

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

kobayashi2-Jessi

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2016 10:26 AM
To: HUS testimony
Cc: breaking-the-silence@hotmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HR96 on Mar 22, 2016 10:00AM*

HR96

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.

March 21, 2016

TO: Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

FROM: Carol Morimoto, LSW
1011 Prospect St. #806
Honolulu, HI 96822

SUBJECT: WRITTEN TESTIMONY NOT IN SUPPORT OF
HR 96/HCR 145 RELATING TO CREATING A TASK FORCE TO ENCOURAGE
COMMUNICATION AND ADDRESS CONCERNS OF FOSTER PARENTS

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

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to urge the Department of Human Services (DHS) to create a task force to encourage communication and address any upcoming concerns foster parents may have.

POSITION: I do not support HR 96/HCR 145.

Through my current work in the foster care field, I have witnessed and have been a part of the DHS efforts to support, collaborate, and enhance communication between the Department, community partners, and stakeholders, especially resource caregivers (foster parents). Working at Partners in Development Foundation, we work closely with the Department, foster care agencies and resource caregivers to provide opportunities for communication that includes the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) where resource caregivers, providers, and DHS meet to discuss areas of need, the sharing of resources and to develop a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter articles highlight information and current issues that would be helpful for resource families in their role as caregivers.

Other opportunities that are available to resource caregivers include a warm line where they can call if they have any questions or concerns. Quarterly support groups occur statewide and provide an avenue for resource caregivers to share their experiences and provide support to each other. Statewide quarterly trainings and an annual conference are opportunities for resource caregivers to increase their skills and knowledge. The topics presented are based on feedback from resource caregivers and new DHS initiatives. These annual conferences often include resource caregivers on panels to share their experience and expertise in the field. These are just a few examples of things that are already in place to support resource caregivers and allow for communication between DHS, resource caregivers and community organizations.

I strongly urge the committee to not pass HR 96/HCR 145.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

March 22, 2016

TO: Committee on Human Services

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

FROM: Cynthia Shimabukuro, LSW, ACSW
46-441 D Kahuhipa Street
Kaneohe, HI 96744

SUBJECT: Hearing on HR96, HCR145 on March 22, 2016, 10:00 am. Rm 329

PURPOSE: The purpose of HR96/HCR145 is to urge the Department of Human Services to create a task force to encourage communication and address concerns of foster parents.

POSITION: I do not support HR96/HCR145 to urge the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services (DHS-CWS) to create a task force to encourage communication and address concerns of foster parents.

I currently work in the foster care field with resource caregivers (foster parents) and with the agencies that support them. I feel that Hawaii has made great strides in providing a supportive environment for the resource caregivers, especially in the past 10 years. In my work with Partners in Development Foundation we actively collaborate with all agencies involved in foster care and their resource caregivers. There are numerous collaborative avenues for communication between agencies including the Resource Advisory Committee(statewide), The Foster Care Training Committee(Oahu), and The Resource Advisory Committee Newsletter.

In addition, the resource caregivers have the opportunity to attend quarterly training sessions, quarterly support groups, an annual conference as a way to increase their expertise and provide support to each other and receive support from contracted providers to the DHS-CWS. As contracted providers, we have ready access to share information with DHS-CWS staff as appropriate regarding the challenges and successes of the resource caregivers. There is also a warm line staffed by Family Programs Hawai'i which addresses concerns and assists the resource caregivers in navigating the system. In addition, complaints can be made to the Department of Human Services Ombudsman office.

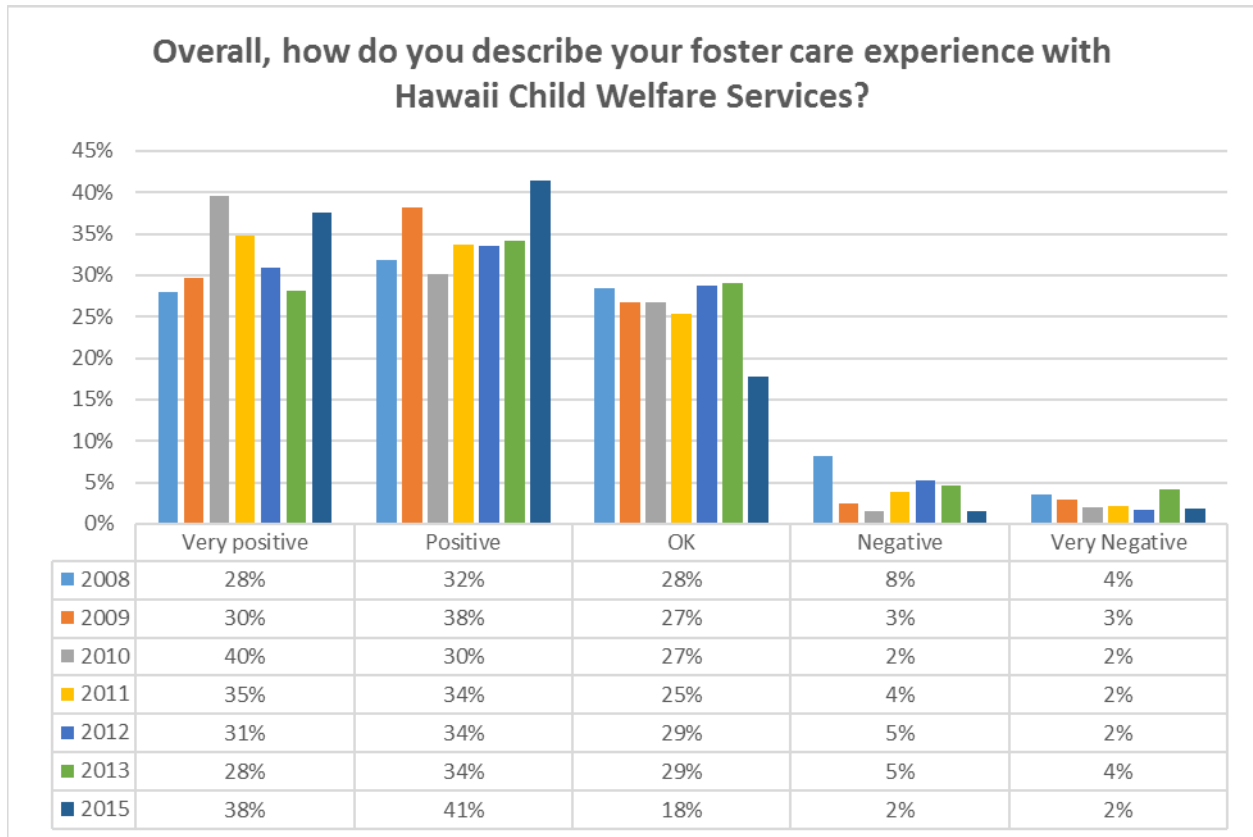
Partners in Development Foundation also works closely with the DHS-CWS to survey each resource caregiver annually and when they leave service to the DHS-CWS. While, like in any situation, not every resource caregiver is satisfied with their past or current relationship with DHS-CWS, most are. The following is taken from the 2015 annual survey of resource caregivers.

When asked how they describe their overall experience of being a resource caregiver with DHS-CWS, a large majority (79%) reported a positive to very positive experience. This represents a 17+% increase since the last

report. Comments varied, balanced between positive and negative, complaints centered on how specific cases were handled, communication issues and challenges working with the social worker.

8-year Comparison: The lowest amount of respondents reporting that their experience was positive to very positive was in 2008, with 60%. This year's results of 79% is the highest it has been.

This table is an 8 year comparison. The table is read from left to right with the left columns starting with 2008 and yearly thereafter, except in 2014 in which the survey tool was being revised.



I do not support HR96/HCR145 because avenues for communication and hearing of successes and complaints already exist and the DHS-CWS continues to improve in this area. I do not feel that having more meetings is the way to get us to 100% satisfaction in this area. Continuing to build on the positive changes and enhance what is working will get us closer to our goal.

I strongly urge the committee NOT to pass HR96/HCR145.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

March 22, 2016

TO: Committee on Human Services

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

FROM: Stephanie M.H. Helbush
94-1061 Hahana St.
Waipahu, HI 96797

SUBJECT: Hearing on HR96, HCR145 on March 22, 2016, 10:00 am. Rm 329

PURPOSE: The purpose of HR96/HCR145 is to urge the Department of Human Services to create a task force to encourage communication and address concerns of foster parents.

POSITION: I do not support HR96/HCR145 to urge the Department of Human Services to create a task force to encourage communication and address concerns of foster parents.

In my work with Partners In Development Foundation, and together with the Department, there has been extensive efforts to assure that Resource Caregivers are provided with support at all stages of their foster care experience, including providing avenues at every stage in the process for them to share concerns/issues with the Department. For example:

Potential Resource Caregivers are surveyed at the following points in the process to assess whether they felt their needs were met and any question/concerns addressed:

- I. ***Inquiry*** – Every family that completes an initial inquiry questionnaire with PIDF is followed-up with a survey.
- II. ***Training*** – Every family that attends a training session is asked to complete an evaluation.
- III. ***Completion of assessment process*** – Every family that completes the assessment process is also asked to complete an evaluation.

All of the above-mentioned surveys/evaluations are reviewed by PIDF management and when appropriate, families are contacted to address any unresolved issues. Also, the information collected is compiled into an annual report that is submitted to the Department.

Licensed Resource Caregivers have several avenues in which to share issues/concerns:

- I. ***DHS Complaints Liaison and Legislative Coordinator*** – Resource Families are referred to the Coordinator as an avenue to share issues of concern.
- II. ***Warm Line with Family Programs Hawaii*** – Provides phone support for families to call with questions/concerns, and are referred as appropriate.

- III. **Annual Survey** – Each year a survey is administered to all licensed resource caregivers to get feedback about their fostering experience, and overall satisfaction in working with the Department. Efforts are made to obtain the highest possible response rate by using various methods to administer the survey, such as in-person, online, and by mail. In the most recent survey done in 2015, 900+ families were surveyed, and the response rate was nearly 30%. The overall satisfaction of resource families was the highest it has been in the last five years, with 38% of respondents describing their foster care experience was “very positive”. Results from this survey is shared on an annual basis with the Department.
- IV. **Exit Survey** – Upon closure of their foster home license, resource caregivers are administered a survey to obtain feedback about their experience and any feedback that they would like to share. Results from this survey are also shared on an annual basis with the Department.

I do not support HR96/HCR 145 to create a task force to encourage communication and address concerns as there are avenues currently in place to attain this.

I strongly urge the committee not to pass HR96/HCR145.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



LATE

250 Vineyard Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

(808) 521-9531

FamilyProgramsHawaii.org

RE: HR96 - 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 HR96.

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



We help kids





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FamilyProgramsHawaii.org

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

LATE

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.

LATE

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: Chiyomi Chow

RE: HR 96

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am opposed to this resolution.

As a former foster parent, I truly believe in the importance of the voice of foster parents (aka resource families) being heard and advocate for communication between Department of Human Services, service providers and foster parents.

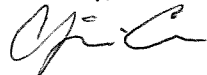
However, there is already a group where foster parents' views can be shared and a process in which their voice can be heard. The program is called "It Takes an 'Ohana" and there is an advisory board, which consists of foster parents, service providers, and a Department of Human Services representative as well.

It does not make sense to form a formal task force for this same purpose. I believe that it would actually be detrimental to the foster and adoption community to create another group. There should just be one group with one voice. The current one should be supported since it already has membership and good working relationships between entities.

Another reason why this resolution should not be passed is because the list of who should be on the task force is incorrect and incomplete. Hui Hoomalu is part of Partners in Development Foundation so they should not be listed twice. I am also not sure why Hale Malama Program was listed for Catholic Charities Hawaii and not the program Statewide Resource Families. Also, there is an agency which works with the most foster parents on an ongoing process and they are not even included – Family Programs Hawaii.

Again, I strongly oppose this bill. A task force is not needed.

Sincerely,



Chiyomi Chow