

LATF

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

HEARING: Tuesday, March 11, 2014  
1:15 pm  
Conference Room 016

FROM: Norman Wilhoite

RE: HB 1576 - RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support HB1576.

Although we do not presently have any foster children in our home, we have fostered a few over the past 20 years.

Since that time the board reimbursement has remained the same. For one of our younger foster boys whom we had in day care, the board payment barely covered those costs alone, not to mention food and other expenses.

Most foster families can't afford to subsidize these expenses as we were fortunate to. Nor is it fair or proper to play on the sympathy and goodwill of these families to finance the states responsibilities. If you want good resource families you need to give them the necessary support to provide properly for these children.

Surely we can find a way to support our most vulnerable in society after 20 years of stagnation.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1576.

LATE

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

HEARING: Tuesday, March 11, 2014  
1:15 PM  
Conference Room 308

FROM: Abigail Sylvester, LCSW and Adam Sylvester, LCSW

RE: HB 1576 - RELATING TO FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We are Abigail and Adam Sylvester and we strongly support HB1576. We are current resource caregivers (previously referred to as foster parents). Providing a loving home and care for foster children is a life passion, however, the expensive cost of living and current foster board rate causes this passion to be financially draining. Though living expenses such as food, rent, electricity, healthcare, water, gas, preschool, and childcare have dramatically increased throughout the years, Hawaii's foster board has not increased in 24 years. In our case, we felt that, in order to provide the time, attention, and care necessary for both our foster children and our biological children, it was best for our family if Abigail quit her full-time job. In many cases, foster children require a lot of extra help with their school work, increased medical and therapy appointments, many meetings with social workers, attorneys, and other professionals, and transportation for family visits. We believed that all of this extra needed attention, along with meeting the needs of our two young biological children, could not be reasonably met with both parents working full-time. Because we believe that there is no more important thing in the world than helping a child secure a safe and bright future, we happily chose to live more simply. Though we are grateful for the \$529 monthly stipend for a foster child, it, in no way, covers all of the costs associated with raising a child in Hawaii. To cover the extra costs we must use our own limited income.

Resource parents choose to foster because they want to change the world, one child at a time. We do it because we know that a child who is placed in a stable family with lots of love is many times more likely to grow to be a productive and contributing citizen in our community. Unfortunately, resource parents are a rare type of parents who will take a child, unrelated by blood, and unconditionally love them as if they had birthed them. Few people are willing to invite the challenges of fostering in their home, and, if the rate of foster board does not parallel with the high cost of island living, even fewer will be able to foster. Please do not make resource parents choose between paying their bills and answering the call to foster. Please show your unwavering support for Hawaii's keiki and their futures by supporting HB 1576 and raising foster board.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1576.