

LATE

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair, Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Rochelle Coop

Re: In support of bill SB 1340, Foster care to 23 for youth in higher education

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013, 1:15 pm, Conference Rm 016, State Capitol

My name is Rochelle Coop. I am the Youth Outreach Coordinator for Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition on Maui. I am also a former Foster Youth.

At the time I was in Foster care there was no ILP, or “readiness for the world” training. I had moved into four different foster families in the last 4 years of high school, barely having time or courage to bond with the foster families. I went off to College at the age of 18 years old, without the support of a family. My foster parents, no longer supported by the state as I had turned 18, were unable to help me in times of need while I found my way in the big new world. It was “sink or swim”. And I struggled and really floundered around those first few years. Somehow I survived it all, but at the end of my stretched out 5 years of college to be a social worker, I quit just before earning my degree. That was only one of many choices I made along the way; that if I had the guiding hand of a parental figure to turn to, I would have made better choices and been so much happier, productive and healthier.....and I believe I would have an easier life even to this day. The tremendous stress and physiological impact I went through “going it alone” those first few years of adulthood, while recovering from a challenging childhood were very tumultuous. This suffering could be relieved and chances for success in building a healthy life would surely increase significantly with extended time with foster families and the support this bill, HB 873, would bring. After all a foster youth goes through by the time they turn 18, it doesn’t seem economical or thoughtful to have this support end abruptly without considering that healthy human development and needs required to grow up doesn’t just END at 18. The opportunity this bill: SB 1340, has to make a monumental difference to countless youth is hopeful and exciting. I pray for this evolution passionately. Please vote yes on SB 1340.

Rochelle Coop

32 Alanui Place, Kula, HI. 96790
(808) 280-2666
Rochellecoop@gmail.com

Date: February 4, 2013

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
And members of the Committee on Human Services

Testimony in Support of SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care.

I support SB1340 because this bill will be beneficial for current foster youth.

I believe that having the opportunity to live at a foster home after age 18 will help support young people transitioning from foster care to independence in life: residence, employment, education, finances, romance, and possibly even parenting. This will also help fertilize vital interdependent relationships into adulthood.

At age 17, a foster youth has little control over decisions that impact their lives. Suddenly at 18, they are treated as fully capable adults who must fulfill adult responsibilities and expectations. Without strong preparation for this new adult role, young people frequently fall short of these expectations and lose the very support that is critical to successful transition to adulthood.

I went into foster care at age 7. I was very used to things being structured. When I got out of foster care at 18, I was very scared because I didn't have many people to count on, and it is scary going out into the world for the first time by yourself. Explaining to your potential landlord that you have no idea why you need a bank account to rent an apartment or have no idea what a deposit means isn't a fun conversation starter either.

I was 17 when I graduated from high school and first attended college. I turned 18 in the middle of my first college semester. The first thing my social worker did was make me an independent living plan for the future. How would you feel if I was to map out your life without knowing exactly what you were looking for?

Having the opportunity to stay in their foster homes during such a tough transition will help them pursue their post-secondary goals. I am positive that you will see more foster youth graduate from college or chosen vocational program. A higher education leads one to generate more earnings, which leads to higher tax revenue, and young adults will be less likely to become dependent on public assistance. There is a high probability they will not be homeless. And best of all, they will be better prepared to raise the next generation because they are better prepared to be self-supporting and care for their future children, so those children will not need to enter foster care.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Grace M. Houghton

LATE

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair, Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

From: The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC)

Re: In support of bill SB 1340, Foster care to 23 for youth in higher education

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2013, 1:15 pm, Conference Rm 016, State Capitol

We, the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC), support SB1340. 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 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, 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

LATE

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 702 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 531-2198 Fax: (808) 534-1199

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Daryl Selman, President
Judith F. Clark, Executive Director
Aloha House
American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii
Bay Clinic, Inc.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu
Big Island Substance Abuse Council
Blueprint for Change
Bobby Benson Center
Catholic Charities Hawaii
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC, Inc.
Family Support Hawaii
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.
Hawaii Behavioral Health
Hawaii Student Television
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition
Hina Mauka Teen Care
Hui Malama Learning Center
Kahi Mohala Behavioral Health
KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth)
Project
Kids Hurt Too
Kokua Kalibi 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

January 30, 2013

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Human Services

Testimony in Support of the Intent of SB 1340 Relating to Foster Care

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

HYSN prefers SB 1104 Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act because it allows a broader group of foster youth the option of remaining in care to age 21. In addition to youth enrolled in college, SB 1104 extends eligibility to youth who are enrolled in vocational training programs, those working 80 hours a month or more, and those who are incapable of participating in college/vocational programs or employment.

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;

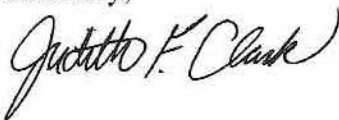
- Remaining in care more than doubled the odds that young people would be working or in school at age 19;
- Those remaining in care were twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21;
- Young women remaining in care experienced a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy 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, sweeping initial "J".

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director