

HB 2163

LATE

Measure Title: RELATING TO YOUTH GANGS.

Report Title: Youth; Mental Health; Appropriation (\$)

Description: Appropriates moneys to fund operational costs to provide therapeutic prevention and mental health programs for high risk youth. (HB2163 HD1)

Companion:

Package: None

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): MIZUNO, CACHOLA, EVANS, LOPRESTI, LUKE, MORIKAWA, SAIKI, SOUKI

DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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LATE

KEITH M. KANESHIRO
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

ARMINA A. CHING
FIRST DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



**THE SUZANNE CHUN OAKLAND, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Twenty-Eighth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2016
State of Hawai'i**

March 15, 2016

RE: H.B. 2163, H.D. 1; RELATING TO YOUTH GANGS.

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice-Chair Riviere, members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") supports the intent of H.B. 2163, H.D. 1, however, would urge this committee to consider reallocating the funds associated with H.B. 2163, H.D. 1 to Adult Friends for Youth as an alternative agency to carry out the goals and objectives.

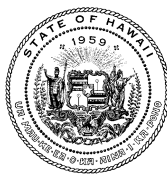
The purpose of H.B. 2163, H.D. 1 is to help reduce youth violence and delinquency in the State by creating therapeutic prevention and mental health programs for high risk youth. The creation of additional programs to assist our youth is consistent with this Department's ongoing concern for at-risk youth. Over the years, our Department has seen increases in crime involving youth offenders who at times are as young as 12 years of age. Yet, despite this rise, there are few programs available to youth offenders in Hawaii, often leaving them with little or no meaningful alternatives.

While the purpose of H.B. 2163, H.D. 1 is to establish a multi-pronged approach in programs which works to combine elements of community and school counseling, our Department would strongly urge this committee to consider appropriating funds associated with H.B. 2163 for the fiscal year 2016-2017 to Adult Friends for Youth as an alternative. Adult Friends for Youth, was established in 1985 at the University of Hawaii, School of Social Work and boasts a stellar track record and history of sustainability which would ensure that any appropriated funds will be allocated properly and effectively. Adult Friends for Youth works with more than 400 high risk youth per week and has established many successful programs such as their Re-directional Therapy which is an effective therapeutic approach to combat violence, drugs, crime, teen pregnancy, family dysfunction, learning disabilities and anti-social behaviors amount the very high risk youth both in and outside of the classroom. Through the

programs implemented by Adult Friends for Youth, their services have successfully changed the attitudes and behaviors of over numerous different gangs. They have also successfully assisted multiple gang members through the difficult task of integration back into the community.

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For all the reasons above, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu supports the intent of H.B. 2163, H.D. 1 and strongly urges this committee to reallocate any funds to the Adult Friends for Youth Program. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



LATE

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
W. R. Farrington High School
1564 North King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Dear Senators and Committee chair,

My name is Ronald Oyama, Vice Principal of Farrington High School.

I would like to submit a testimony on behalf of Adult Friends for Youth. I have been at Farrington High School for 9 years, and in the Department of Education for 26 years. Farrington High School has a steady enrollment of approximately 2,400 Students. We are currently servicing about 5 federal housings, and our poverty level is at approximately 59%.

Like me, before I transferred to Farrington High School, most of the public never experienced or had to deal with our youth that are being attracted to the gang life and the provisions that gangs provide for our young men and ladies. It gives them a home, a belonging, an identity, a sense of pride, and in most cases, love. I have come to know many members in gangs and let me say, they are young men and women, growing up, looking, searching and longing for a place to call home. A place and company where they truly feel the love and the respect that they are searching for. Many of our students in gangs have gravitated towards each other because they do not feel safe in our community.

It's different to work with, help, and deal with our students affiliated with gangs and all the deep rooted issues that comes with them on a daily basis. These students who are gang members are your sons, your daughters, your nieces and nephews, your grandchildren. They are searching and yearning for a better life just like anyone else. They just been looking for this in the wrong places. They need support, but who has the time to deal with our children who have some deep rooted, twisted childhoods, and unspeakable secrets that no one will ever hear of?

Many times students affiliated with or in gangs are dealing with issues that they have no outlet to express, no one to navigate and help them through their issues within themselves or with others. Many times the feeling of helplessness turn into rage, paranoia, false pride, and then violence. This is when the public then hears about the gang violence on the streets, in their neighborhoods, and the animosity and hostility that stems from deep rooted confrontations from past generations.

AFY has been a huge force and influence on our campus and in our students' lives. They take the time to deal with our groups and through their therapeutic discipline, they navigate through the groups' and individuals' needs, feelings, and emotions. Our students affiliated with gangs need to be heard, to be supported, to have someone they can truly pour out their feelings to. AFY has been there for them. AFY supports ALL Clients, even after graduation and into their adult lives. Their doors are never closed. AFY clinicians are available to our student clients 24 – 7 and are on the clock with them anytime they need help and support. Our administrators, counselors, social workers, and security has worked hand in hand with AFY whenever we have had confrontations, fights, and gang wars. AFY has very strong relationships with our gang members and they are deeply trusted and respected. This is one of the reasons we have made huge strides when reconciling, mediating, and returning our campus back to normalcy. Without AFY our school cannot function. We cannot duplicate the services, time, and specialty that they have perfected

Addressee

Date

Page 2

LATE

over the years. Without AFY I fear there will be no one that the gangs will trust, relate to, and feel that they are understood.

I am asking you to please consider their request for funding. We need AFY not only for our school, but our community, and most importantly for the students that need help, love, and understanding. You have the power to pass this bill that will acknowledge the fact that gangs do exist, are part of our culture in Kalihi, but more importantly, by funding AFY, you are changing lives. Please use your power and efforts to fund a proven and vital organization that knows how to deal specifically with our gangs.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ronald Oyama.

Vice Principal of Wallace Rider Farrington High School



Adult Friends for Youth

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FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Sidney M. Rosen, M.S.W., Ph.D.

**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to Committee on Human Service
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Deborah L.K. Spencer-Chun
President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Riviere and members of the Committee on Human Service, I am here to testify in support of HB2163 HD1 relating to Youth Gangs.

Before taking on the role of President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth, I spent over 20 years in the field working directly with youth involved in gangs and violence. What have I learned over the years? Gang members and youth involved in violence are usually acting out as symptom of deep rooted issues. They join gangs because they need a place to belong and the gang becomes their surrogate family. Like drugs, the gang becomes a means to escape dealing with problems that have become overwhelming for them to handle. To break up the gang or to work with a youth in isolation is defeating because you are taking them away from their only support network. We also know that peers tend to have the most influence on each other at this developmental stage in their lives. Youth gang membership and violence is not limited to particular communities nor is it limited to only public housing, it is much more wide spread.

So what have I learned that works? Providing outreach services to these young men and women and engaging them in group counseling sessions helps begin identifying the deep rooted problems, talk about it, and teach them skills to cope with the problem as well as skills to empower them. These services has to be consistent, long-term and infused in their communities. These services should be holistic and include the entire peer group to turn negative peer pressure into positive peer pressure so that they can begin to hold each member accountable for their actions. The Juvenile Justice System has agreed that working with a youth in their environment is much more effective than incarceration and has made stride to provide services to a youth in their communities. Youth involved with gangs and violence should be given the same option.

Over the years, gang membership and violence have become more prevalent because technology namely social media has brought it to the forefront. Fights, name calling, bullying and recruitment of members are often posted to many of these sites allowing the problem to spread faster and island wide. This sensationalizes the violence and makes it attracting to watch as well as engage in the behavior. Social media has also been the catalyst that have brought youth (sometimes close to a hundred) from all over the island to engage, participate and/or witness a fight causing members and residents of the community to live in fear.

At Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) we reach and provide services to more than 350+ students week, which involves group counseling as well as outreach, case management, advocacy, truancy reduction, leadership training, and mentorship on and off the school campus. Our Street wise, street smart therapeutic approach works with high risk youth on their own turf and tackles difficult challenges that youth faces. We work with youth gangs as whole entities usually for three plus years. Our services are culturally relevant to Hawaii's diverse multi-ethnic population. We also provide Crisis services and interventions 24/7 because we know that the violence do not only occur between 9am - 5 pm. AFY works in partnership with school administrators and faculty to provide effective counseling services to reduce and eliminate destructive behaviors on school campuses in order to create a violence free, safe educational environment where students can thrive. We provide mediation services between rival gangs at schools and between schools. We partner with other programs to refer youth for more services when they have learned to properly conduct themselves in the appropriate settings.

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We ask for your support of this bill, HB2163 HD1, because it will provide services to our youth in gangs and give them the opportunity to become productive and contributing members of society, Thank you for allowing me to testify.



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Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Lisa Tamashiro

Director of Operations and Special Projects of
Adult Friends for Youth

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**Past Chair of the Board*

I am in strong support of HB 2163 HD1, Relating to Youth Gangs, which will appropriate funds to programs that have the experience and expertise in serving this targeted youth population. Adult Friends for Youth has been providing services to Oahu's youth for the past 30 years. The non-profit agency is committed to redirecting the lives and behaviors of the youth from destructive to constructive and building safer communities for all residents.

Hawaii, particularly on Oahu has a rising issue of youth violence and crime. It is not a situation to be taken lightly as the possession of firearms to conduct robbery and property crime has been identified on numerous cases. Without programs to properly service the youth, the rising issue has the potential to turn into an epidemic that will result in the burden of the State and taxpayers as well as the safety of many communities and schools.

Incarceration has not proven to be an effective approach in the rehabilitation of youth. The targeted youth need services where it is multi-faceted and holistic. The building of trusting and meaningful relationships with service providers has the capacity in redirecting the behaviors of the youth to becoming contributing and productive members of society. The youth need to be provided with the appropriate services and programs that can address their needs and issues. While addressing the needs and issues, the youth can also learn coping skills and tools to abstain from violence and crime.

As a service provider, I have seen the drastic changes that youth can make when given the opportunity. The peer group is considered to be most influential in a youth's life. When youth gangs are serviced as whole entities, members can learn to hold each other accountable for their actions and progress positively as a group.

By providing the appropriate services for these youth, we will be creating a safer community for all residents of Hawaii and a brighter future for the next generation. We strongly urge the committee to pass HB 2163 HD 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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Submitted to:

Submitted to Committee on Human Services

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Jeffrey Aganos

Redirectional Specialist of Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 2163, Relating to Youth Gangs

I am representing and testifying in support of HB 2163 on Youth Gangs.

Throughout the years, Adult Friends for Youth has played a vital role in keeping the community safe from violence and also redirecting the lives of youths within the low-income community. AFY has conducted group and individual sessions in redirecting and empowering the lives of the youth to not only make the community a safer and better place for everyone but also working with youth to help them believe that they matter. Over the years the youth we have worked with have felt that they have been portrayed in a negative way - where they had to endure that stigma of making them feel unworthy to the mainstream. Through AFY's services, many of them come out feeling confident in knowing that they can make a difference in their community.

This Bill will provide the funding to support the organizations that are equipped in servicing the targeted population. By passing this bill, it will prevent youth gangs and violence from becoming a serious problem, but more importantly, help to secure safer schools and communities, and build bridges that for all youth to cross over to a better future.

Thank you for your time and opportunity to testify.



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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to:

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES:

Sen. Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Chair

Sen. Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Sabra Della Lucia

Redirectional Specialist of Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 2163, Relating to Youth Gangs

Adult Friends for Youth's Staff is on call 24/7. We provide therapeutic services to the most at-risk youth on the island of Oahu, and it is truly a privilege.

They may not always follow directions, they may not allow for services in what we think of as the traditional therapeutic setting, they may not even believe that they need services. What the youth do understand is that when Adult Friends for Youth begins services with them, they are being respected, heard, understood, supported in a safe environment.

They are the youth that often have no place to go and have lost hope, therefore they have turned to destructive behaviors and violence to cope with their struggles.

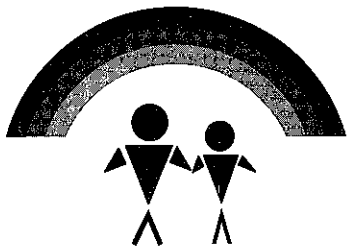
Often, the youth find themselves in the juvenile court system or worse.

People often ask me, "Why would you want to work with the bad or rotten kids.

They have no respect and don't care about their education." I usually respond by saying that those are not the kids that I provide services to. I provide services to the students that society has given up on, that program after program has given up on, and sometimes their own family has given up on. I get to watch youth gang members engage back into their education, communities and families. I get to help them believe in themselves once again.

The therapeutic process of changing a life is never short or simple, which is why the work of Adult Friends for Youth is so important. There is no quick fix to improving a life. Just like adults, change takes time.

We ask that the state support the agencies that are facilitating this change. Do not give up hope in our youth. If we are asking them to believe in themselves, we have to believe in them as well. Supporting HB 2163 shows your commitment to Hawaii's at-risk youth in redirecting their lives from destruction and delinquency, to becoming contributing members of society.



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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to:

Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by

Malakai Maumalanga
Director of Redirectional Services
Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 2163 HD 1, Relating to Youth Gangs

Aloha, my name is Malakai Maumalanga and I am the Director of Redirectional Services at Adult Friends for Youth. I am support of HB2163 HD 1 relating to Youth Gangs.

I want to start by stating that I would not be here today testifying if I didn't get the support I needed to change my life. That support came from Adult Friends for Youth (AFY). As a kid growing up in Kalihi I got heavily involved in gangs and violence which seemed like a normal life for me. It's a lifestyle you don't grow out of unless you get the support to deal with these issues. I was expelled from every school I attended because of all the fights. My gang was well known by the police for the destructive behaviors and violence we caused in the communities. It got so bad that the police were often posted on King Street to monitor us. The kids in the neighborhood would not come to the park to play they were afraid of all the trouble. We had been in so many fights and we didn't care that we terrorized our neighborhood. Nobody wanted or knew how to deal with us. Then AFY came into our lives. At first we thought they were another police program to monitor us. We later found out they really wanted to help us and have a peaceful and safe community. I have been blessed to have had AFY help me and my friends deal with our issues so that we could live a productive life. They worked with my whole gang to decrease the violence and to help us begin to hold each other accountable. The accountability that we had for each other helped us to look toward a more productive life. If you only work with one youth or one person from the gang it becomes difficult for that person to try and steer the other members to a positive path. However, if you work with the gang as whole entities –the peer pressure now is easier and becomes positive rather than negative. I went to jail

many times but with the continuous support of AFY, I eventually went to college and got a Master's degree in Social Work. I had all of this experience and today my friends and I are productive people of society. We are not a burden or draining our economy but rather giving back.

LATE

Today, I am the Director of Redirectional Services at AFY. We help students redirect their lives and change their perspectives of life through Redirectional Therapy. We believe that all students have the capacity to enter mainstream of their issues are addressed and their feelings nurtured. By redirecting youth violence and gangs it has a tremendous impact in our schools and communities. By supporting HB 2163 HD 1, it gives these youth an opportunity to reach their full potential. Aggressive behavior and violence is a disease, if left untreated spreads like any other disease. So please support HB 2163 HD 1, give our gang youth a change in life, and help to redirect them from destructive behaviors to a constructive life. Thank you for your time, support and LOVE for our youth and our communities. Mahalo and have a Blessed day.



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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to:

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES:

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Siutiti Takai

Redirectional Specialist of Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 2163, Relating to Youth Gangs

I strongly support HB 2163, Relating to Youth Gangs. Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) is a nonprofit organization, providing therapeutic work toward high risk youth for the past 29 years. AFY has gained a notable reputation for its overwhelming success with this specific youth population. By helping to redirect their lives through advocacy and empowerment, continuous effort is further directed toward integrating them into healthy community living and personal well-being. AFY's outreach services help to heighten the potential for achieving community goals, such as reducing extreme poverty, improving healthy lifestyles, and access to educational opportunities that enhances the quality of life. The youth AFY services are those who believe they have no place in the community. AFY's mission is to enhance the potential for all youths to achieve a rewarding life and become productive members of society. I truly, support the vision and mission AFY stands for and proud to say that I am a part of this agency whom, is making a difference in the lives of youth gang members.

In eyes of many, youth gangs and violence is a growing problem that needs immediate attention. Rather than spend incredibly high cost on incarcerating the young people of our community—we should invest in programs that have the experienced expertise and relationship building skills to address serious concerns around destructive and violent behavior in order to redirect these behaviors toward a positive and constructive solution. Many high risk youth have issues that go deeper than what they portray that often leads to lashing out through violence. Therefore, counseling sessions as a group in school helps express the emotions that are bottled up.

We view this bill will help reduce youth gangs and violence in our communities and therefore, we strongly support it and hope you will too. A quote from our President Barack Obama, "*Justice is not only the absence of oppression, it is the presence of opportunity. Justice is giving every child a shot at a great education no matter what zip code they're born into. Justice is giving everyone willing to work hard the chance at a good job with good wages, no matter what their name is, what their skin color is, where they live.*"

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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Cc: supersaybra@yahoo.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB2163 on Mar 15, 2016 13:15PM*
Date: Monday, March 14, 2016 5:53:51 PM

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HB2163

Submitted on: 3/14/2016

Testimony for HMS on Mar 15, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Angela Mau	Adult Friends for Youth	Support	No

Comments:

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Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Kapolei Girls of Kapolei High School

We, the Kapolei Girls of Kapolei High School support the Bill HB 2163 HD 1. Agencies like Adult Friends for Youth are needed in communities like Kapolei, where there are a lot of youth violence. Without AFY, we would not be where we are today. We value our education and we now can see a future for ourselves. We know there are a lot more teens on this Island that need the help. Below is our individual testimonies as to why we support this bill.

My name is Hale Santiago and on behalf of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY), I would first like to say what an amazing blessing they have been to my life. When I first started to attend this group session, I wasn't the best person/student to be around. I was constantly getting into fights and altercations with many people. I had terrible grades, I was not a people person. I was for sure not going anywhere good in my life. Now that I have been in the group sessions, I'm happy to say that everything has turned around for the better because of AFY. My grades have changed and improved a lot from F's to B's. When I get angry, AFY taught me to walk away from the situation so I don't fight. Not only has AFY extremely helped me in my social life but they have helped me in my personal life as well. My attitude towards people has changed for the better and I have over time created a family-like bond with the group members. AFY has amazingly wonderful people that provide help to those who need it. I can honestly say that with their help and constant push of support to help me do better in school, I am on the right track and I will be successful! THANK YOU AFY!

My name is Kiara Carroll, I am a junior at Kapolei High School. I would like to talk about how Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) helped me out. Since being in this program, I am able to talk about what's been going on in my life and that there are people out there that want to help kids like me. Like most kids on this Island, I did drugs, skip class, fight, etc. But now, I go to class and try to improve my grades. I am not saying that AFY makes me do these things but they are encouraging and are a big part of me wanting to make a change. The group counseling sessions are very effective in helping the kids out on this island because they help make a difference in kids with behavioral problems just like me. Thank you.

I, Kayla Marie Navarro support the HB 2163 HD 1 bill. What Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) does for kids at my school, Kapolei High School is amazing. AFY helps kids like me for example, clinicians Titi and Mo believe in myself. I understand that they are going to be by my side when I make right or wrong choices. And if I am wrong, they will guide me to the right path. I support this bill HB 2163 HD 1 because I want kids like me in Hawaii to have this amazing guidance with no judgement and 100% support 24/7 every day of the week. Last year, I fell and hit rock bottom and I thought I couldn't save myself, yet I did and I got referred to the AFY group. They have helped me stay on track and provided amazing advice, life experiences, and knowledgeable guidance. I want this bill to be passed to help other kids that are struggling with fighting, drugs, home problems, and self-problems. I love and am thankful for AFY group sessions.

Thank you for your time.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Hans Hanis from Farrington High School

My name is Hans Hanis and I support this bill HB 2163 HD 1. I am a Micronesian and I am affiliated with a friendship group from Kalihi Valley Homes and Kuhio Park Terrace. I am writing this testimony or story, on behalf of an agency that I have been with for quite some time called Adult Friends for Youth (AFY).

I met AFY through my 'brothers' and my rugby coach, Molo. I was once a boy who did not care about how my life would turn out. I couldn't see myself succeeding in any way and I wanted to give up. When my father was sent to jail, I was left with no hope, no future, and no motivation to become the Hans I am today. I felt like a failure- a failure that had no dream. This all changed when I met AFY. They took the boys and I on an "outing" to experience new things. I knew this was a group I wanted to be part of. I changed schools from Roosevelt to Farrington where regular services were offered. Through weekly therapeutic sessions, I received pep talks, motivation, and ultimately, the courage to seek out opportunities to better my life.

I am now a different Hans. I have made the people I love happy. I know I will be successful. I will work to give people hope that can't find hope, as AFY once did for me. I will be the man that changes the negative perceptions of Micronesians. Most importantly, I know that AFY will be there to guide me every step of the way. Thanks to the staff at Adult Friends for Youth, I am the man I can be proud of today.

Please pass this bill so that others can receive services from AFY like I do. Thank you for your time and opportunity for me to testify.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Jeffrey Silva
Graduate of AFY C-Base Class, Current LCC Student

My name is Jeffrey Silva and I am a student of Adult Friends for Youth. Thank you for allowing me to share my testimony in support of bill HB 2163 HD 1.

AFY is not just focused on education but on helping teens who have been through rough times and grew up or have been around gang violence. They help teens find hope in having a better life through activities instead of violence. Before I found AFY I was just a drop out who only knew how to steal and rob people. That's all I wanted to do. Every time I saw something I wanted, I would take it. I had no remorse for others and I didn't really care about my education or my future. Sometimes I would run around with my friends and if we saw someone from another gang we would beat them up and take their money. Then Debbie and Lisa walked into my house one day and told me about AFY. At first I thought it was going to be a repeat of high school where no one cared and no one understood where I came from. But then, things were different with AFY. From there, my ways of thinking got better. I was no longer hanging out with the same group of people or stealing. AFY helped me find a job so I could make my own money. AFY also helped me get into college where eventually I would like to pursue a degree in Business. Without AFY I would probably be in jail or hanging with the same people stealing and fighting.

I hope you pass this bill because there are a lot of teens out there that need the help AFY provides. Without AFY, there is no hope for the future of those teens running around the streets. We do not want to end up like the mainland where kids are running around with guns and shooting innocent people. We want to keep Hawaii beautiful and full of aloha.

Thanks for your time.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Mapa Leakona
Former Student of Farrington High School

My name is Mapa Leakona and I am a student of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY). I want to thank you all for the opportunity to support HB 2163 HD 1 relating to Youth Gangs.

I have been a part of this 'blessing' of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) for about four years. The experiences with AFY from eighth grade until now have helped me and my friends decrease gang violence and drug use, cope with family issues, and improve in school. As a member of a group called T-gang, my friends and I met with AFY every week at Farrington High School and in the community. Sessions addressed our goals and future. AFY proved to us early on that they weren't like other agencies- they wanted to help us improve ourselves *and* our community. They were there to keep us motivated, to open our minds and to see the potential for our futures. They never stopped believing in us.

Because of Adult Friends for Youth, my friends and I have found success. Many of us are in college, working, or doing god's work. We spend time giving back to our community to make it better for future generations. I never thought that I would be able to see the world in this way. I can be proud to say that today, I am continuing my education through Adult Friends for Youth's alternative education program. I know I can count on their support in order to reach my goals.

By supporting HB 2163 HD 1, you can help youth like me to find that same potential to succeed. Please support HB 2163 HD 1 to give all youth the opportunity for a better life.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Chuukese KAM IV boys from Kalihi

We support this bill HB 2163 HD 1 because without agencies like AFY there would be a lot more youth gangs in Kalihi. With the rise of youth gangs, would come an increase of crime in our neighborhood. AFY does amazing work not just with us, but with many of the youth in Kalihi. We are so thankful for the support and services from AFY.

We consider AFY as a second home. It is a place that sees the good in us when others do not. It is also a place that helps us when others have pushed us away. The boys from Love Kids and Kam IV would like to thank AFY for helping the boys to see the beauty in living in the "ghetto". Also, AFY has encouraged us to change the perspective of how other people view us and other teens from Kalihi. Without AFY we would not know half of the things that we know today. For example, we learned how to give more than to take. AFY also never gives up on us no matter how bad the situation gets. Group sessions at AFY helps us express our issues because of the bond that we have with the workers, which we also consider as our friends.

Please pass this bill so that we can continue to receive services from AFY, and more youths like us all over the island can receive services too. Thank you for your time.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Paea Masaniai
Graduate of AFY C-Base Program and Current HCC Student

Good morning, my name is Paea Masaniai and I have recently graduated from the Adult Friends for Youth program and I support HB 2163 HD 1 relating to youth gangs.

AFY has helped me back when I was in the 10th grade at Farrington high school when I was not doing well in school and my grades and attendance was really awful. The only thing I really paid attention to in school was football because it was fun. But I didn't like going to school because I couldn't understand anything. I was really short on credits and my counselors told me that I had no chance of passing on to the next grade level or graduating. So my mom told me that I would have to go to a program but I was unsure of everything. That same year, my older sister who was a gang member had just graduated from the Adult Friends for Youth program. My sister knew I needed help so she kindly asked Lisa from AFY to see if I could get in the program. Lisa scheduled a couple of meetings with me so that she could know me better and understand the situations I was in before she could help me.

I wasn't a gang member like my sister but AFY has helped me become a way better person than I was before and no words can explain how thankful I am for this program. They are loving and caring staff members and they have helped me throughout my life. They also helped me learn how to balance out sports and school. At first I thought I have let my mom down but AFY gave me a second chance to redeem myself. I graduated from the program and now I am a student at Honolulu Community College majoring in liberal arts. I am trying to get my requirements so that I could try to transfer into a university and try to better my life.

The community needs programs like AFY to help more people like me and my sister. Thank you for your time.

Submitted By Ryan Beauchan
Former Adult Friends for Youth Student

LATE

Members of the Human Service Committee, my name is Ryan Beauchan and I ask that you support HB 2163 HD1 relating to youth gangs.

I will am so grateful for everything Adult Friends for Youth has done for me and my brother. I support them in everything as they have supported me. Today I am a supervisor for a security company but years ago I thought I would never do anything with my life. I was stealing, fighting, and using drugs. This was a regular part of my daily routine. I was introduced to Adult Friends for Youth during my freshman year at Waipahu High School after a fight on campus and that changed my life forever.

We had weekly counseling groups with them and I could discuss anything including my troubled relationships and drugs. They also helped me to mediate my fights with other students on campus and in the community. In my senior year I joined football and was a middle linebacker. I saw my leadership potential. Unable to make up prior credits I left Waipahu High School and joined AFY's Clinical/Competency Based Alternative Education (CBASE) High School Diploma Program through the Waipahu Community School for Adults. I graduated in 2007 was selected to be our class speaker at our graduation ceremony.

On November 29, 2013, I received AFY's Young Person of the Year award. It was a great feeling and it reminded me that they still care about me. I stated then that "this award goes to all the people that had helped me in my life. Who had inspired me to be the best that I can be. Thank you AFY for all you have done".

Today I am still working security. I also applied to become a youth correctional officer at Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility but they said that I didn't have the prior experience of working or volunteering time with youth in our community. I believe I can be of help to our youth someday with the experience I had. My future looks brighter as I am engaged and will be a father soon.

I ask that you support HB 2163 HD1 so kids who are troubled and join gangs like I did will have the opportunity to do better. If I didn't have AFY I don't know where I will be today. They are still a part of my life but in a good way. I look forward to becoming a dad and raising my child the best I know how through the lessons I learned.

Thank you.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
William Masaniai
Student of Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 2163 HD 1, Relating to Youth Gangs

My name is William Masaniai and I am a student of Adult Friends for Youth. Thank you for allowing me to share my testimony in support of the Bill HB 2163 HD 1.

About nine months ago I was in Las Vegas, Nevada and I was convicted of burglary, home invasion, and conspiracy. I got sentenced to six months of probation and fifty hours of community service. When I refused, the judge informed me that they were going to throw me into a juvenile detention home until my eighteenth birthday, to serve time for the crimes I committed. My loving mother came up with the idea of sending me to Hawaii to the rest of my family members as a form of punishment. The only way for me to stay out of 'juvie' was to come to Hawaii but double my probation period and community service hours. Two weeks later, I was on my way to Hawaii.

After being on the Island for three weeks, my Aunty was taking my cousin Paea to the C-Base program at AFY and told me to tag along. Arriving at the AFY office, Paea introduced me to Lisa (AFY staff). I was referred to AFY because I was short on credits, one year of probation, and a hundred hours of community service. Lisa, Jeff, and the other staff members helped me complete my hours of community service within two months by helping around the office. AFY helped me create a resume and get my worker's permit to find a job. I was able to apply and got hired at Domino's pizza where I have been employed for five months now. I am currently in AFY's C-Base program and I will graduate in September 2016.

If it wasn't for agencies like AFY, I would still be running around with my friends making bad choices and I would be unemployed. I hope my story will impact others to never give up and to know that they matter. Especially, youth like me who deserves a second chance. We are human and everyone makes mistakes. Also, don't judge a book by its cover because you don't know what their story is.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Chuukese boys from Farrington High School

Subject: Support for HB 2163 HD 1, Relating to Youth Gangs

Hello there, my name is Yro Onosar and I've only been a part of AFY for about five months. They have helped me to make, not the right, but the best decisions that I could possibly make. I may have not been there as long as the other 4TB boys have, but they still treat me and show me that they care for me just as much as they do for the others. I appreciate our AFY leaders as they have showed me that there are many opportunities for us out there and that we just have to be wise about them. I truly believe that it is the help of AFY that has helped us to drastically decrease our violent lifestyles of the past. I am very thankful that I have met such a wonderful agency that cares for us.

My name is Ason Billy and I'm part of the original 4TB members. I've been a part of AFY for about 4 years. They have helped me stay out of trouble and have also helped me a lot both in and out of school. Regardless of the many careless mistakes I've made in the past and all my wrong doings, AFY was there by my side when I needed them. They've helped me to realize opportunities that I never thought had the chance to be a part of. Because of the impact AFY has had on me, I believe they can truly impact anyone.

Hello, my name is Nick Stephen and I am a part of a brotherhood/cliq called "4 The Brodies, or 4TB". I have been a part of AFY for 3 years so far. To me, AFY means a lot because they have helped change me into the person I am today. I used to get into a lot of fights with other gangs but with the help of AFY, I've come to realize that it's not worth it. AFY has given me great opportunities like playing rugby and traveling to Portland to compete in a regional tournament against other rugby clubs from around the nation. AFY has taught me a lot of thing that will help me throughout life. I am grateful for them.

My name is Peter Aumua and I've been a part of AFY for 3 years. I belong to the group 4TB. AFY has changed the way I view life and my perspective of it. They have helped me to reflect on the mistakes I've made in my life and to turn them into life learning lessons. I appreciate all the staff members of AFY for their countless efforts to help change the live of my friends and I.

LATE

Hi, my name is Werner Nick, also known as, Uso. I've been with AFY for about 3 years and throughout those years, they have helped me a lot and have taught me lessons on making the best decisions for myself. I really appreciate the time they've sacrificed for me and my friends known as 4TB because if it was for AFY, we would probably be like a lot of other teenagers out there getting in to trouble and making a lot of bad choices. I just want to say thank you to all the AFY staff members for saving our lives. You guys are my heroes. Thank you, love you and God Bless.

Hello, my name is Jake. I've been with AFY for 3years. I'm part of a brotherhood called 4TB. AFY has been a great help in my life. They keep us out of trouble and teach us the importance of school. They are able to reach out to us and convey the message that not all problems have to be solved by fighting. They're able to give us opportunities and experiences that will help us when we reach the real world of adulthood.

Submitted by
Zara & Gary Aki
March 14, 2016

LATE

Dear Members of the Committee on Human Service

Aloha! We are Zara and Gary Aki, and we are residents of Kamehameha Homes. We also are active within our Community here, and have been Board Members for our Kamehameha Homes Tenant Association since 1997. Our 3 children are grown and on their own leading a very productive life. We have 7 grandsons, and they're a blessing and joy to us. It's just the 2 of us, yet we continue to do volunteer work for our Community simply because we care about our neighbors and because this is home. We became aware of AFY when our son, (our youngest) was attending Kalakaua Middle School. He became a client of theirs and Debbie was his worker. While being involved with AFY, he adjusted and learned from them. To this day, he will quote what he was taught "the choices you make today, may determine your future." Kinohi had some issues still, but Debbie periodically checked on him throughout the years. When he graduated in 2001, like most young men, didn't know what he wanted to do, wasn't sure if he should give college a try. But, he did. Debbie walked him through the process, helped with all the paperwork, and for the first week or so picked him up and took him to HCC. All we asked of our son, was to give it a shot and see if you like it or not. When everyone had doubts about Kinohi, and when he was down about himself, Debbie was there for support and guidance. For that, we are so grateful and appreciative.

When HPHA had funds available for Associations to benefit their Communities, our KHTA Board, chose AFY as one of the agency to come in and work within our Community and with our kids. With our experience with AFY, it was agreed among our Executive Board to select them and hopefully they would come here to service our Community, and they did. We even had classes for Adults with Ms. Terry Fisher, and we had a great time sharing and learning about ourselves. We also became more aware of the scope of service that they provide for the youth. It is unreal. Sad to say that the funds from HPHA ran out. But, AFY didn't allow that to stop them. They continued to work with the kids and we believe that they made a difference in their lives.

Recently, we've come together again due to the increase in the Gang Activity/ Violence that have been taking place. These Gangs congregate here at Kamehemeha Homes, and they fight. I'm talking about 50 plus kids, with no respect and a whole bunch of attitude! They stop traffic on King Street, and here on Haka Drive. They had weapons on them and they would throw them at the other kids who they were fighting with. They had pipes, sticks, rocks, a machete was seen, it was extremely dangerous for us. They would scale the outside walls of Kamehameha Homes and they would be all over our Community. Police are called, but they are quick to run away as soon as they see or hear a police siren. Since last September, our Association have worked side by side with Farrington High School, HPD/ Weed and Seed, AFY, and HPHA. We have had 2 Community based meetings here at our Hall to discuss and try to come up with positive solutions, or an action plan to address this. Last year we invited some Legislators with various agencies, Farrington and Mckinley High School, and HPHA to meet with our residents, and just to let everyone know that this is some serious business. Through the planning process and in us seeking advice, it was AFY who stood by us and guided and supported us. AFY is currently working with the Gangs that have been fighting and we see positive results. There have been no current fights here. In this last meeting, it was reported to us that the State & City did not grant AFY money. This is very sad. When an agency such as AFY, who does terrific work with our youth in trying to steer them on the right path, to have no funding is sad. Here you have a credited agency whose work record speaks for itself, where the staff is on call 24/7. Whenever there is a type of Gang Violence/ Fight, AFY is the one everyone calls. Come on people!!! We need help to insure the safety of our kids and grandkids. We plead with all of you to support HB 2163 HD 1 for agencies like AFY. Services like theirs is very crucial to a lot of families and Communities.

Thank you for taking the time to address our Support letter.

Mahalo,
Zara Aki/ President KHTA
Gary Aki/ Sgt. Of Arms KHTA



LATE

HAWAII BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

735 Bishop Street, Suite 412 * Honolulu, Hawaii 96823
(808) 524-2249 - FAX (808) 524-6893

March 14, 2016

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Honorable Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland
Honorable Senator Gil Riviere
Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB2163 HD1

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and the members of the committee,

The Hawaii Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO is comprised of 16 of the 17 construction trade unions throughout Hawai'i. With an estimated membership of 20,000 statewide, our primary mission is to provide employment opportunities & living wages for the many working men and women we represent.

The Hawaii Building & Construction Trades Council stands in strong support of HB 2163 HD1. For years, the Trades Council has been a supporter of Adult Friends for Youth, which is a local non-profit committed to working with our high-risk youth facing threats from gang association, violence, bullying, and other negative social behaviors in their communities.

We have seen firsthand the positive transformation that many of these young people have gone through. We as the various unions represented by the HBCTC, have enrolled many of AFY's youth into our respective apprenticeship programs and they have been an asset to our programs.

To continue to provide these and other services to our youth and our community at large, we need to make sure AFY and other worthy programs have the funding they need to succeed. Echoing the words of Frederick Douglass, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." We urge you to continue supporting services for our at-risk youth through legislative efforts like HB 2163 HD1.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 2163 HD1.

Respectfully yours,

Reginald Castanares

President - Hawaii Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO