

LATE

January 27, 2013

Human Services Committee (HMS)
Re: RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Dear Chairwoman Mercado-Kim and HUS Committee Members:

My husband and I have been foster parents for nearly two decades and leaders of a support group of foster parents since 1993. Regrettably, little thought was given to foster parents when there was a surplus in years past to "take care" of those caring for the special children of this State. But now in these days of economic declines the message is even harder to deliver. But it needs to be said that the foster board we receive today has proven to be inadequate for a number of years in regards to the needs of the children we share our homes and hearts with. Remember, too, that we are paid **NOTHING** (theoretically) by the State, what we receive in the form of foster board is a **REIMBURSEMENT** of money spent for the child. No compensation is given to foster homes upon the entry of a child into our homes. We receive this reimbursement **AFTER** the first 30 days the child is introduced into the family. Economic times are hard for all of us and we would never "return" the children in our care, but will we need your assistance to properly provide for the children. This is, understandably, the worse of times to ask for the increase, **BUT** we have been silent for so very long and we are not asking for ourselves...but for the children.

Please consider the following analogy and think of how much the children and the resource homes are being given to provide the best for the children. The board rate is \$529.00...prorated this equates to a mere \$17.00 and change per day. If we were to allow my hanai teenagers their \$17.00 a day allocation in cash and told them to feed themselves the breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks they are accustomed to, get to school, then to karate practice and then to the library for study hall and back again...they'd run out of money before getting home. Add on to that their hair sprays, mousse and gels, hot irons, blow dryers, that "got to have" school logo items, lost school books, make up, colognes, deodorants, body sprays, acne medications, movie tickets, tennis, art, golf, tahitian or hula lessons, bus fare to and from wrestling, football, basketball or to the community pool, school field trips, project materials and even a birthday gift or two for those friends' parties. Sometimes, "difficult" children can wreak havoc on a foster home (especially during a transition period) and **ALL** damage and destruction repairs are to come out of the foster board payment also. And, please, don't forget to add into this the supposed cost per day cost for **"room and board" and assumed legal liabilities** we are subject to in case of litigation arising from the children's "misconduct". Please take the time to view the attachment and see how well "others" are treated on a daily basis...**Our children are worth more than this.** Thank you for your time.

Franklin & Evelyn Souza
Hanai Ika U'Hane O Na Keiki
("To foster the Spirit of the Children")
Kapolei, HI 808-255-8297

LATE

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,

Steve and Fran Schaeffle

Pahoa, HI

LATE

January 28, 2013

In regards to Senate Bill 59

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

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit my testimony and share mana'o in support of Senate Bill 59, which would increase the foster board payments to support all of the children in foster care in Hawai'i.

We opened our home and family thirteen years ago to children needing a safe environment, supportive adults and a loving, caring family. Foster care has truly been a rewarding experience over these years. We have been blessed many times over by the presence of these children in our home. The children become our family the moment they step into the door. They have become our extended family, through continued contact after their departure from our home to be reunified with birth parents, family members or permanent foster placement. We have become part of their village.

In our thirteen blessed years of caring for the children in the foster care system, the cost of life's necessities have increased tremendously. Yet, we continue to provide for these children on what has been provided to us for their support.

Some of the basic expenses that are standard for a home like ours for children ages 0-3 years old include: diapers, wipes, infant formula, baby food, and car safety seats. There is also the cost of day care so we may continue to work and earn an income to support the entire family. I currently pay \$450 per month for day care at a special needs program. After that expense, it doesn't even leave \$100 for additional needs. This is just a typical financial situation for younger children. The needs of the older youth and teens are even greater.

I assure you that foster families will continue to provide for the children as best we can, as we have done these past many years, with or without Senate Bill 59.

But I ask you, for the sake of all the children in out of home care and for the loving families that open their hearts and homes to become 'ohana to these children, to please support Senate Bill 59 and help us to give them the homes, the lives and the opportunities that they so long for and deserve. As it takes a village to raise a child, I ask you to be part of our village and help us to raise these children, the future of Hawai'i.

Me ke aloha,

Kau'i Keola
Resource Caregiver