

HB693 HD1

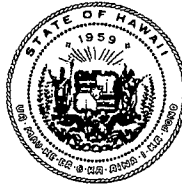
Measure Title: RELATING TO PROGRAMS FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH.

Report Title: Youth; Prevention, Intervention, and Group and Individual Counseling; Appropriation

Description: Appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services for the operational costs of an organization providing prevention, intervention, and group and individual counseling for high risk youth. (HB693 HD1)

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): MIZUNO, MORIKAWA, OSHIRO



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES
707 Richards Street, Suite 525
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

March 16, 2017

TO: The Honorable Josh Green, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Merton Chinen, Executive Director

SUBJECT: **HB 693 HD1, Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth**

Hearing: Friday, March 17, 2017, 2:50 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

OFFICE'S POSITION: OYS supports the intent of the measure but requests that any appropriation not affect the priorities in the Executive Biennium Budget. OYS strongly supports a balanced and multi-prong approach to strengthen protective factors and improve a community's response in addressing problems such as youth violence and juvenile delinquency. OYS partners with both government and private community-based agencies to ensure a coordinated continuum of services for youth, incorporating HRS 5-7.5, Aloha Spirit, and a positive youth development framework for youth and their families to develop competencies, increase protective factors, and strengthen relationships and resiliency.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the measure is to appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services for operational costs of an organization providing prevention, intervention, and group and individual counselling for high risk youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 904 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Rick Collins, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive Director

Bay Clinic

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

Ho'ola Na Pua

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 14, 2017

Senator Josh Green, Chair

And members of the Committee on Human Services

COMMENTS ON HB 693 HD1 RELATING TO PROGRAMS FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, is providing comment on HB 693 HD1 Relating to Programs for High-Risk Youth.

HYSN strongly disagrees with the opening premise of the bill – that youth violence is a growing concern in our state.

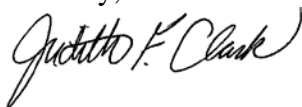
Hawaii's youth have a very low rate of violent crime compared to other states. A review of 10 years of data on juvenile crime and contact with the juvenile justice system showed that almost half of Hawaii's juvenile arrests were for status offenses, such as running away from home, curfew violations, and truancy from school (Umemoto, K et. al. Disproportionate Minority Contact with the Juvenile Justice System, 2012). From 2003 through 2012, Hawaii's juvenile arrests declined by 36.5% and confinements at the Hawaii Youth Correctional Center decreased by 51.1%. Only 5% of juvenile arrests involved weapons or intimidation. (Juvenile Delinquency Trends in Hawaii 2003 – 2012). Hawaii has the lowest rate of gun violence in the United States (U.S. Centers for Disease Control). In a recent report on gun-related injuries and deaths in which a minor was the perpetrator, Hawaii reported only one injury and no deaths – a teenage boy shot himself in the leg with a bb gun (Honolulu Star-Advertiser).

HYSN supports positive youth development programs that prevent youth violence. We believe that the low rate of youth violence in our state is due, in part, to effective youth programs provided by government and non-profit providers.

But planning and funding for youth programs must be based on reliable data, not on inaccurate opinions about youth violence. It is neither fair nor accurate to characterize Hawaii's juvenile offenders as violent criminals or to state that youth violence in Hawaii is a growing problem.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith F. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



March 15, 2017

To: Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Service

From: Deborah Zysman, Executive Director
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **HB 693 HD 1 – Relating to Programs for High-Risk Youth**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 016, March 17, 2017, 2:50 PM

On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing to support HB 693 HD 1 – Relating to Programs for High-Risk Youth

The programs that have been in place in Hawaii to provide services for high-risk youth have been successful over that last few years and are starting to contribute to declines in youth violence and youth incarceration. To continue to obtain positive results continued and increased investment in these prevention and treatment programs is needed.

For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests that the committee pass this bill.

HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education. Last fall, HCAN convened input in person and online from more than 50 organizations and individuals that came forward to support or express interest for a number of issues affecting children and families in our state that resulted in the compilation of 2017 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda, which can be accessed at <http://www.hawaii-can.org/2017policyagenda>.

Public Testimony
of
Reginald Castanares, Business Manager
Plumbers and Fitters Local 675
Honolulu, Hawaii

In Support of HB 693 HD1
RELATING TO PROGRAMS FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH

Before the Senate:
Committee on Human Services
Friday, March 17, 2017
2:50 p.m., Conference Rm. 016

Aloha Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang and Members.

My name is Reginald Castanares; I have the privilege and honor to represent the Plumbers and Fitters Local 675. Our membership is a representative cross section of Hawaii's working families. They also are affected from time to time by the tragic impacts of societal ills, drugs abusive relationships and criminal activity which are found at all levels of our community today.

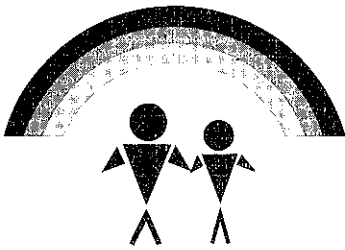
We take great pride in our role as an integral member of our community, as such our Union has always tried to do its part in helping those in our society less fortunate. Our award winning apprenticeship programs are designed to influence the younger generation to continue their education and to take advantage of the opportunities which acquiring a trade provides. With that in mind we have been an active supporter of the incredible work which the organization "Adult Friends for Youth" provides in our community.

We recognize that there are no easy answers to these difficult issues but we are also committed to doing our part to provide encouragement, help and assistance where ever we can. Thus, we would like to add our support to the many community leaders who have come forward in support of HB 693.

We fully endorse the position as proposed by the AFY leadership at this time.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit my testimony in support and for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,
Reginald Castanares



Adult Friends for Youth

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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Deborah Spencer-Chun
President and CEO
Adult Friends for Youth

Date: March 14, 2017

Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang and members of the Committee on Human Services, I am here to testify in support of HB 69 HD 1 relating to Programs for High Risk Youth.

Before taking on the role of President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY), 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 although it may be negative, 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, talking about it, and teaching 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.

In 2015, there were many fights and violence in the streets of Kalihi. This left the community up in arms and fearful. As we worked with the youth through counseling sessions, we knew that we had to also address the concerns of the community at large. We were asked and assisted many residents of Kalihi particularly those in public housing from both Kamehemeha Homes and Kuhio Park Terrace. These meetings allowed residents, DOE administrators, HPHA, area legislators, HPD, concern community members and youth to have an open and honest communication. What we learned is that data and statistic alone do not always show us the true picture. Communication with all who live and operate in these communities draws us a bigger picture of the problems they must face on regular basis. Since those meetings, communication has continued and partnerships have been built to address the problems of gang and community violence. We are happy to report that the many youth involved in these negative activities have gone back to mainstream school, alternative education, graduated and gained employment.

This summer adding to the gang violence are some homeless youth who have organized to form their own gang and have contributed to violence and criminal activities because of their circumstances. Many do it for protection on the streets and to find the means to survive. In August of 2016, the Institute of Human Services (HIS) asked AFY to intervene and contracted us to provide services to 10 youth. Since then we have been in contact with 40 youth addressing the violence and gang activities while assisting to help get these youth off the streets and into housing.

At AFY we reach and provide services to more than 350+ students a 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 for a period of 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.

We ask for your support of this bill, HB 693 HD1, because it will provide services to our youth, who are the future and give them the opportunity to become productive and contributing members of society, Thank you for allowing me to testify.

Adult Friends for Youth

Submitted to Senate Committee on Human Services,
Senator Josh Green, Chair,
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by McKay Schwenke
Vice President,

Date: March 14, 2017

HB 693 HD1 Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth

I am in strong support for HB 693 HD1 which relates to Programs for High Risk Youth. Youth violence among "high Risk" and youth gangs are on the rise again. Over the past year there have been numerous incidences reported by the media regarding youth violence relating to gang confrontations in schools, parks and in the community. Recently violence has also been reported among the homeless youth population as well. This Bill if passed will allow organizations to reach out to this specific "high risk" youth population to help combat violence, crime, and destructive behaviors. For the past 30 years, Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) has been servicing high risk youth, by redirecting them from violent and destructive behaviors to non-violent and constructive behaviors through advocating and empowering them to explore possible options that will lead them away from crime and prison, and toward healthy outcomes and meaningful lifestyles. The ultimate objective for all youth is to help them become contributing members of their community, and society as a whole.

AFY's professional staff is able to comfortably reach out to these "high risk" youth individuals and groups to build relationships through face to face meetings, and engaging them in group mentoring activities. Working with groups as whole entities allows members within the group to build stronger group cohesion with one another, also allowing members to effectively become role models for each other as they begin to experience positive growth through their successful outcomes as they move in a positive direction. Success breeds success and the more positive the experience, the more successful the end result will be.

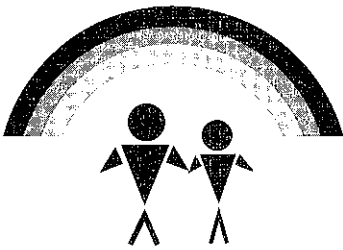
Helping children and youth believe that they matter is critical in order for self-determination and self-respect to be appreciated. The old adage, "Prevention is better than Cure" is so true! Locking up and incarcerating our youth is not the answer. Prevention and intervention coupled with individual and group counseling services that

have the ability and the expertise to relate and impact change among youth, is the key to keeping them from not only hurting themselves, but others as well.

In order to help decrease and stop the violence among many of our "high risk" youth, we as a Government body have to realize the magnitude and severity of this urgent matter and be willing to make the appropriate decisions to effectively combat this serious concern. Furthermore, I hope you will support this Bill so these children and youth will receive the services that will help impact our schools and communities.

Once again I support HB 693 HD1 and hope you see the bigger picture on how this Bill will also support and promote safer schools and communities for our children and youth to prosper for years to come.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony.



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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Lisa Tamashiro

Director of Operations and Special Programs of
Adult Friends for Youth

Date: March 14, 2017

I am in strong support of HB 693 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 over 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 epidemic we have seen on the island with the homeless population. It is crucial that we see the value in working with our youth now that will soon become adults. In order to break the destructive cycles of violence and crime, it is a necessity that we work with the youth who given the opportunities, has the potential to change and not be a burden of the State and taxpayers.

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 the youth are serviced as whole entities, members can learn to hold each other accountable for their actions and progress positively as a group.

Over the years, studies have shown that incarceration has proven to not 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.

While addressing the needs and issues, the youth can also learn coping skills and tools to abstain from violence and crime. In addition, violence amongst youth can be tackled when the youth are given the prescription of hope and believe they matter.

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 693 HD 1 with the amendments approved by the House Committee of Human Services submitted by staff of Adult Friends for Youth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Adult Friends for Youth

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**Past Chair of the Board*

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Submitted to:

**Senate Committee on Human Services,
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair**

Submitted by:

**Jeffrey Aganos
Redirectional Specialist of Adult Friends for Youth**

Subject: Support for HB 693-HD1
Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth.

My name is Jeffrey Aganos and I am representing and testifying in support of HB 693-HD1 relating to programs for high risk youth. Throughout the years, Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) 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 help many of them come out feeling confident in knowing that they can make a difference in their community. This Bill will help support organizations that are helping cope with this serious problem, but more importantly, helping to secure safer schools and communities, build bridges that will help all youth cross over to a better future.

Once again, I highly support HB 693-HD1 in relating to programs for High Risk Youth. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Adult Friends for Youth

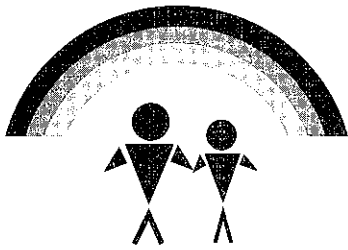
Submitted to Senate Committee on Human Services,
Senator Josh Green, Chair,
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by Rafael Gacula
Redirectional Specialist
Date: March 16, 2017

HB 693 HD1 Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth

My name is Rafael Gacula, a recent graduate of UHM's Myron B. Thompson School of Social work and current staff member of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY). I am in strong support for HB 693 HD1 relating to Programs for High Risk Youth. Growing up in poverty and coming from a low income family has warped my understanding of success and happiness. When I was younger school was not a priority to me. The harsh realities of life's demands had a much stronger pull on a young person's mind than education and good moral values. Success to me back then meant that my friends and loved ones were protected at any cost, even at the expense of a destructive path, and happiness was having everyone around the next day to do it again. My worldview of poverty lead me to believe that society was a cruel place, and to live in it, you had to be tough and cruel back, not caring for anything or anyone besides yourself.

This Bill if passed will allow organizations to reach young people to realize their potential, redirect destructive and violent behaviors, and lead them to becoming contributing members of their community and society as a whole. For the past 30 years, AFY has been servicing these youths to help stop violence in order to strengthen family and community safety while promoting healthy and meaningful lifestyles for all youth so that they can reach their full potential. Young people are the strongest influence to another young person's life. This bill is vital to helping children believe that they matter and will help all youth to secure their future and prosper today.



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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to:

Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by

Malakai Maumalanga
Director of Redirectional Services
Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 693 HD 1, Relating to Programs For High Risk Youth

Aloha, my name is Malakai Maumalanga and I am the Director of Redirectional Services at Adult Friends for Youth. I am in support of HB 693 HD1 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.

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 693 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 693 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.



Adult Friends for Youth

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Submitted to:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICE:

Senator Josh Green, Chair

Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Siutiti Takai

Redirectional Specialist of Adult Friends for Youth

Subject: Support for HB 693 HD1

I strongly support HB 693. While growing up, violence was all too familiar. Many of my family members were involved in fighting especially, my father. Fighting was the way they would resolve situations. As a child, you grow up thinking its okay because you see it all around you. But I am here to say that violence is not the answer! My name is Siutiti Takai and I am a Redirectional Specialist with Adult Friends for Youth. The high risk youths we service is the reason I come to work every day. At AFY, we provide the students with alternative options and teach them coping mechanisms to help prevent them from reverting to violence. I strongly believe, high risk youth need unconditional love, support and encouragement daily. They need to know and hear that they are valuable members of our community.

In the eyes of many, youth violence and homeless youth involved in acts of violence and juvenile delinquency 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. The 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.

Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) is a nonprofit organization, providing intervention work toward high risk youth for the past 30 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 serves are those who believe they have no place in the community. I truly, support the vision and mission AFY stands for and I'm proud to say that I am a part of this agency whom, is making a difference in the lives of youth gang members. We ask the support of this bill, HB 693 because it will help give the youth a chance towards a brighter future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.

H.B. NO. 693 - Relating To Programs for High Risk Youth.

HB 693 is an important bill that I feel should be passed and supported to implement preventive measures in preventing youth violence and criminal behavior for at risk youth. Through appropriated funding for therapeutic prevention criminal thoughts and behaviors can be recognized and addressed through counseling. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is an effective means to restructure negative thinking patterns which if continued will most likely lead to reoccurring negative behaviors. These preventive measures give youth an opportunity to opt out of a life that leads to jails, institutions, and death. Many of the high-risk youths turn to violence and gang life because there are no other options or supports; however, funding will provide positive options. Once high-risk youths turn into adults they may already have an extensive criminal record and they're so enmeshed in the criminal lifestyle that it is nearly impossible to rehabilitate them.

Mental Health is a major issue in our society today and is often stigmatized by popular media. Without proper attention to mental health issues for at risk youth, these individuals will never recognize that they have mental health problems beyond their control. These problems are often dealt with through drug and alcohol abuse which increases mental health issues. This is a sad situation; to live life knowing that the cards are stacked against them. In other words, to be unaware of mental health issues sends these youth down a path of destruction. I support HB 693 to help at risk youth in preventing youth violence and criminal behavior by providing positive programs.

Garriss Akiona Social Work Student - 2401 Kula Kolea Place, Honolulu, HI 96819

Submitted to Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Jerry Killion
AFY Student

Date: March 16, 2017

Aloha ladies and gentlemen, Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang and Committee members on Human Services. My name is Jerry Killion and I am in support of HB No. 693 HD 1.

For so long gangs and violence has been a part of my life and raided our society leaving behind a heavy burden for our leaders. They go out into our streets vandalizing at their will causing unnecessary expenses that pile up for taxpayers. I have witnessed violence and crime all my life and observed how it becomes a lifestyle. Generations after generations the lifestyle is passed on and the process once again, repeats itself leaving one questions, "When does it stop?" These problems can't be stopped when they are adults. We must teach them when they are still young. On top of the problems already within the youth, another problem emerges and that is youth homelessness.

One of my friends whose smile and joy emanated off of him especially on the basketball courts turned homeless and has been on the streets for 2 years now. He is only 16 years old. What support does he have to make it through? Making it to college and graduation with a degree is most definitely the least of his worries.

Adult Friends for Youth is an organization that services high risk youth and homeless youth. Their influence within our communities has grown drastically that many of us rely on them. AFY offers group and individual counseling but also prevention and intervention services. They have an alternative education programs (C-Base) that has been ongoing for over 10 years now. I met AFY because of my affiliation with a gang in Kalihi that used to cause riots and property damage within the community.

Within my three years as an AFY serviced student, I have been taught how to take responsibility for my actions and then grow from my mistakes. They helped me believe that I could have great accomplishments if I work diligently. AFY is also filled with staff members who are willing to go that extra mile because their happiest moments are when kids like me grow successful and lead the next generation. One of the many things that separate AFY is that they have no termination policy and they continue to keep tight bonds with their older students. Thanks to AFY and their support, I had the confidence to take on AP Calculus my junior year, passed the class with an A and had a perfect score on the state exams. I am now a senior at Farrington High School awaiting for my diploma to become a future marine and serve my home as you all are doing here too.

I ask that we come together to nurture the next generation because together, anything is possible. So ladies and gentlemen, I ask that you humbly support HB 693 HD 1. Thank you so much for your valuable time.

Submitted to Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Jomer G Domingo
AFY alumni

Date: March 15, 2017

Aloha ladies and gentlemen, Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang and the Senate Committee members of the Human Services. My name is Jomer G Domingo and I am in support of HB No. 693 HD 1.

Being a witness and apart to many crimes and violence's and gang related incidents, I hereby humbly ask to hear me out on behalf of Adults Friends for Youth (AFY). AFY is a Nonprofit Organization with loving and caring staff that has helped me in many situations. Living in a community full of liveliness, happiness and no crime is what we all would want in our lives in. But in reality it's completely the opposite for some of us unfortunately. Crimes and Violence will never end but with guidance, mediations and counseling to help troubled young teens like myself once before, there is a possibility to have a safe community and for me, this is all thanks to Adults Friends for Youth.

About 12 years ago was my first experience with AFY. In middle school, I used to get bullied and things taken from me and that is why my friends and I created a gang to protect ourselves. We fought every day with other rival gangs and others who tried to mess with us. The turning point for me was when I sent someone to the hospital but I also went to the hospital due to injuries from a riot. I realized that the gang life will lead me nowhere but only pain and misery. But I wouldn't have realized that without AFY. AFY has been with me and my friends the whole time since middle school. They are an organization that really cares about the students and the community. To this day, I still turn to AFY when I hit roadblocks in my life.

Besides being a troubled teen, to add to that, my education was also in jeopardy. High school became harder and harder each year till I finally dropped out. Thankfully AFY had created an alternative education program (C-Base) which till this day is still ongoing and has helped me and many others get their alternative diploma. I am now 24 turning 25 successfully working in a career I would have never thought would occur for me. I have been with the Laborer's Union for 3 years now and my future goal is to start my own business. AFY has the ability to help all youth. Their counseling, prevention and interventions helps kids like me to open up and express my feelings instead of fighting.

Therefore ladies and gentlemen lets continue helping the youths of this generation to succeed and lessen the crimes and gang violence around our community by supporting HB 693 HD 1. Thank you for your time and mabuhay!

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 10:17 PM
To: HMS Testimony
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HB693

Submitted on: 3/16/2017

Testimony for HMS on Mar 17, 2017 14:50PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Barbara Barry	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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