

SB 59

Measure Title: RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES.

Report Title: Foster Care Services; Monthly Board Rate; Increase; Appropriation (\$)

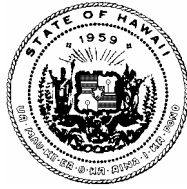
Description: Increases the monthly board rate distributed by the department of human services for foster care services for children.

Companion:

Package: None

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): CHUN OAKLAND, ESPERO, GREEN, Baker, Galuteria, Ihara, Solomon, Taniguchi



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

January 29, 2013

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 59 – RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES**

Hearing: Tuesday, January 29, 2013, 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 016 , State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of S.B. 59 is to increase the monthly board rate distributed by the Department of Human Services for foster care services for children.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill but is concerned about its fiscal impact. It would require an additional appropriation of State general funds.

The DHS estimates that if the board rate were to be raised by \$75 per month, an additional \$5,298,300 per year in State general funds that would need to be appropriated. The foster board rate is the benchmark for adoption assistance, permanency assistance and higher education board allowance payments. An increase in the basic foster board rate requires an increase in the benefit amounts for each of these programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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 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

Date: January 25, 2013

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

Testimony in Support of SB 59 Relating to Foster Care Services

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 59 Relating to Foster Care Services.

Our current foster care rates do not cover the actual costs of caring for young people in the foster care system. \$529 a month does not adequately cover the growing costs of food, clothes, and utilities, not to mention the growing teenage boy who eats everything in sight. This makes it difficult to recruit and retain foster families.

We can increase the stability of young people in care by increasing the foster care rates because children will be able to live with a stable family throughout their time in foster care. When foster children are moved around to multiple homes, they cannot form trusting relationships with caregivers, they have more difficulty in school, and they are more likely to have emotional and behavioral issues.

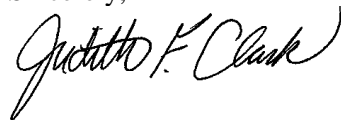
By maintaining a larger pool of foster families to match with the children, we also increase the probability that the foster family will have similar culture, values, and interests to the child.

Increasing the stipend for foster care will also help the transitioning foster children who participate in the higher education program. By increasing the funds they have for basic expenses, they will be able to work fewer hours, allowing more time to concentrate on their education. This will increase college graduation rates, leading to greater self-sufficiency and less future dependence on public assistance.

Foster parents are already donating their time to take care of foster youth, if this bill passes, they don't need to donate their savings too.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director

hale `opio kaua'i, inc.

Community Programs for Children, Youth and Families

January 27, 2013

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TO: Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, MD, Vice Chair

FROM: LaVerne Bishop, Executive Director
Hale `Opio Kaua'i, Inc.

RE: SB59 Relating to Foster Care Services

HEARING: DATE: January 29, 2013
TIME: 1:30 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM: 016

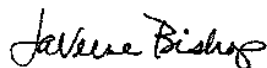
Thank you for the opportunity to support increasing the foster board payment for youth in the state's care. Hale `Opio Kaua'i, Inc. has provided services for foster youth on Kaua'i since 1975, first in group, then in therapeutic foster homes.

Five hundred and twenty-nine dollars each month goes to families who open their homes to young people, who, through no fault of their own, are unable to live with their family and who often are unable to see their parents or siblings. These young people have often lost their innocence, their family, their community, their school, and have few personal belongings.

This board payment has not increased in twenty-two years, whereas the cost of fuel, and therefore everything else, has doubled in just the past few years. We as a state are taking on the parenting of these young people and need to keep pace with the cost of goods and services so as not to create further hardship for these displaced young people and the open-hearted families that take them into their homes.

I appreciate your careful consideration of this bill; we want these children to have equal advantage, and we do not want the cost of living to be a barrier to families who otherwise may provide care, consistency, and support for youth unable to live with their parents. As their parent, the state needs to align foster board payments with current costs.

Sincerely,



LaVerne Bishop
Executive Director



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, January 29, 2013, 1:30pm
Conference Room 016

FROM: Linda Santos, President & CEO
Family Programs Hawai'i

RE: SB 59 Relating to Foster Care Services

Senators Chun Oakland and Green,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Family Programs Hawai'i specializes in services related to the child welfare system. As a partner of the DHS contract, Hui Ho'omalua, FPH provides training and support to resource caregivers statewide. It Takes an Ohana, the "voice of resource caregivers," is one of Family Programs Hawai'i programs.

The state can be very proud of the reduction in the number of children in foster care which has occurred because of the implementation of new programs and best practice. The number of licensed resource caregivers has also declined, but the expectations for these dedicated families has increased.

Support for Resource Caregivers is crucial to the foster care system and the best interests of our children. Reimbursement to Resource Caregivers has not been increased in 22 years while the cost of raising children has dramatically increased. To adequately care for these children, the foster board rate must be increased. Without adequate reimbursement, it is difficult to recruit quality Resource Caregivers.

We respectfully support an increase to the reimbursement rate.



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 1:30 pm
Conference Room 016

FROM: Judith Wilhoite
Family Advocate
It Takes An `Ohana

RE: SB 59

I thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

I am the Family Advocate for Family Program Hawaii's It Takes An `Ohana (ITAO) program. ITAO has brought together a group of experienced resource caregivers in a group called the ITAO Advisory Committee (IAC). IAC has a passion for creating the best outcomes possible for Hawaii's children affected by out-of-home care. I also represent their voice and we strongly support this bill.

In return for the federal reimbursement to the states for a portion of foster care costs, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act requires states to reimburse resource caregivers, formerly known as foster parents, for their foster child's:

1. Cost of food,
2. Clothing,
3. Shelter,
4. Daily supervision,
5. School supplies,
6. A child's personal incidentals,
7. Childcare,
8. Insurance and
9. Travel visitation with a child's biological family.

The \$529 per month reimbursement rate that Hawaii resource caregivers receive to cover their foster children's costs has not been changed since 1990. Per the Hawai'i State Data Center, the cost for a basket of food to be prepared at home in 1990 was \$24.71. In 2011, the cost for that same basket of food was \$53.75. That cost has risen 100%.

In hard economic times like we are in now, this can prevent good families from becoming resource caregivers and at the same time, force good resource caregivers out of the system.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this bill. It is the right thing to do for our treasured children.

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

Aloha Senator Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 59.

I became a “foster sister,” when my parents became licensed. My parents have always managed in some form or another, to attract more children to our home. Even though I am the eldest of five, my family has always seemed so much bigger because our home was open to anyone who needed a place. When our relatives fell on hard times, my cousins would spend their break at our house. Despite the financial expense these visits incurred, my parents have taken these losses in stride, because they love children.

In my home, no one feels unwanted, abused, ignored or abandoned. Food is readily available, love freely given, and we are encouraged to pursue our passions. Our lives are structured with chores and academic responsibilities, but there is always enough time in the day to pursue the creative and athletic endeavors that strike our fancy. This same lifestyle is extended to any child who takes up residence in our house, relation or not. It takes a lot of love to make a house a home, where everyone is accepted and made to feel like a real member of the family. Somehow, despite the financial burdens of childraising, my parents continue to do just that.

The start-up costs of fostering a child are steep. We usually find out we're getting a baby on the day it needs to be picked up, and have to scramble to get everything in time. Almost always, the child's family is unequipped with the necessities, like diapers, formula, clothing and carriers. Unable to shop ahead of time, when things are more affordable, means my parents have to front more money when we buy these things.

Foster families deserve a pay increase in these tough economic times, especially since the cost of living is so high in the state. If the minimum wage increases, why shouldn't foster care payments? Twenty years ago, the \$17.00 per day boarding payment stretched a lot farther. The cost of shelter, utilities, transportation and groceries gobbles up this pittance.

Increasing the foster board payments may encourage more families like mine to foster, once they see it will not be a financial constraint on their own families. The more families we attract to the system means less overcrowding of foster children in the same home, allowing for more individualized attention. This added attention may be just what the child needs. Directed, loving attention and a set schedule seems to work wonders with the kids who've come through my home. The great thing about being young is the ability to forget, and I believe that under the right

influence any child can move past the ghosts of their past, once they have assimilated to their new, positive living environments. This won't happen if the state doesn't do more to attract and retain foster families.

Families like mine are helping to define the future of a whole generation. We are loving and rehabilitating lost children, trying to instill in them a sense of stability, positivity, and drive to live productive lives. If a few more dollars a day helps to make this happen, the money was well spent. The ones we save now will determine how we live later, so as much as possible, I believe any and all support that can be made available to fostering families should be done so, post-haste. My foster siblings always enjoy the time spent with my extended family, and they hate to leave. Parting is often the hardest part of this process, and the only consolation is knowing that we've done these kids a good turn, and look forward to helping another.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and please support Senate Bill 59.

Sincerely,

Brittany Waipulani Dayton

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

Jan. 29, 2013

RE: Senate Bill 59, RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Aloha, Chair Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. Thank you for allowing me to submit these comments in favor of Senate Bill 59, which instructs the state Department of Human Services to increase state payments to support children in foster care in Hawaii.

I know all of you recognize that our children are our most valuable resource, and safeguarding the well-being of our children today prepares Hawaii for a better future. Properly caring for our foster children is particularly important because these children are especially vulnerable. Many are victims of abuse or neglect, which can put them at high risk for all kinds of problems as they reach adolescence and adulthood. Intervening early and effectively in their lives is critical.

Foster parents are one of the primary tools available to the state to help these children. These children often arrive at our homes in times of crisis. We show them what a safe and stable home looks like, which is something some of them have never seen before. We model healthy adult relationships, provide structure and order in their lives, teach them good habits to help prepare them for work and school, and give them hope for a better future for themselves. Most importantly, we give them love. People become foster parents because they love children, and because they want to help children.

No one does this for the money, but difficult economic times such as these bring financial concerns sharply into focus. The state has frozen reimbursements for foster parents for the past 22 years, and we all know that prices dramatically increased during the last two decades for food, diapers, toys, preschool, rent, electricity, school supplies and all of the many items that our families purchase every day. The foster board reimbursement today is about \$17 per day, which means foster parents must routinely reach into their own pockets to cover the cost of caring for their foster children. This puts extra pressure on these households, and it forces some to reassess whether serving as foster parents is in the best interests of our own families.

Senate Bill 59
Kevin Dayton
Page 2

Please also consider that foster children often require extraordinary investments of attention and time, which can make foster parenting a 24-hour job. Some foster children are drug-exposed or come to us with emotional disorders that require therapy. Some foster children need very intensive supervision to keep them safe. Foster parents often must navigate the complexities of public school special education programs. Teenagers placed in our care may need to participate in drug treatment or have Family Court hearings.

The Department of Human Services is also making new demands on foster families. Today the department often asks foster parents to have more frequent contact with birth parents to assist with visitation and help the birth families prepare for reunification. This year the state also established new mandatory, ongoing training for licensed foster families. While I agree with both of these DHS initiatives, they are examples of the state asking for more and more, while providing less and less financial support to our foster families.

The state has made great progress in recent years in recruiting and training caring, capable foster parents so that foster children will have stable, safe places to stay in times of crisis. However, we know that recruitment of foster families becomes much more challenging, and retention of foster families becomes more difficult when foster board payments do not cover the cost of caring for these children.

Experienced foster parents have skills that are critical for the welfare of foster children, and it is extremely important that we retain them. Veteran foster parents have helped guide children through feelings of abandonment and crisis, and learned to watch for signs of still-undetected sexual or other abuse. They have learned to navigate the state system to help connect their foster children with the services they need. These experienced foster parents have coped with child-raising challenges that many parents never experience, and they make an enormous contribution to our community.

We respectfully ask that you approve Senate Bill 59 to increase foster board payments and provide foster parents with the financial support they need to continue this important work for the state. Thank you for your consideration.

Kevin Dayton
(808) 960-5007

Sonnette Dayton
90 S. Wilder Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Aloha Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony strongly in favor of Senate Bill 59, to increase the foster board payments that support our foster children after they are placed in state custody.

When my husband and I became foster parents in December 2009, we were assured that the state would provide appropriate financial support for the children placed in our care. We later realized this was not the case. Foster parents are expected to pay for all kinds of costs that simply cannot be covered by the basic \$529 per month the state provides to support foster children.

Newborn children, infants and toddlers in particular are extremely expensive to care for because of the supplies, formula, crib, bottles, diapers, powder, strollers, car seats and an array of other items that parents need to properly care for a small child. My family and I love to fuss over the newborns, and I don't mind the midnight feedings, but I eventually had to tell my licensing social worker we could no longer care for infants and newborns because of the out-of-pocket costs. I am a stay-at-home mother with five children of my own, and we all live on my husband's income. We love caring for foster children, but it has become a financial burden on my family because the support payments are too low.

We were shocked to learn that the state has not increased foster board payments in 22 years. The \$529 per month works out to about \$17 per day to care for a child. If you have ever attempted to board a dog, you probably know that boarding kennels in Hawaii charge \$25 to \$40 per day to board an animal.

Foster children and foster families urgently need your help. Please pass Senate Bill 59 to increase foster board payments.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Sonnette M.M Dayton

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: sheilainhi@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Saturday, January 26, 2013 10:34:03 AM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/26/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Sheila Calcagno | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: Everything is going up but the funds for foster care have stayed the nsame for Foster care. Children need money to help them with there needs.

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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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: Haku1234@aol.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Sunday, January 27, 2013 4:38:02 AM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/27/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Sharon tanaka | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: I support sb59. Having worked with special needs care children, I believe raising the foster care (fc) subsidy after 22 years is not unreasonable. Foster care parents have added much to FC children that could potentially be a problem to society. The costs to the state and society would be much more than the raise of FC subsidy. I have seen with early intervention FC children living more productive and happier lives. Please support sb59!

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Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. All of Hawaii's families have been under pressure as the cost of housing, utilities, food, transportation and other expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics for foster children in their care.

As a foster parent myself, my husband and I do everything we can to love the children in our home and to give them as close to a normal life as they can have. We strive to let them know they are loved, and we want to give them as many good experiences they can have to know a different way of living. They also need extra therapy and to attend special programs to help them heal from their 'scars'. By helping them in all these ways, we are helping to stop the bad patterns of their families and to reduce the chances of them and their future children be in the system.

People like us sign up to be foster parents because we love children and want to contribute to our communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sandra Dale

Foster Parent (aka Resource Caregiver)

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: lwbeachfun@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM*
Date: Sunday, January 27, 2013 10:24:19 AM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/27/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Linda Ward | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

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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January 27, 2013

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Mahalo for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As a parent of three elementary school age children, I have not fostered children myself, but have friends who have, and hope to someday contribute to our society by fostering youth in need of loving and caring homes. I had a foster sibling when I was 6 -8 years old. My parents had stepped up and taken in our neighbors foster daughter when they announced they could no longer “afford to keep her”. She was 16 at the time and was not sure where she would be sent, where or if she would finish high school, or who she would live with. My parents, although they had 2 young children, fostered for her remaining time in the system.

My last memory of Julia was on her 18th birthday when my parents drove her to a friend’s home and dropped her off. As much as my parents tried to contact her, we never heard from her again. I doubt she was able to have the resources and support that she was getting from my parents in order to maintain her productive lifestyle. I fear the system let her down and things didn’t turn out as well as they could of. I can’t help but think her life may have been very different now had she not been forced from the system due to a birthdate. I would probably still know her.

I think of when I was 18, I lived at home and went to Kapiolani Community College. I had a part time job and was just learning about the world of responsibility and maturity. I’m glad I had my parents to lean on when I needed their support & hope that for a foster child as well. Even coming from a stable family is challenging; add the challenges of being a foster child who just outgrew their support, on a birthday, and you reduce the opportunity of a productive member of society leaving the system.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families. Julia is a perfect example of where lack of funds forced a child from one home, and an 18th birthday from another. These things can be fixed.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments. The cost is little compared to the investment of time and energy that the parents give, and the long term expense that a non-productive citizen puts on our society.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen K. Lattanzi". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Karen K. Lattanzi



ABR, CRS, GRI, RSPS, SRES
527 Paopua Place
Kailua, HI 96734
www.JudyBarrett.com
JudyB@JudyBarrett.com
voice - 808-263-0250
fax - 808-440-0115

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, MD, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawaii State Senate
State Capitol
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Senators Chun Oakland, Green, and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

I recently learned that reimbursements to foster families have not been adjusted in 22 years. The Consumer Price Index has nearly doubled in that interval. It is inconceivable that the State of Hawaii would expect families to be able to support foster children properly on a 1990's budget.

These children are the responsibility of the State. The State has gotten away with minimum support because foster parents have dipped into their family budgets to pay for the needs of the foster children in their care. There comes a point when even the most well-intentioned foster parents must choose whether they can continue to care for foster children if doing so deprives their own children.

Please, for the sake of the children, correct this long-ignored problem of hideously inadequate financial support for foster parents this session!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

January 27, 2013

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. All of Hawaii's families have been under pressure as the cost of housing, utilities, food, transportation and other expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics for foster children in their care.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joseph Feind

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. All of Hawaii's families have been under pressure as the cost of housing, utilities, food, transportation and other expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics for foster children in their care.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Henry Sonsona Jr.

838 Lokahi St.

Honolulu, HI 96826

808 223-0664

hsonsona@gmail.com

January 24, 2013

The Honorable Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Oakland and Senators:

***Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill No. 59
Relating To Foster Care Services
Bobby Jean Leithead Todd
Hearing Scheduled For January 29 at 1:30 p.m., Room 016***

I am writing to support increasing foster care payments for children in foster homes and in temporary as well as permanent placement in such homes. For many years I worked as a private attorney and handled approximately 60 Child Protective Services cases on a pro bono basis for the State of Hawai'i. I served either as a Guardian Ad Litem for the children or as the attorney for one of the parents. Providing for the needs of these children was always a challenge. When I first worked on these case in 1995 the foster care subsidy was \$529 per month. Today in 2013 it is still \$529 per month.

A little over six years ago I received a phone call that changed my life. A classmate of my daughter called her. He had run away from his current foster home. It was his sixth foster home. He asked if we would be willing to take him in. After I said yes, he called back and said that his younger brother had run away from another foster home to be with him and also needed a place to stay. Thus started my journey into the foster parent portion of my life. So I ended up with the two boys as official foster children for whom I received foster care payments. About nine months later their younger brother who had been in a third foster home came to live with me and I became the proud parent of my three hanai sons.

In the past six years, in addition to my "official" foster sons, my home has become a refuge for other children who were homeless after they turned 18 and did not have family to take care of them. These other children with no support system have stayed with me anywhere from a few days to six months. They were all friends of my hanai sons that they met in foster homes or at the Salvation Amy home. Recently, I hanaied a fourth boy although not through the Department of Human Services. His mother moved out of state. Since he lives with me, he is not in danger so he does qualify to be a foster child and since he is not related to me, he does not qualify for any other assistance.

Of my four hanai sons, I currently receive assistance for only the youngest who is in high school. My two eldest foster sons aged out of the system and I have continued to support them and have them currently enrolled as full time students at our local community college. It has been a long journey to reach this point and at times it has been a financial struggle as I sent two of the children I gave birth to through college at the same time I took in my boys.

Since I have tried to make sure the boys participated in extra-curricular activities, the cost of providing for them can be a juggling act. This past month there was tuition for one of the boys in college (at this time he does not qualify for financial assistance), my second boy is on Pell grants but I still pay for gas and car insurance for him in addition to food, shelter and clothing. Oh and yes, the electric bill for four boys and me runs about \$450 per month since I haven't been able to convert to either solar water or PV yet. The boys take a shower in the morning and in the evenings after getting home from school and extra-curricular activities. There is always laundry! Should I mention the car accidents, and the joyride with my car when the Tokyo drift ended up with a flat tire and a bent rim? The resulting increases in car insurance have hit the pocketbook too.

I took my two in high school for wrestling shoes and sneakers and walked out of Sports Authority with a \$280 bill. The bill for one of them to get the wrestling jersey and polo shirt was \$72. Then there are the sports photos. The list goes on and on. We've gone through track shoes, soccer shoes, football shoes and regular running shoes. There's the weight lifting set, the basketball backboard, the extra car for them to drive. I admit that many of my expenses are high because I chose to keep my foster sons when they aged out and continue to support them. Trust me the foster care payments did not cover supporting them when they were younger and the \$529 does not support the one boy who still gets assistance. (You would not believe what I spend on food!)

The first two years were the roughest. My boys got into fights in school. One had a marijuana possession charge hanging over his head. Then he got arrested for truancy. He tried to escape from the police station. Then he got arrested for shoplifting. The last arrest was for breaking and entering. In each incident I had to take vacation from work to handle his problems. He kept expecting me to kick him out, to give up. I didn't. This past semester as a full time student at the community college, he came home with two A's, one B and a C, and he actually reads books for enjoyment! When I got him six years ago he was flunking his classes in high school. It took us six years to get from the arrests and truancy to this. And wonders of all wonders his two brothers came home with good report cards this past semester too!

The point I am trying to make is that in order to succeed, children need stability, they need a home base. They need to know someone is in their corner and they frequently need support past the age of 18. I have managed to squeak by on finances, but I am an attorney and earn a decent wage as the Planning Director for the County of Hawai'i. But even at my income level, with four hanai sons and putting two of my three other children through college, I sometimes wondered what I had been drinking when I went down this road and took on this challenge. The only way I was able to provide for my boys

adequately was because I had a good income, not because of the foster care payments. But there are other good people who do not earn what I do who either struggle to support their foster children or decide not to take on the challenge.

My youngest son is a junior in high school and will age out of the system in 18 months. An increase in foster care payments might be nice to help with all the senior years costs, but far more importantly, it would help the other foster parents with ongoing needs. I don't plan on taking in any more children as I still have to see my four hanai sons through college, so an increase would not help me so much as others with younger children or those considering whether to take on this responsibility.

I ask for your support for this bill and more importantly for an investment in these young children. What would it cost you if one of my boys ended up in jail instead of college? What would it cost the state if one of them had gotten a girlfriend pregnant and she and the baby were on welfare (I am constantly keeping my fingers crossed on this one!) What would it cost society if they had gone down the same road of drug and alcohol abuse that they came from?

My boys recently lost their mother for good. She lost her battle with addiction and the damage it did to her health. At her funeral her brother told a tale of two generations of addiction. My sons say that they have to break that pattern, that they can't be the next generation to lose its way. Please invest in them and others like them. It is one of your best hopes to break the cycle.

Sincerely,

Bobby Jean Leithead Todd

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. All of Hawaii's families have been under pressure as the cost of housing, utilities, food, transportation and other expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics for foster children in their care.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Arlene Seymour

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

I am an Occupational Therapist in Hawaii and work with kids with special needs. I have provided services for families who are fostering young children as some of these kids have special needs related to issues such as drug/alcohol exposure in utero or neglect/abuse during early years. Some may just have a learning disability or sensory issues completely unrelated to their early childhood, but just 'because'. I was completely floored to learn that foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years! I find this actually a disgrace and think that Hawaii should be 'ashamed'!! Living in Hawaii is not cheap and to think that there has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades is horrible! These families are usually facing added costs when needing special services beyond just providing basic needs for the kids and programming fees or equipment needed for treatments can be costly- we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the care needed for foster children in their care.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shelley Boling, OTR
Therapy on the Go, Inc.
(808) 342 0534

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: sarah.kahikilani@yahoo.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM*
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 8:06:09 AM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| sarah begley | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: oswalds@oha.org
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 2:23:12 PM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| oswald k. stender | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: Chair Susan Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services Committee: I strongly support SB 59. Foster parents provide care for our many foster children and have not had an increase in reimbursements for caring for these children in the last 22 years! They have continued to fill this gap of parenting even though the work has been more demanding with the DHS constant requirement that they provide a broader range of care for these children. These foster parents make an enormous contribution to our community and the care they provide for our foster children. Mahalo for your support of this bill. Mahalo and aloha. Oz Stender. Trustee, Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

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Regarding SB Bill 59—To increase Foster Board Payments

Aloha,

Thank you all so much for your consideration of Hawaii's Foster Children and Resource Care Givers. I have read the bill in its current form and noticed the blanks when it comes to the proposed increase amount, and I can tell you that that is as close to accurate that anyone is ever going to come when contemplating the amount of money required when raising a child, and I mean any child, and it is a good place to begin, so mahalo in advance for your efforts. I only hope to add something of value to this conversation and I am willing to avail myself if it is your wish.

Our walk with the system currently in place to protect Hawaii's youth began in 1999, fourteen years ago. Like many other families who have chosen this path, we became involved with a desire to make a difference in the life of a child, cliché I know, but nevertheless, true.

As a young x-ray technologist I performed child abuse studies on children, one deceased, others still alive but bruised and fearful. Though I've never been able to get the image of the lifeless body of the dead infant lying on the hard, cold x-ray table or the distorted swollen and blue face of the baby that was attached to life support after ingesting kerosene due to neglect out of my mind, the experience that affected me the most was the 2am on-call child abuse exam I had to perform on a beautiful three year-old little boy who had been beaten by his mother's current boyfriend. His face was visibly bruised, he was hungry and scared, his mother reeked of alcohol, yet when the social worker arrived and evaluated the case the child was sent home with her. I asked why and was told that there were no foster homes available to send him to. Later, while filing away his x-rays, I discovered that this was not the first time he had been brought in, there were other films in his jacket indicating a pattern of neglect and abuse and he was only three years old.

Seven years later we received our first foster child and fourteen years since that day, we have taken in twelve children, formally adopted seven of them and have just begun the process of adopting two more sisters. When we began, the thought of money was not on our minds, but as any parent knows, when you add children to a family, money and the lack of becomes a very hot topic. We were naïve but in a way that is a good thing, because if we knew then what we know now there is a good chance I would not be writing this letter, but there would also be nine children who would be living in very different circumstances as well. So I must appeal to you on their behalf and not my own.

I must assume that you all have been briefed on poverty thresholds and are aware that the current formula used was developed in the 60s and takes only the cost of food into account. It was a good place to start but that work needs to be continued and the formula needs to be improved just as foster board

reimbursement rates need to be evaluated on a regular bases. I did not realize that 22 years had passed since the last rate determination, that is far too long and it puts children at risk and here is why.

Since becoming a foster parent I have worn many hats and become a pseudo expert on all things child related and that is wonderful. But one thing I have not been able to do for many years is consistently hold a well paying job. Foster parenting is a full-time commitment and many kids that end up in the system have needs that are above what is considered average. I am blessed with a husband who is a full partner and a good provider so I count us among the lucky ones but we are stretched beyond our ability to provide for all of our children even with the current foster board rate of \$529/month and are constantly playing catch up. I do work when I can and have taken low paying jobs within the school system so that I can be close to the children and help out in their classrooms but when a child that is not yet school age comes into the home that is not possible and there is never a guaranteed paid position within the school.

Foster children come with emotional baggage, extra educational needs, and sometimes severe diagnoses that require a complete lifestyle change. Meeting these needs is a time and energy consuming process and there are days that never end. It would take too many words to get into all the experiences we've had and I fear you would quit reading if I described them, but please familiarize yourselves with terms like ADD, ADHD, Auditory Processing Expressive Language Delay, Adjustment disorder, Dysthymia, Major Depressive Disorder with Psychosis, Personality Disorder, Mixed Emotional conduct disorder, PDD-NOS also known as Autism spectrum disorder. Now who in their right mind would subject themselves and their biological children to the challenges that come with that territory? Would you? I believe some of you would and I also believe that you all are willing to consider what it would take to retain the excellent resources caregivers that are already doing good work. Good homes are necessary to transition these children from fringe environments into mainstream society.

Sadly, that is not happening for many that become permanent foster youth. One event I have seen is children being moved around in the system for variety of reasons. Multiple placements in the course of a single childhood have a detrimental effect on overall growth. Behavior is often cited as the cause of removal from a home and I can comprehend that. But what I also know is that if a family hangs in there long enough for that child to finally and truly feel like they are a part of that family the behavior gets better, but it does take a while, more than a year, more like five years. But most families cannot afford to deal with problem behaviors for that long because it takes time and for most us, time is money. So they give it a shot, about a year, sometimes less, and then they throw in the towel because it is very hard to deal with problem behaviors on top of the stress of coming up short every month. I'm going to be very blunt here; it is possible for a child to become repulsive. The ones that reach that stage because of multiple rejections are the ones who will ultimately end up in prison. I know firsthand because we adopted a teenager who had at least seven previous placements and we tried hard but we just didn't have enough time and she is now a statistic.

I also have the perspective of being a co-trainer of other foster parents. Wonderful people from many different professions come in for training wanting to help a child in need and have been called to take in children after receiving their licenses. Sadly they don't last very long because the time commitment

needed to care for these children with a foster board rate of \$529 does not compare to a salary with paid vacation, sick days, a 401K and a pension. And just for the record, we don't take many vacations and our date nights, well, what's a date night?

I hope you recognize the fact that I keep mentioning the resource family in relation to the foster child. It's because a loving family is what heals a broken child. Anyone can spend all day pulling on your heartstrings by telling you all about children in need and that is what hooked me too. But what has kept me in for the long haul is the family we've grown into every time we take another child into our home and watching that broken child heal and learn to trust again. There are not words that can describe who we are as a unit today. There are events that have brought us to our current understanding of what family is and we are unique, we cover all colors of the spectrum, experience life from different perspectives, drive each other nuts and we love one another unconditionally. I wish we could do this job forever but we cannot afford to. And we could not be a temporary placement either. We are a forever family; children that come through our door don't have to leave. I believe there are others like us out there but they just cannot afford to do this work at the current rate. So please consider making the necessary adjustments, these kids deserve forever homes and there are families who would be tremendously blessed just by having a foster child grace their presence.

Sincerely,

Melissa D. Tangalin
Wife, Mother of Twelve &
Resource Caregiver
Kauai, HI

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: lyles808@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 1:29:49 PM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Lyle Silva | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: I am writing my testimony to the Legislature to inform you that freezing support payments for our kids for 22 years is too long, and it is time for an increase. The State needs the help of Resource Parents to care for our kids. By unfreezing support payments will help draw in more willing parents to become Resource Parents to care for our children in Hawai'i!!

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I worked in the Foster Youth services field from 1991 thru 2000 in group home settings and with families that were Foster Parents. I returned and worked specifically with Foster Youth and their foster families from 2005 thru 2008.

My wife and I were also licensed foster parents with youth in our home in 1996 and 1997. We ourselves adopted two youth out of foster placement. They are now 19 and 21. We received difficulty of care placements as they were labeled “hard to place”. We could not have afforded the services needed to help these two women become the excellent members of society that they are. Some adoptions turn into failed adoptions and the children are returned. I urge you to look at and see the importance of raising both the amount of the foster care board payments and the age at which it is terminated.

Raising a foster youth is never easy. Even if the youth is placed in the foster home the day they are born, they will forever live with the fact that their biological parents did not raise them. Any child or adolescent would question “what was wrong with me that my biological parent did not want to raise me?” With counseling a youth, whose self esteem is not yet developed, would still have a hard time understanding that the reason their biological parent chose not to raise them was a decision of the biological parent and not due to anything the child did. Questions then arise “well, why was it my parents who had these issues?”, and later in life “am I going to do that to my child if my parents did it?” There are some mature adults who live and die without ever getting “over” the negative feelings they have that their biological parent did not raise them. And they have a right to have those feelings.

Our society presents television shows and movies where the “families” are biological families and parents raise their children no matter how dysfunctional they are. Additionally all the “perfect” families are biological families a large majority of the time. This past summer viewed the movie The Avengers where I was offended when the character Thor explains his brother Loki's violent killing spree with the flip comment, "He's adopted." Foster youth don't even have the pleasure of feeling “I am a part of this family forever because they legally adopted me.”

I share all this to say that foster parents bear the full burden of assisting the child through their developmental stages of life and most every foster or adoptive child “tests” their caretakers at each developmental level to see if they are “going to keep me or give me away like my biological parents did?” As the child's awareness of life and social climate expand and develop as they develop mentally and emotionally, their understanding of the commitment, attachment and dependence with their caretaker grows and they have to test and see if the caretaker is going to remain attached to them?” This “testing” can take many forms, but many times it is “acting out” behavior as the youth knows that is what will get them “kicked out” most often.

This is just one aspect of the foster parent – foster child relationship that takes “extra” effort and extra “cost”. Placing a child in residential placement at the expense of the state has been estimated to be a cost of one million dollars. In residential placements the chance for close bonding and positive adult-child relationships are much less and that creates a greater chance of youth coming out of placement that will not be ready for the adult relationships needed to hold a job, develop loving bonds with spouses and be productive contributing members of society. Give the foster (and adoptive) parents the amount of money they need to provide the care, home and love to these youth.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: kapua143laili@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 1:28:55 PM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Kapua Silva | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: I am writing my testimony to the Legislature to inform you that freezing support payments for our kids for 22 years is too long, and it is time for an increase. The State needs the help of Resource Parents to care for our kids. By unfreezing support payments will help draw in more willing parents to become Resource Parents to care for our children in Hawai'i!!

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: josh@hawaiianwatersports.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 1:28:19 PM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| josh | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: I support funding for foster care families.

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: kukahikov001@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB59 on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 12:14:53 PM

SB59

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS on Jan 29, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Cheri Kukahiko | Individual | Support | No |

Comments: Please, please consider bill 59 seriously. As a supporter of foster care and adoption, as my husband and I fostered 4 siblings since 2002, and adopted all of them in 2005, the struggles to afford to raise them continues, but yet the board payments do not increase. Please consider, like the federal government, annual economic increases. It's been 10 years since we got the keiki, and gas prices have soared, electricity is skyrocketed, water bills are rising more than ever before, and yet the income foster payments have remained the same for 22 years. We are in support of increase the monthly foster board payments.

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: chevy59@sprint.blackberry.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB309 on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 1:42:55 PM

SB309

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS/CPN on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM in Conference Room 229

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Ed Chevy | Individual | Support | Yes |

Comments: My name is Ed Chevy. i wear a hearing aid to keep coping with the hearing world. My son wears a hearing aid, too and so is his mother. Hearing aids are expensive and are not covered by most health insurance plans. Depending on income level, we couldn't get financial assistance to help purchasing hearing aids. Hearing aids are needed to be replace every 5 years to keep from being inconvenient, unreliable and unattractive when technology gets better for us to hear better. Thank you

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[SB 59](#)

[Status & Testimony](#)

RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES.

Increases the monthly board rate distributed by the department of human services for foster care services for children.

To whom it may concern:

Foster parents should receive the funds they need to support the children placed in their homes. As a foster parent or "resource caregiver", we don't receive the necessary resources to provide adequate care for children placed in our home. The foster board rate has not increased in 22 years. At \$529 a month, we our asked to support children at 71 cents an hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I took in a premature infant, some of his material needs were formula that were \$35 a can, diapers, a crib, car seat, strollers...all of this to come out of that \$529 foster board payment. Many a times we've had to dig into our own pockets to pay for extra expenses.

I also recruit foster parents and although money is not the driving force in becoming a foster parent, it does help to offset the extra time one needs to adequately support a child in foster care; time that they may need to take off from work to attend to the children's needs. Foster parents are expected to transport children to and from school, to and from visits, to and from activities, to and from therapies, attend court hearings, help with homework, supervise visits, get additional trainings, attend IEPs, catch children up on medical and dental needs, to name a just a few.

When you think that the state subsidizes for child care at a rate of \$570 a month , a position that is covers 40 hours a week, it somehow seems that foster parents are getting the short end of the stick.

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments that support children in foster care in Hawaii.

As you know, foster board reimbursements have not been increased in 22 years. All of Hawaii's families have been under pressure as the cost of housing, utilities, food, transportation and other expenses have escalated, and caring for a child costs more today than ever before. There has been no relief for foster families for more than two decades, and we know that foster families often must use their own money to provide the basics for foster children in their care.

People sign up to be foster parents because they love children and want to contribute to their communities, but Hawaii has now reached the point where many foster parents are forced to decide whether caring for foster children is in the best interest of their own families.

Any social worker or family court judge can tell you the tremendous impact that caring foster parents can have on the lives of the children in their care. If Hawaii is to continue to attract and retain qualified, loving foster families to care for these children, the state must address the problem of inadequate foster board payments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alfredo & Rae-Anna Bonilla