

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Rick Collins, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive Director

Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Hawaii

Bobby Benson Center

Central Oahu Youth Services
Association

Child and Family Service

Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii

Domestic Violence Action Center

EPIC, Inc.

Family Programs Hawaii

Family Support Hawaii

Hale Kipa, Inc.

Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.

Hawaii Student Television

Hui Malama Learning Center

Kokua Kalihi Valley

Life Foundation

Marimed Foundation

Maui Youth and Family Services

P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.

Parents and Children Together
(PACT)

Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest and

Hawaiian Islands

Salvation Army Family

Intervention Services

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Susannah Wesley Community
Center

The Catalyst Group

Uhane Pohaku Na Moku

O Hawai'i

Waikiki Health

March 18, 2016

To: Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Human Services

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HR 96 and HCR 145 URGING THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CREATE A TASK
FORCE TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION AND ADDRESS
CONCERNS OF FOSTER PARENTS**

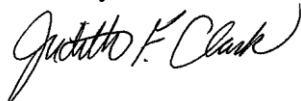
Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports Urging the Department of Human Services to Create a Task Force to Encourage Communication and Address Concerns of Foster Parents.

HYSN recommends two amendments to the resolution:

- Changing the words “foster parents” to “resource caregivers” as this is the term currently in use by the Department of Human Services;
- Adding two additional representatives to the task force from It Takes An Ohana, which provides training and support services to foster parents; and a representative from a Neighbor Island foster care provider to ensure that Neighbor Island needs and issues are addressed.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



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FamilyProgramsHawaii.com

TO: Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

HEARING: Tuesday, March 22, 2016
10:00 AM
Conference Room 329

FROM: Judith Wilhoite
Family Advocate
It Takes An Ohana

RE: HCR145 - URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CREATE A
TASK FORCE TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION AND ADDRESS CONCERNS
OF FOSTER PARENTS.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the Family Advocate for Family Program Hawaii's *It Takes An Ohana* (ITAO) program and a foster parent. We oppose HCR145.

In September, 2011, ITAO brought together a group of experienced foster parents and adoptive parents who have a passion for creating the best outcomes possible for Hawaii's children affected by foster care. The ITAO Advisory Committee (IAC) was trained by author and consultant, Shanah Trevenna, on how to find effective solutions to issues and how to create "bridges" between all stakeholders in the child's life including resource caregivers, families and the Department of Human Services (DHS). In 2012, DHS and Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) representative joined our group.

Reading this resolution, we believe its intent is to improve the relationship between foster parents and the Department of Human Service. We think everyone would agree that this intent is positive and worth pursuing, and agree with it. However, in our experience of working closely with DHS, what we see happening more and more is a strong effort by the department to hear the needs of the resource families and to address them. Thus, we believe that this resolution is not necessary.

Some of the results of the recent work we have done with the department include creating documents and trainings for both foster parents and social workers that clarify procedures and access to information, who to call for what purposes, etc. We believe that

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information is power and try our best to get this information to the people that need it.

The DHS, along with their partners, have put into place many supports for foster families. They include, but are not limited to:

- A Warm Line where families can call and get information, support and advice.
- Support Groups on each island.
- Quarterly trainings that cover issues to give families the knowledge they need to help the children in their homes.
- Raised the board reimbursement payment
- Doubled the clothing allowance and now allow these funds to be used on diapers.
- Expanded resources for foster youth who exit care, helping families to better help these young adults.

That said, by no means do we want to paint a rosy picture of the experience of our foster parents. Caring for hurt and abused children is no easy task. There is still work to be done to create a more inclusive culture of teamwork between the foster parents and the social workers. But the DHS has worked tirelessly to improve this situation and I believe we are truly on our way to creating a healthy relationship between our brother and sister social workers at DHS and our families.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to this issue.

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kobayashi2-Jessi

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2016 10:27 AM
To: HUS testimony
Cc: breaking-the-silence@hotmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HCR145 on Mar 22, 2016 10:00AM*

HCR145

Submitted on: 3/18/2016

Testimony for HUS on Mar 22, 2016 10:00AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dara Carlin, M.A.	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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. As the President and CEO of EPIC 'Ohana, a non-profit organization that provides youth voice in child welfare, and several services for families, I respectfully recommend that a Task Force is not necessary. Collaboration has been the hallmark of Child Welfare Services over the last ten years. Federal reviewers who come to Hawai'i to review our child welfare system consistently list cross-sector collaboration as a strength. The members of the task force identified are already a part of several committees, work groups and collaborative efforts, including workshops that will be held in each county in April and May for resource caregivers, and foster parent groups.

'Ohana Conferencing brings together all of the extended family, including the resource caregivers in a circle of support and solution focused decision making for families in the child welfare system. Because most foster parents are also relatives and are specially licensed to care for the children, their role in conferences is vital. However, even when the resource caregiver is not a family member they are invited to share and hear information about the children, and get to know the family. Non-relative caregivers may not be able to stay for the family portion of the conference, but their input is vital. These conferences help to support not only the safety of the children, but also the well being of the children.

Because CWS has made it their way of doing business to be inclusive and collaborative, our organization is asked to participate in many work groups, committees, and collaborative efforts. For instance, once a year we celebrate National Reunification Month and highlight the team that helped a family achieve a successful outcome. That team includes the foster parents. It Takes an Ohana serves as an advocate for foster parents, and we see them actively participating in many initiatives providing the foster parent voice to initiatives like the development of prudent parenting standards for foster parents. That work group is a good example of the collaborative effort. At the table are several young people from HI HOPES, agencies such as Partners in Development and EPIC, It Takes an 'Ohana, and social workers from all islands. Together the group is writing a handbook for foster parents to improve the care of children in the foster care system. The handbook will be shared at the conferences in April and May.

Although there is nothing wrong with a task force, the organizations charged with this task are already participating together in so many meetings and initiatives to make child welfare and foster care better. The result of the task force will inevitably distract from their efforts rather than enhance them. Perhaps a more useful approach is to ask the groups listed for the task force to make a concerted effort to reach out to those individuals who may feel disenfranchised. For instance, in the upcoming workshops and in the quarterly foster parent groups, the department could make sure that all resource caregivers receive invitations. In that way, individuals with concerns will have an opportunity to be a part of constructive improvements and solutions.



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RE: HCR145 - URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CREATE A TASK FORCE TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION AND ADDRESS CONCERNS OF FOSTER PARENTS.

Dear Honorable Yamane:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am the President and CEO of Family Program Hawaii. We oppose HCR145.

First I would like to state, I do not oppose the intent of this resolution, I believe it is a noble cause that is designed to improve the relationship between foster parents and the Department of Human Service. We think we can all agree that its intent is positive, worthwhile and desirable. However, in the time that I have been with our agency, my experiences have been that of working closely and collaboratively with DHS. I know firsthand through crucial conversations with the leadership at DHS and through their actions that there has been an increasingly robust effort on the part of the department to partner with our resource families and other stakeholders, including a desire to hear and address their needs. They truly want to uncover, understand, address and take action on implementing necessary changes to further ensure vital support for our resource caregivers as utmost important partners in the work we do to support our children and families in Hawaii. Thus, we believe that this resolution is not necessary.

As outlined in the testimony provided by our "It Takes and Ohana, Family Advocate", here are some of the results of recent work that has been done with DHS to better support foster parents. They include, but are not limited to:

- A Warm Line where families can call and get information and advice.
- Support Groups on each island
- Quarterly trainings that cover issues to give families the knowledge they need to help the children in their homes.
- Raised the board reimbursement payment
- Doubled the clothing allowance and now allow these funds to be used on diapers.
- Expanded resources for foster youth who exit care, helping families to better help these young adults.

As she also shared, there is still work to be done to assist and provide an inclusive, collaborative culture of support and partnership for our foster parents to help scaffold their efforts in providing caring and nurturing support for our kids. However, DHS leadership and staff have worked vigorously



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to improve the provision of services. It could be said that a networked cadre of professionals is well underway to create a more responsive system to enhance the relationship between DHS, its social workers, resource caregivers, families and partner agencies.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this issue.

Paulette Bethel
President & CEO

P.S. if a final decision is made to approve this resolution, I would respectfully ask that Family Programs Hawaii, as a vital partner with DHS and resource caregivers, be included as a member of this Task Force.



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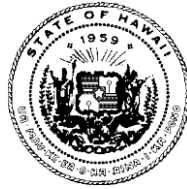
LATE

My name is Joshua Gaoteote and I am the Support Groups Coordinator with Family Programs Hawaii Resource Families Support Services Program. I am writing this testimony to oppose HR 96 and HCR 145. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has already implemented measures to help support resource caregivers and youth in foster care to address some of the communication issues and other problems with the DHS. A task force is not needed and may set back the progress already made. One of those initiatives is the supportive services provided to resource caregivers by Family Programs Hawaii Resource Families Support Services. These services are funded by the DHS. A few of the supportive services are the Warm Line, which is a phone number that resource caregivers can call Monday thru Friday from 8:30am-5:00pm to ask any questions or to talk about the youth placed in their home, or any problems or issues they may be facing even problems with their DHS Social Worker. We also provide quarterly trainings for resource caregivers to learn more skills and learn more about the different issues facing youth in foster care and other issues like mental health and behavioral issues. There are also the support groups for resource caregivers. These support groups were created so that resource caregivers could get together and provide support to each other. The resource caregivers talk about the problems they are having with the DHS and come up with solutions. They also give each other advice on how to handle problems with the DHS and the youth that are placed in their homes. If there are problems that they can't solve, they are encouraged to bring them up to me so I can follow up or to call the Family Programs Hawaii Warm Line. The support groups are open to all resource caregivers in the state. We currently have three support groups on Oahu, one on Maui, one on Kauai, one in Hilo and one in Kona. So there is no need for a task force at this time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joshua Gaoteote

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



RACHAEL WONG, DrPH
DIRECTOR

PANKAJ BHANOT
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96808



March 21, 2016

TO: The Honorable Dee Morikawa, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Rachael Wong, DrPH, Director

SUBJECT: **HR96/HCR 145 URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
CREATE A TASK FORCE TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION AND ADDRESS
CONCERNS OF FOSTER PARENTS**

Hearing: Tuesday, March 22, 2016, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent this bill, respectfully asks that this resolution be deferred, and offers the following comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to create a task force to encourage communication and address concerns of foster parents (resource caregivers).

Resource caregivers are vital to ensuring the safety and well-being of children in foster care. The Department respects and values our resource caregivers and works collaboratively with them to support and address their concerns through numerous means: monthly visits to the resource caregivers' homes, training and support groups, advocacy and support of resource caregivers, contracting of services to support and assist resource caregivers, and other collaborations. These include:

1. Hui Ho'omalua (Partners in Development, Catholic Charities Hawaii, and Family Programs Hawaii) – This hui is comprised of the same identified task force members listed in the resolution, and it provides support, trainings, and advocacy to resource caregivers; conducts home assessments; coordinates support groups statewide; conducts quarterly

trainings statewide and annual conference; operates a "warm line" hotline that resource caregivers can call with questions and receive answers and advice; sponsors the Resource Advisory Committee that is composed of DHS, resource caregivers, services providers, foster youth, partners, etc. to identify and address issues; produces quarterly newsletters and other means of communication with resource caregivers; provides opportunities for resource caregivers to serve as co-trainers in training; and hires resource caregivers, as well as former foster young adults, as staff to provide services to other resource caregivers.

2. It Takes An Ohana Advisory Committee – This advocacy group for resource caregivers addresses questions and collaborates to work on issues facing resource caregivers and the foster care system.
3. EPIC Ohana Conferences – These venues provide resource caregivers the opportunities to participate in *case-specific* Ohana Conferences to support the children and the family, to help establish positive relationships with the birth parents of the child, and to find and engage other family members to assist in the care of the child.
4. Foster Care committees on each island – These collaborations address issues and needs, required trainings, and other concerns facing resource caregivers on their islands.

As is evident, there are numerous active collaborations that promote communication between resource caregivers and other stakeholders committed to the well-being of children in the foster care system. The Department recognizes that resource caregivers are integral to foster care, a key members of these collaborative efforts with DHS to improve the foster care system, and ensure positive outcomes for children. For these reasons, DHS includes resource caregivers in the following:

1. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Reviews - Resource caregivers serve as reviewers in this Federal-State evaluation of Child Welfare Services (CWS) cases.
2. Child and Family Services Review (CSFR) - Federal review of CWS programs and systems include resource caregivers' feedback.
3. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Committee – Partners and stakeholders, including resource caregivers, address issues and needs of foster care.
4. Resource caregivers also participate in workgroups to develop policy, procedures, and initiatives— such as Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Program and Pono for Families— to improve CWS systems and services.

The Department also offers the following comments: Clarification is needed regarding the representative from Catholic Charities Hawaii (page one, line 31). Hale Malama Program is a program of Catholic Charities that serves medically-fragile infants and children in foster care.

The Department expresses concern that a task force would be subject to the Sunshine Law (e.g., receipt of public testimony and posting requirements of minutes) that have implications for those in the foster care system. For children in foster custody, the Family Court has exclusive jurisdiction over disposition of cases, and any resolution establishing a task force should clearly establish that the task force would not be able to discuss or address case specific issues and or discuss issues that are subject of current or future litigation. For this and the above existing avenues of communication, we ask that this resolution be deferred.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.