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Testimony in Support of SB529, Relating to Parental Rights

To: Senator Clayton Hee, Chair
Senator Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Vice-Chair
Members of the Senate Committee Judiciary and Labor

From: Mahealani Kaawa

Rc: SB 529, Relating to Parental Rights

Aloha, my name is Mahealani Kaawa, and I am a social work student at UH Manoa, a member of a Native Hawaiian community, and a single mother. I am in STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 529

In 2003, Hawaii statistics from the National Violence against women says that 15% or 1 out of 7 adult women have been sexually assaulted and the Sex Abuse Treatment Center in Honolulu says that Hawaiian or part Hawaiian women make up the largest category of sexual assault victims. Also, 8 out of 10 rapes were by men they knew, so, the consequences for these women are extreme. As a Native Hawaiian single mother, I cannot begin to imagine what it is like to be a raped victim, conceive a child as a result, and then be forced to let the same predator interact with my child.

Currently, in the State of Hawaii a convicted rapist has legal rights to access the child who is the result of that same rape conviction. According to our laws, family courts can award this rapist custody, visits, and obtain parental rights to this child. Furthermore, because Hawaii State laws can allow this to happen, the child's mother, the victim, is forced to re-live the trauma of being raped as the rapist interacts with her child. Hawaii needs to protect the child and victim-mother from this convicted rapist.

I am in STRONG SUPPORT of SB 529 that gives authority to family courts to deny the convicted rapist rights to custody and visitations. Also, this bill gives family court authority to terminate all of his parental rights.

I am in STRONG SUPPORT of SB 529

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
Sincerely,

/s/

Mahealani Kaawa
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