transition into adulthood for my foster brothers and sisters in care.

Without a shadow of a doubt, I feel that with the passing of this bill the negative statistics that haunt youth in care will change from negative to positive. Where only 3 percent of foster youth DON'T graduate with a college degree and 97% complete one.

We are taken into care by the State, who becomes our 'parent', and promised a better life than the ones our families are able to provide us. When my peers turn 18, their parents don't stop loving or supporting them. Why then, are foster youth expected to survive on our own with little or no preparation or supports when we turn 18?

In closing, I humbly ask that this committee passes SB 1340 and give my foster brothers and sisters the continued support they need and deserve through their transition to adulthood. Mahalo nui loa.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Judy Adviento, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**

Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Judy Adviento, I am 21 years old and I am the Secretary of the Oahu HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit this testimony in support of SB 1340 and its intent to provide the option to participate in voluntary foster care up to age 21.

Some foster youth are not prepared to go out on their own when they turn 18. There are so many negative statistics about youth who age out of care. For example, in a study of young people formerly in foster care, 24% have experienced homelessness at least once, and 81% of the males get arrested in comparison to 17% of their peers in the general population.

I went into foster care at the age of 16. Even before I went into care, I was quite independent. I worked and a lot of my paperwork by myself so when I went into foster care, I was ready to take on those obstacles. It also helped that I had a lot of supportive people around me. When I turned 18, I felt prepared but not every youth is as prepared as I was and it's expressed through the statistics.

I am currently my younger brother's resource caregiver (foster parent) and it would terrify me if I found out that my brother "fell through the cracks" because he was not ready to go on his own at the age of 18. Every youth matures at different rates. This is even true with our peers in the general population. The difference is that foster youth sometimes don't know/have anywhere and anyone to go to when they are in trouble and struggling financially, emotionally, physically, etc.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important option for youth, and they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible. In closing, I ask this committee to pass SB 1340. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Karen Hagopian, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Karen Hagopian, and I am 19 years old. I am the Vice-President of the West Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board. I support SB 1340 to the fullest extent. By extending foster care to the age of 21, it gives the foster youth a better chance to get a support system such as building a family relationship, obtaining knowledge of schooling, having a housing system in place, and being able to balance school and work without having to fret about where they are going to sleep that night.

For me when I aged out of foster care at 18, it was hard to focus on school and work because I knew that I would have to move out of my foster home and find a place to live. Because of that my grades slipped in college and I had to focus more on work. This is why I think extending foster care to 21 is important. I humbly ask that you pass SB 1340. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Keola Limkin, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Keola Limkin, I am 22 years old and I was born and raised on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am the Secretary for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. During most of my childhood I lived with my mother and my five younger siblings. When I was a sophomore in high school, my siblings and I were placed in foster care until I aged out of child welfare services.

My younger siblings frequently moved between foster homes until my mother regained legal custody of them. I was fortunate to remain with the same foster parent during my entire experience. I developed a strong relationship with my foster dad to the point where I felt permanence. Immediately after graduating from high school, I lived at the University of Hawaii at Hilo dormitory while attending school. Our bond did not wither and he allowed me to live with him during summer break.

I support SB 1340 regarding Voluntary Foster Care Act to extend care to 21 in Hawaii. I believe that allowing foster youth to have an option to remain in foster care up until the age of 21 would nurture positive community members. The age group of 18-21 years is a window where healthy risk taking can take place. These young adults will face many new experiences and a foster parent could provide both support and counseling. Foster parents should also be trained to parent these young adults in this specialized period if policy is to change. Foster parent guidance during this critical period for learning will ensure that they succeed in their future endeavors. Please pass SB 1340.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Michael Masulit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My Name is Michael Jay Masulit and I am a Member of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340 which supports voluntary foster care up to age 21 in Hawaii.

For those who age out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own because of the lack of support that they need to be a successful adult. I've seen many of my fellow board members who aged out of foster care deal with a lot in their lives. Many of them had very little or no support. I am one of the fortunate ones. When I aged out of foster care, I was able to complete a college degree in culinary arts with the help of an aunt. If it wasn't for this one caring adult who provided housing and college support, I don't know where I would be today.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important option for youth, and they should have the choice to remain in foster beyond 18, as long as they want to and are willing to meet the requirements of the program.

In closing, I would ask this committee to pass SB 1340. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Nadia Troche, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Nadia Troche and I am the Vice-President of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 1340 and its intent to provide the option of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

At age 15, my brother and I entered foster care without any knowledge of the system. It was a traumatic experience. Fortunately my brother had me to fall upon when things went wrong, therefore I can say I grew up at a very early age. But, without me he wouldn't have had that responsible adult to nurture him during his transitioning stage, he wouldn't have had any financial help to get himself anywhere in life, he wouldn't have had a place to stay once he aged out, and those are all problems that other youth face alone. I can strongly say that foster care should be extended past the age of 18, and of course there are many reasons why, but my main reason is we deserve to be loved and nurtured like any other child. We deserve to have that strong back bone to fall upon in time of need, we are children of the community that want to be the best we can be. To have that stable home, those stable foster parents, a stable living would really change lives, a lot of lives!

Statistics show that former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. In closing, I would ask this committee to pass SB 1340 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition into adulthood. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Nellieshy Mamuad, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Nellieshy Mamuad and I am 24 years old. I entered foster care at the age of 12 and aged out at 18. I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit my testimony in support of SB 1340, which would allow voluntary extension of foster care until age 21.

Foster youth are wards of the state, which simply means that the state is our parent. For our out-of-care peers the nurturing and support of their parents is not something that abruptly ends at the age of 18. Our foster youth deserve to be afforded this same nurturing and support by our parent, the state.

Many foster youth who age out of care at 18 are not fully prepared to enter the world on their own with what little to no resources we do have available. In East Hawaii, there is only 1 agency that I know of that has a specified program that offers continued supportive services for aged out foster youth.

Statistics show that 24% of young people aged out of foster care have been homeless at least once by the time they are 24 years old. Furthermore, former foster youth at the age of 24 are earning more than \$10,000 less per year than their peers in the general population. Adding the lack of supportive adults who can help them find housing, write a rental reference or even co-sign, our former foster youth are at a huge disadvantage in succeeding at obtaining stable housing. Sadly, housing is just one of the many basic-need areas that our young people must fight to navigate on their own once they have aged out of the system.

In closing, I would like to humbly ask that you support and pass SB 1340, so that our foster youth can have the opportunity to be afforded the same continuance of nurturing and support beyond 18 that their out-of-care peers are. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Noy Worachit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana HYOI Assistant

Re: **Testimony in Support of SB 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

Good afternoon members of the House Committee on Judiciary. My name is Noy Worachit, I am 20 years old and I am the Vice-President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative on Oahu. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340 which supports the voluntary option to extend jurisdiction for foster youth beyond age 18. I support the intent of this bill to have foster care extended up to age 21.

For some of those who have aged out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own or they lack the support they need to be successful adults, which is why I feel it is important that we should have the option of being in foster care until the age of 21. When I was 18, I was a single parent to my 2 year old daughter. I was working two jobs and also attending school full-time. The support I received throughout my transition out of foster care is similar to what extended foster care would be like in a sense. For example, my foster parents allowed my daughter and me to stay in their home even after I turned 18. They also cared for my daughter while I went to work and school and eventually became temporary legal guardians of my daughter to allow me to pursue my dreams of having a career in the military. It gave me peace of mind as a mother to know that no matter what happened, my children and I will always have someone to lean on for support.

Currently, I am only a few semesters away from obtaining my Associate's degree in Administration of Justice and I have also been with the same employer for nearly 2 years. I truly believe that I would not be here today if it were not for the support of my foster parents.

However, this is not the case for most foster youth. Many of them have very little or no support when they age out of foster care.

In Hawaii, 33% of former foster youth in a recent poll, ages 18 to 23, reported having couch-surfed or moved from home to home because they did not have a place to stay. That is more than the national average of 24% of former foster youth who experience some form of homelessness by age 24. In recent studies, 67 % of youth formerly in foster care are dependent on public assistance compared to only 7% of their peers who have never experienced foster care. And by age 23 and 24, youth formerly in care will earn a yearly median of \$8,000 compared to their peers at \$18,300. By extending foster care to 21, it will help increase positive

outcomes in employment and decrease negative outcomes in the areas of homelessness and dependency on public assistance.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important **option** for youth, and that they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible.

In closing, I ask that you afford us the same opportunities as you would for your own children and I ask this committee to support the intent of and pass Senate Bill 1340. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol
From: **Sassy Lean, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii),**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative
Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Princess Johnisa Lean, I am 19 years old and I was born on the island of Oahu, and raised on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am the Vice President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. Although my mother had custody of me, I lived with family members and my godparents for majority of my childhood. As an adolescent I lived with my mother until I was placed in foster care in my sophomore year in high school. I was granted guardianship with my foster parent until I aged out of foster care.

I lost connections with my siblings and their children while I was in foster care. They remained in the custody of my mother when I was placed in my foster home. I was fortunate enough to remain in one placement throughout my experience in foster care. My guardian and I acquired a powerful bond that till this day has never changed. I still call her for advice and I am always welcomed in her home. She has given me a sense of stability, guidance and permanency. Besides her role as a mother to me, she is a Social Worker for Child Protective Services in Hawaii. She has supported me as a parent would their own child, she treated me no different from her biological children and helped me achieve a successful transition into adulthood.

I support SB 1340 regarding Voluntary Foster Care Act to extend care to 21 in Hawaii. I believe that offering foster youth the option to remain in foster care up until the age of 21 would increase their chances of a positive and successful transition into adulthood. Youth that age out of care with no support, no social capital, no guidance, no stability, and no sense of permanency will either become homeless, or incarcerated. I strongly feel that no 18 year old whether in foster care or not is ready to live on their own. As foster youth the state is our parent, so the option of foster care to 21 will help increase our success as adults. Many youth in the general population at the age of 18 can continue to live with their parents, therefore I believe that foster youth should have the same option to ensure successful transitions into adulthood. I ask this committee to please pass SB 1340. Thank you.

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Rachel Burke, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Rachel Burke and I am 19 years old. I am part of the West Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board. I fully support SB 1340.

Extending voluntary foster care to the age of 21 is very important for several reasons. At age 18 most youth are not able to support themselves. It takes a while to get a job, buy a vehicle, find a place to live, and still be able to save money. By extending the age to 21, it gives young people an opportunity to have the support system they need to get these things done. This gives them a chance to slowly start doing things on their own but also being able to turn to someone for help. I think this bill is crucial to the success of foster youth in Hawaii.

When I aged out of foster care I had a great support system. I had my foster family who told me multiple times that I would always have a place to stay; that they weren't kicking me out at 18. They helped me with transportation, finding a job, getting a place to stay, buying groceries etc. To be honest, I would not have been able to accomplish anything without my support system. I am very thankful that I have them and I can always turn to them for help.

I ask your support in passing SB 1340. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Samantha U'u, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Maui)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Samantha U'u, I'm 18, and I am a member of the Maui HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunity Initiative. I would like to submit a testimony in support of SB 1340. The Bill supports the extension of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

I aged out of the foster care system when I turned 18 last February. I knew what I wanted, but I didn't know how to achieve it. I didn't have the knowledge of where to go or what to do because nothing was planned out. I was lucky enough to be guided through the process of what I wanted for my future because I continued on with my schooling.

My brother on the other hand struggled much more. He was homeless at one point because he did not receive the necessary support that he needed. Statistics show that many former foster youth experience a form of homelessness and my brother was one of them. To get out of the state of being homeless he decided to continue on with his schooling in college. He received the support that he needed, but later found out that school wasn't for him. When he dropped out of college, the support stopped, as well. I feel that if he had a planned out future along with support of other people he wouldn't have been homeless at the time, with nothing other than school support to rely on.

In closing, I would like to ask this committee to pass SB 1340. To help other foster youth out there to receive the necessary support they need to plan out their future. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, March 21, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Sharla-Ann Fujimoto**, Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative,
EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

Aloha, my name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto and I work for EPIC 'Ohana, Inc. and assist with the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative and the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340, which extends voluntary foster care to the age of 21. I have worked with youth in foster care and formerly in foster care for almost five years and I feel that this is a population in need of support.

Today, there is a youth turning 18, but they are not celebrating the way their peers normally would because this youth is a foster youth. This foster youth is packing their things (most likely into trash bags) while asking themselves the question, "Where am I going to go?" This youth will most likely end up homeless on the street or will end up going back to the biological family they were taken away from only to face the same traumas that that landed them in foster care to begin with. This youth will most likely face extremely poor outcomes because they do not have adequate support.

Those of us who have not been in the foster care system do not understand the true pressure behind turning 18. Most of us were excited at the prospect of turning 18. Most of us have had parents help us out get into college, buy a computer, help us with transportation, and maintain a stable living situation. Most of us that have not been in foster care were not expected to find a job, find housing, get into college, and find adequate transportation on the same day we turned 18. Most of us had a choice if we wanted to leave home or not. For our youth aging out of care, they have no choice and they are absolutely terrified of their 18th birthday—they are expected to make huge life decisions that they may not be developmentally able to make at such a young age and without adequate supports put into place.

I fully support this bill because if youth in foster care were given the option to remain in care up until the age of 21, they would have a few more years to build the adequate support they need to become successful, self-sufficient adults. They would be able to experience a different type of foster care that is developmentally appropriate for them. They would be given the chance to plan their life as they see fit for them because they would have more than just one day to make all of the huge life decisions.

In closing, I humbly ask this committee to pass SB 1340. It would benefit the foster youth by supporting the notion that we believe in them and that supports do not end at the age of 18. Thank you.

To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany Darragh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Maui)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Tiffany Darragh, I am 19 years old and a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Maui. I recently aged out of foster care on Maui.

I support Senate Bill 1340 to extend voluntary foster care to 21 because I know many youth who have aged out who have absolutely no place to go. They are living at the park or jumping from friend's house to friend's house. If foster care was extended to the age of 21 there would be less worries about where the youth are going with their lives.

When my brother aged out, he was kicked out of my grandparent's house. My brother had never had a job and he didn't do much thinking on how he would find housing. So aging out was a big shock for him. My brother was homeless for a while. He decided to go to college to make his life better. Our independent living worker helped him find a cheap place that he could afford with money he received for higher education every month. My brother is on food stamps. Then he also lost that place he was staying at. Once again, he was on the streets. I felt bad for him but there was nothing I could do. If the system extends care to the age of 21 then no youth in the future would have to go through what my brother and many others have gone through.

Please support Senate Bill 1340. Mahalo.



To: **Committee on Judiciary**
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany Tuilata, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of SB 1340, Relating to Foster Care**

Good afternoon, members of the House Committee on Judiciary. My name is Tiffany Tuilata and I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 1340 and support the intent of the voluntary foster care act, which extends the option to remain in foster care up to age 21.

I'm 24 and I aged out of foster care while on the run. I immediately found myself homeless with no support or knowledge on the resources available. When you find yourself sleeping in public restrooms or beaches, you begin to wish you had someone you could rely on or someone who could lend a helping hand. Just thinking of where my next meal would come from or when it would be safe to sleep in the park, it isn't a feeling that any youth should endure. As recent as a year ago, I found myself homeless with two children.

Thankfully, I participated in the Opportunity Passport Program, a program through the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative which teaches financial literacy training, helps us open bank accounts and have our money matched for asset purchases. I was able to use my matched savings account to make my first purchase for a housing deposit and first month's rent. I was so happy to have a place for me and my children to call home.

Nationally, statistics show that 24% of former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. Unfortunately, I was one of those statistics and I don't wish any transitioning youth to experience the hardship of being without a home or a supportive adult.

In closing, I would humbly ask this committee to pass Senate Bill 1340 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need to be successful adults in our community. Thank you very much.



SB1340

Submitted on: 3/19/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Adair Kathleen Fincher	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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SB1340

Submitted on: 3/19/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Daylin Gibson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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SB1340

Submitted on: 3/20/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Eliza	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support SB 1340. Thank you.

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TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

HEARING: Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325

FROM: Jamie McOuat

RE: SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support this bill. The facts and statistics are well-known. Foster youth who have endured frequent trauma, abuse or neglect, separation from their birth families, and later, often repeated separations from a succession of foster families, turn 18, and left to fend for themselves. Whether they leave by choice as their first display of independence from the system or are simply rendered homeless by caregivers who can no longer afford to keep them, we know the majority have no place to go and have very little life skills in order to obtain employment. A ¼ have not even graduated from high school. Those who are lucky enough to secure a job, earn below the poverty level and this in the most expensive state in the nation. These children (and yes they are still children psychologically, even if not deemed so legally) are 4 times more likely to become a single parents themselves, thereby putting an even greater burden on the state and continuing the "welfare" cycle. A correctional facility or a prison is most likely their next home and how much more will that cost the state? I urge you to allow these vulnerable children to experience the only secure environment they may have ever had in their lives for a few more years to achieve far superior outcomes both for themselves and society as a whole.

We are constantly reminded during resource caregiver training that is mandatory in order to become a licensed home, that we should treat these child as our own. Would you turn your own children out at 18 because you could no longer afford to keep them? Could you live with that fact that your child might die from their own hand if left to their own devices too soon? The common verbage throughout the system is "our kids" when referring to foster children. I no longer care about being thanked by a judge each time I appear at a court hearing in support of our kids, I care about a definition of "our". To me it means all of us, the state and federal government included. Please consider the long term effects with a little funding now rather than what is sure to be a lot of funding and heartache later and support this bill.

SB1340

Submitted on: 3/20/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jane Dickson	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 1340, Relating to Foster Care. As the parent of two young men in their early twenties, I know first hand that young adults are making many crucial life decisions and taking on significant new responsibilities. The choices they make at this time of their lives will have profound consequences for their future and for the future of those around them. The support of caring adults is crucial. A voluntary foster care program will give foster youth this support at a critical and formative time in their lives. I was fortunate enough to hear members of the HI H.O.P.E.S. board, former foster youth, talk about their own experiences aging out of foster care. It was very clear that they benefited enormously when they had a strong support system. It was deeply moving to listen to these courageous young men and women describe the difference that caring, encouraging adults made in their lives. I hope all young people can have the opportunity to make their first steps into their adult lives with a network of support. I believe that helping foster youth make a successful transition to adulthood will have long term benefits for them and for our communities. I believe that this is both the wise and the right thing to do for our youth. Thank you so much for this opportunity to testify. Sincerely, Jane Dickson

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SB1340

Submitted on: 3/20/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mari Matsuda	Individual	Support	No

Comments: As a parent, I know 18 is too young to be cast out. These are all our children, let us care for them.

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SB1340

Submitted on: 3/19/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
omar tiwari	Individual	Support	No

Comments: It is critical that we support those in foster care and ensure they become well adjusted and positive contributors to society. Given the significant amount of data that highlights the disadvantages those in foster care face in attaining a financially independent life, we need to provide that additional support in getting them to a self sufficient state of mind and aspiration. Otherwise we are dooming them to perpetuate the cycle of distress and despair.

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SERENA L. PODISH
WILLIAM S. RICHARDSON SCHOOL OF LAW, CLASS OF 2013
2515 DOLE STREET, HONOLULU, HI 96822
Serena9@hawaii.edu

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

House Committee on Judiciary
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair

Conference Room 325
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: Support of SB 1340, SD2, HD1 (HSCR975) Relating to Foster Care
Hearing Scheduled Thursday, March 21, 2013 at 2:00 PM**

To the Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

I write today in strong support of SB 1340 that would, in part, establish the young adult voluntary foster care program to care for and supervise eligible foster youth until age twenty-one.

Growing up I have always believed the saying “it takes a village to raise a child.” Today the story seems to have changed to “if it’s not my child, it’s not my problem.” We have forgotten that *all* children are *our* children. It is our collective responsibility to ensure they have the resources, support, services and encouragement they need to succeed.

I was fortunate to have the support of my mother and mentors—adults who cared and were committed to my development. That support did not cut off when I turned eighteen. In fact, twelve years later I still receive support, encouragement, and advice from mentors who are now life-long friends. Many foster youth are not so fortunate. Upon aging out of the system, if they do not have a care provider who will voluntarily assume the role past eighteen, the youth are left to “sink or swim”—navigate the responsibilities of adulthood with no introduction or guidance.

We can make a difference to ensure foster children, our children, receive the tools, skills, encouragement and support they need before they become eighteen and make certain they have a stable foundation to successfully transition into adulthood and independence. We want to make certain they not only survive, but *thrive*. We can do this by supporting SB 1340 to extend foster care to twenty one. To make it even stronger—I would encourage amending SB 1340 to extend the age to twenty-five.

For the reasons set forth above, I strongly support SB 1340 and pray committee members support this bill as well to ensure it passes. Please do what is in the best interest of the youth of today who are our futures of tomorrow. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my comments. Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

/s/ Serena L. Podish

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

HEARING: Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325

FROM: Cindy Manzano

RE: SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I agree foster youth should be able to stay in foster care to age 21. I am a foster parent plus I work in a homeless shelter on Maui. We have a lot of teenagers who come into our shelter. Many of them just got out of foster care and they are homeless. I think the youth are not ready at age 18. This "once you reach 18 you are out" policy doesn't work! The youth do not do well with that.

Many of these youth are depressed. And there are a lot of them. A secondary problem is that once they are homeless, they get on drugs.

As a foster mother and a homeless outreach worker, I whole heartily support this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity

Dennis & Grace Poei
P.O. Box 31204
Honolulu, HI 96820

March 20, 2013

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

HEARING: SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care
Thursday, March 21, 2013
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325

Dear Rep. Rhoads, Har, and Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Grace Poei and I thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 1340 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youth who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

As a former foster parent and now adoptive parent of two siblings who came from difficult backgrounds, multiple placements and have suffered much personal loss, my husband and I continue to educate ourselves so that we can provide the care that is necessary to help our children heal. We have benefited from resources of agencies and specially trained persons in various fields of medical, educational, emotional, psychological, neurological health, etc. I believe that without the resources of people in various fields of specialty, our children would not have healed and progressed as much as they have. Although much of the medical, dental and drug costs have been covered by Quest medical insurance, some of the specialized services have been out of pocket expenses for us.

We have also learned that our children have been delayed academically because of, and not limited to, learning disabilities and they have benefitted from private tutors who are trained to work with youth with learning disabilities. As a result of years of tutoring, our children are progressing in school. They still struggle, however with the assistance of caring teachers and tutors, they are progressing and this gives us hope that they will be able to graduate from high school and eventually from college to be able to contribute to our community.

Our children are also learning social skills, and we also try to provide them with opportunities to learn about their culture. Participation in team sports, language school, church, mission trips, hobbies to name a few, are some of the ways that we have seen our children grow and learn to become responsible, compassionate and caring individuals. Again, participation in many of these extra-curricular activities does have a cost. However because of our love for our

children, we try to provide what we are able to so that they can heal and grow.

We know that our children do require a longer time to heal and learn because of their difficult backgrounds, and we are committed to being a support to them throughout their adult life. I also see how youth in foster care will need extra support in their transition into their adult life and without the support of the “village” as they say, I do worry that they will make wrong choices with severe consequences that will impact them into their adult life. We as a community also suffer from wrong choices whether it is in the form of crime in the neighborhood, unemployment, dependence on welfare and social services.

We participate with foster and adoptive support groups and try to take advantage of the training provided by Family Programs Hawaii and other organizations to educate ourselves and also be a support to other families. We are so inspired and encouraged by many other foster and adoptive families who are also committed and compassionate in caring for our youth in foster care.

My husband and I know that we cannot change the world, but if we can make a positive difference in the lives of our children who came out of foster care, this will make a huge difference for them, their future families and society.

We urge you to consider the positive impact that SB 1340 will provide for many of our foster youth.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis & Grace Poei



You must be the change you want to see in the world.
-Gandhi-

March 20, 2013

To: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Human Services

From: Donna-Lei Downey
Mother, Educator, Counselor and
Graduate student at the School of Social Work, University of Hawai'i-Manoa

Re: **SB 1340-Relating to Foster Care**

Position: **Support**

I strongly support SB 1340 for the following reasons:

1. **Hawaii's Foster Youth deserve** our vital support that will arm them with the necessary tools and life skills they need to ensure a successful transition into adulthood.
2. **Hawaii's Foster Youth deserve** the opportunity to fulfill their dreams and become productive citizens in our society.
3. **Hawaii's Foster Youth deserve** the financial benefits that will increase their opportunities to complete college and or vocational programs that result in higher earning potential over a lifetime.

Let us learn from our past and INVEST IN OUR FUTURE.

I urge you to support SB 1340 and respectfully request that the committee pass this measure.

Thank you again for your attention to this issue. I appreciate your time and this opportunity to provide testimony.

March 20, 2013

To: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Human Services

From: Sonja Tupua
Graduate student at the School of Social Work, University of Hawai'i-Manoa

Re: **SB 1340-Relating to Foster Care**

Position: **Support**

I strongly support SB 1340 for the following reasons:

1. **Hawaii's Foster Youth deserve** our vital support that will arm them with the necessary tools and life skills they need to ensure a successful transition into adulthood.
2. **Hawaii's Foster Youth deserve** the opportunity to fulfill their dreams and become productive citizens in our society.
3. **Hawaii's Foster Youth deserve** the financial benefits that will increase their opportunities to complete college and or vocational programs that result in higher earning potential over a lifetime.

I urge you to support SB 1340 and respectfully request that the committee pass this measure.

Thank you again for your attention to this issue. I appreciate your time and this opportunity to provide testimony.

LATE

SB1340

Submitted on: 3/21/2013

Testimony for JUD on Mar 21, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jennifer Chantrill	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I am an adopted parent who works with foster youth that age out of the foster system in related to their housing assistance. Although the Federal government has the founding to assist the aged out youth to secure a dwelling unit for the period of one year and half, most of the youth ended up not able to secure a unit due to lack of many life skills, such as, taking up the responsibility to be able to follow the house rules, paying rent on time, or fulfill the responsibilities to maintain their housing assistance. These youth either not able to secure a unit or being evicted from the unit prior to lease term. Most of the youth are emotionally or mentally younger than their physical age. I strongly suggest to extend foster care from age 18 to age 21 so can become more mutual and prepared to enter the society with sucess. Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

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