



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

March 28, 2013

TO: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

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

Hearing: Thursday, March 28, 2013; 2:00 pm  
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of S.B. 1340, S.D. 2, H.D. 2, 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 respectfully requests that the effective date of January 1, 2014 be reinstated for this bill. This will allow the Department to develop the infrastructure to implement this new program.

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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



*The Judiciary, State of Hawaii*

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance**

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair

The Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

The Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 28, 2013, 2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

by

R. Mark Browning

Deputy Chief Judge/ Senior Judge

Family Court of the First Circuit

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

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

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary supports the passage of this bill. We had earlier noted our deep concern that this bill, unlike its House companion, failed to provide the court discretion to appoint counsel for the youth. This is no longer a concern with the subsequent inclusion of the language from that House companion.

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



**SB1340 SD2 HD2**  
**RELATING TO FOSTER CARE**  
House Committee on Finance

March 28, 2013

2:00 p.m.

Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1340 SD2 HD2, 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 HD2. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

# 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

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair  
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, March 28, 2013  
2:00 pm  
Conference Room 308

FROM: Pastor Brad and Esther McDaniel, Licensed Resource Caregivers (aka Foster Parents)  
Harvest Family Life Ministries Hawaii

RE: SB 1340 – Relating to Foster Care

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1340 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

We have worked with teens since 1989 and since 1992 specifically teens who are at-risk and/or in custody of the foster care system. We have walked with many through their struggles to adulthood. Although at age 18 individuals are declared an adult, many teens in foster care do not have the family support, nurturing, stability, and positive adult relationships that many of us grew up with. *In our experience* most teens in foster care at age 18 are functioning at a level at least 4 years younger than their peers who are not in foster care. They have been neglected, traumatized, abused and the healthy stages of development have been disrupted causing delays physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

There is evidence that youth in foster care often need extra help and time with this critical transition period. National statistics show that youth in foster care are less likely to graduate with a high school diploma and more likely to have been arrested than their peers. We know they are less likely to be employed or employed at jobs that leave them living below the poverty rate and the girls are at higher risk for becoming pregnant. It is estimated that 65% leave foster care without a place to go and between 1/3 – 1/2 will become homeless.

Senate Bill 1340 will provide these young people with additional time to organize their lives and prepare for productive adulthood. Extending state support to these young people can help them to get firmly established at work or school, and set them on a positive and productive path. We are committed to serving Hawaii's youth and their families and we hope you will join us in supporting SB1340.

Thank you!

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Brad and Esther McDaniel – (808) 694-9900



To: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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 this crucial bill, SB 1340. Mahalo.

To: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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 Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative in West Hawaii. I am for the Senate Bill 1340 Extension of Foster Care to age 21 in the State of Hawaii. 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: **House Committee on Finance**

Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**

Thursday, March 28, 2013

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 Finance. 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: **House Committee on Finance**

Thursday, March 28, 2013

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**

Good afternoon, Chair Luke and members of the Finance committee. 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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013  
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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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, Chair Luke and members of the Committee on Finance. 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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**

Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013  
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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013  
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 Finance Committee. 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.





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#### **House Committee on Finance**

Thursday, March 28, 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





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To: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013  
State Capitol, Room 308

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.

To: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013

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

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 18<sup>th</sup> 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: **House Committee on Finance**  
Thursday, March 28, 2013  
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.

Bill: SB 1340

Date: March 28, 2013

Time: 2:00pm

Place: Room 308

Committee: Finance

Chair: Representative Luke

Vice Chair: Representative Nishimoto

**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

**SB1340**

Submitted on: 3/27/2013

Testimony for FIN on Mar 28, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 308

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Judith Wilhoite	Family Programs Hawaii	Support	No

Comments: Extending foster care in Hawaii from age 18 to 21 will be a positive step for Hawaii in our bid to bring about better outcomes for our former foster youth. I strongly urge you to pass this bill. Thank you for your time and support.

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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FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

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TO: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair  
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, March 28, 2013  
2:00 P.M.  
Conference Room 308

FROM: Linda Santos  
Family Programs Hawai'i

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Family Programs Hawai'i specializes in services related to the child welfare system. Assisting youth successfully emancipate from foster care is one of our most important program emphasis. We operate 5 different programs working with this population. These programs are located on Oahu and in East Hawaii and are funded primarily by foundations grants or contracts. They were developed because of our concern for the poor outcomes we have seen for emancipating youth.

In the last 10 + years, the Federal Government, as well as the State of Hawaii, has recognized that youth in foster care need additional benefits and services since they are most often without resources when they become 18. New laws have been passed to assist them. The Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act provides states with the opportunity to improve the outcomes of these youth. Other states that have already enacted have reported success.

We strongly support this bill to set the requirements needed to extend the foster care to 21.

**SB1340**

Submitted on: 3/27/2013

Testimony for FIN on Mar 28, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 308

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Signe Godfrey	Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiatives	Support	No

Comments: Dear Sylvia, I support this bill to extend care and benefits for the foster children who have aged out (beyond 18)to give them time to become independent and productive. I have been involved with the foster children for over 20 years even becoming a foster parent at one time. These children have so little, and as a community they need our support. The funding may seem like a lot right now, but in the end it saves in human services 10 times over. Please pass this bill to help our "state's" children. Thank you. Signe Godfrey

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**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB1340 on Mar 28, 2013 14:00PM  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 26, 2013 3:03:28 PM

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**SB1340**

Submitted on: 3/26/2013

Testimony for FIN on Mar 28, 2013 14:00PM in Conference Room 308

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jared Chantrill	Individual	Support	No

Comments: TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chai Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair Committee on Finance HEARING: March 28 , 2013 2:00 pm Conference Room 308 FROM: Jared Chantrill RE: SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Currently, children age out of the foster system when they turn 18 years old. Many of them have not even graduated from high school yet. Most of them need a moratorium to decide what to do with their lives. Under the corny system, they do not get it. The quirks of crime is recruiting

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair  
Committee on Finance

HEARING: March 28 , 2013  
2:00 pm  
Conference Room 308

FROM: Chet Okayama

RE: SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care

I have worked with foster children and foster alumni in Hawaii for more than twenty-six years. I have been blessed to be a part of the lives of foster children who grow up to become successful, independent adults. They have been able to break through and rise above past family issues such as homelessness, abuse, neglect, drug addictions, incarcerations, and other trauma and multiple challenges of their lives. The odds of breaking through past family issues are stacked AGAINST transitioning foster youth. I believe that the critical point that can determine long-term success or failure for a foster youth is the "transition" years from about 18-21 years of age. I believe that the key to their success is having a connection with the right resources and support services from trained staff including former foster youth.

Research shows that foster youth who are supported past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday do much better in securing jobs and careers and furthering their education. Like most young adults, transitioning foster youth often want to prove that they can live independently so they may enjoy new freedoms. Many quickly learn the tough life lesson that with freedom comes responsibility including financial responsibilities and responsibility for self-care. Transitional life skills such as managing finances/budgeting, organizational skills to be able to meet deadlines and responsibilities, and balancing one's life to include different aspects of self-care now become "real" in the "real world" and this is when former foster youth may be most open to practicing and learning these critical life skills.

Foster youth as young adults often do not have the support/"safety net" from family and extended family that most living in Hawaii take for granted as a given. As young adults, foster alumni may seek reconnection with /support from birth family and this can lead to disappointment and even further traumatic experiences. Some focus on boyfriend/girlfriend relationships which often do not last. Sustaining positive "lifeline" relationships and healthy friendships is not surprisingly, a challenge for many foster youth. In our island communities, many cultures value and emphasize the need for connections and relationships. It takes great courage and effort for foster youth who have moved through different families, schools, and communities to develop trusting, healthy relationships. This is another critical core life skill that can be experienced and taught via the right resources.



A transitioning foster youth may find themselves truly “alone” as a young adult without supports/resources/friendships that they had as a younger child and student in school. Feeling alone and apart from the rest of the world can lead back to homelessness, drug and alcohol dependency, abusive relationships, and even suicide. Research shows that negative outcomes such as homelessness, drug dependency and criminal activities DECREASE when foster youth are supported past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Research shows that foster youth and alumni state that the key to their success is having a source of ongoing support through transitions and life challenges. Former foster youth that I have worked with have told me this same thing many times over. Again, I believe that the critical point that can determine long-term success or failure for a foster youth is the “transition” years from about 18-21 years of age. I believe that the key to their success is having a connection with the right resources and support services from trained staff which includes former foster youth. I believe that “investing” in these young adults now will “pay forward” many dividends including decreasing costs related to homelessness, incarceration, and other public and criminal justice system costs for adults.

Former foster youth that I have worked with have dedicated much of their lives to helping others so that the next generation of children and families would not need to suffer through the life challenges that they did. One of these alumni is a doctor, at least three are practicing social workers, many are “in transition” themselves in college or exploring the work world, and others are succeeding as parents and as contributing members of our community. Just knowing that each of these foster alumni survived through the ultimate loss/trauma of being separated from their birth parents brings understanding of how each triumph to break through and succeed in life is amazing and a blessing for all!

Aloha, Representative Sylvia Luke, Representative Scott Nishimoto and members of the Finance Committee:

I strongly support Bill 1340 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

As a foster parent, I am very aware of the struggles some foster youth have at they begin their adult lives. It's hard enough for kids who have more normal lives. Foster youth transitioning into adulthood need mentors and 'parents' to support them as they gradually become independent. They need extra time to establish themselves as adults with a job or education and a place to live. More time to transition will result in more productive, happier adults. Let's give these children a better chance and show them that they continue to matter.

Bill 1340 will provide these youths with additional time to prepare for a productive adulthood.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sandi Dale, foster parent

Kailua