

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



PANKAJ BHANOT
DIRECTOR

CATHY BETTS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 11, 2018

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

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2277 HD1 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Hearing: Monday, March 12, 2018, 2:45 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill and offers the following comments. In addition to concepts identified in the measure, DHS administration is also discussing additional resources such as consultation, evaluation, and analytics capabilities that would support positive case outcomes and improved case practices.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds to establish a five-year program in the East Hawaii, Child Welfare Services (CWS) Section, in Hawaii County that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty and funds additional case managers and support staff positions.

The notion of a five year pilot program is intriguing as DHS continues to examine ways to improve our services and response to families in crisis. DHS acknowledges an increase in children in foster care; the total number of children in foster care statewide has increased 23% from State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014 to SFY 2017. The highest increase has been in the East Hawaii section, where we have seen a 56% increase of children in foster care over that same period. Preliminary data indicate parental substance abuse as the precipitating factor, resulting in these increased Child Welfare Services cases in East Hawaii. Fortunately,

CWS - East Hawaii has experienced a low vacancy rate (currently, all caseworker positions are filled in East Hawaii) and maintains a relatively stable workforce.

In SFY 2016, the confirmation rate for child abuse and/or neglect allegations in East Hawaii was the same as the statewide confirmation rate of 40%. Based on November 2017 data, the average caseload per worker in East Hawaii was slightly lower (25 cases) than the average caseload statewide (26 cases). The Department agrees that support is needed to reduce caseloads and increase the Child Welfare workforce, however, that need is not greater in East Hawaii than in other areas of the State.

As is well established, poverty, child abuse and neglect, and family violence, are results of complex social, economic and environmental factors, and we welcome the legislature's partnership to improve the child protective response system on the Big Island and throughout the state. However, in considering the suggested cap to worker caseloads, in addition to investment in child welfare services, any pilot must include equal or greater emphasis and investment to support and improve capacity of prevention and other services that strengthen families by addressing protective factors that when present in the home, reduce the risk and incident of abuse and neglect in the first place.

In 2017, DHS and Social Services Division (SSD) leadership have taken a number of steps to examine and address the needs of SSD and Branch staff. DHS Director and SSD Administrators visited offices throughout the state and met with staff to share the vision and opportunities for change and improvement. DHS and SSD leadership listened to the voices of our staff to hear their concerns, needs, and ideas for solutions.

DHS initiated a number of efforts to transform the way we do this most sensitive work. Structurally, to improve case practices, SSD separated policy from operations allowing Child Welfare Services Branch (CWSB) to focus on improving its case practice while the Division will provide the support services (training, policy clarification, collaborative efforts with other DHS divisions and external partners). In 2017 the legislature supported this change and transferred 10 positions from CWSB to the Division to provide these support services to staff that provide direct services to children and families.

SSD is also engaged in the development of its IT application to the DHS Integrated Enterprise System. Once the IT platform is fully developed, departmental service and data

integration will improve access by SSD to relevant information of the Med-Quest and Benefit, Employment, Support Services Divisions. Eventually, it is envisioned that external state and non-profit partners may also be linked. The investment in our technology systems to share data and streamline processes, improves access to services and information by clients and staff, improves efficiency and response time, and will support staff morale and mobilize our workforce.

‘Ohana Nui, the DHS multigenerational framework to end poverty, is a transformative challenge to provide integrated and comprehensive services to families to end the cycle of poverty, abuse, and neglect. Commenced in 2016, ‘Ohana Nui is already yielding promising collaborations between divisions, public and private agencies that provide critical services to vulnerable populations, as we strengthen families and sustain positive change. Hawaii County has invested in a web-based resource that puts community resources at the fingertips of service providers, and DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and SSD's Adult Protective Community Services Branch have become high users and appreciate the community's ability to collaborate. Further, an ongoing pilot of DHS and the Department of Health is currently underway to build a more robust state home visiting program, recognizing the importance of prevention and intervention without duplicating services.

DHS also restarted its collaboration with the University of Hawaii to build workforce capacity and support our staff's professional development. The Hawaii Child Welfare Education Collaboration (HCWEC) with the University of Hawaii, School of Social Work, is a valuable staffing resource, graduating masters of social work scholars every year. The first graduating class prepared eight scholars in 2017. These graduates became social workers placed within vacancies on O‘ahu, West Hawai‘i, and Kaua‘i. We anticipate another eight scholars entering the CWSB workforce in June 2018. With limited state funding, CWSB will continue this capacity building program, which is currently eligible for federal reimbursement funds.

CWSB is also in the process of a reorganization and is examining ways to maximize vacant positions by moving positions within the Branch. Workload and staffing patterns are being analyzed to make the most prudent decisions with existing staffing resources.

Staff retention is a critical factor in addressing the vacant positions. In the past four years, CWSB has invested efforts to strengthen the leadership team. The Branch developed supervisor training curriculum, tested, and modified it with input from CWS supervisors. The first cohort is currently participating in the nine-session training program with an additional coaching support.

With the support of Casey Family Programs, the CWSB executive leadership has been participating in a leadership strengthening program. CWSB has quarterly statewide supervisor training and management leadership team meetings to provide peer support, conduct problem-solving discussions, and discuss opportunities for targeted in-service training.

CWSB staff consistently report that insufficient resources and prevention programs are needed to better serve families. Early childhood and early learning opportunities for children and parents, residential substance abuse programs that allow children to be placed with parents, resources to address economic and health issues, limited transportation resources, and an aging state vehicle fleet are examples of needs identified by staff. To address one of these needs, in SFY 2018, CWSB is identifying funding to purchase new vehicles for three of the Sections without motor pool services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Harry Kim
Mayor



Wil Okabe
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i

Office of the Mayor

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March 9, 2018

Senator Josh Green, Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 016
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Green and Committee Members:

Re: HB 2277, HD 1 Child Welfare Services
Hearing Date: 03-12-18 – 2:45 pm; Conference Room 016

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2277, HD 1.

My staff and I have been made aware of the critical need to improve child welfare services in Hawai'i County. While both of the State's East and West Hawai'i offices are suffering from a shortage of manpower, the initiative proposed in HB 2277, HD 1 recognizes the reality that it is in East Hawai'i where the State has the best chance to hire and retain the necessary personnel.

The caseload numbers that were presented at an earlier hearing on this bill varied a great deal, but it seems clear that the child welfare caseload in East Hawai'i is shocking and disturbing. Child welfare workers have so many clients that it would be considered unacceptable by national standards. Add to that the handicap of being asked to cover a huge geographic area, requiring a great deal of time-consuming travel, and it is no wonder that the community is begging for your assistance.

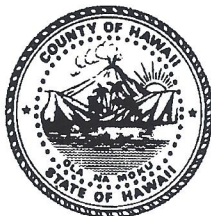
The positions and funding requested in HB 2277, HD 1 are for a "pilot project." If that is determined to be the best way to give some relief to the East Hawai'i workers and the keiki they serve, then I defer to your wisdom on that matter. My main concern is that the workers and their clients get the relief called for, and the sooner the better.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Kim
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

VALERIE T. POINDEXTER
Council Chairwoman & Presiding Officer
Council District 1



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Email: vpoindexter@co.hawaii.hi.us

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

County of Hawai'i
Hawai'i County Building
25 Aupuni Street, Suite 1402
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

March 9, 2018

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

Email: sengreen@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Email: senchang@Capitol.hawaii.gov

Subject: Testimony Supporting HB2277, HD1, Relating to Child Welfare Services
Hearing: March 12, 2018, 2:45 p.m., Room 016

Dear Senators:

On behalf of myself and the constituents of Council District 1 in Hāmākua, County of Hawai'i, I would like to express our support of SB2277, HD1.

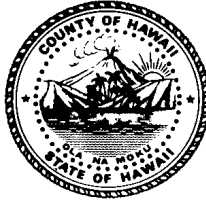
This bill establishes the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section, as well as appropriates funds.

I strongly urge the enactment of HB2277, HD1. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Valerie T. Poindexter
Hawai'i County Council Chairwoman
District 1, Hāmākua

From the office of -
Council Member
District 3



Office: (808) 961-8396
Fax: (808) 961-8912
Email: sue.leeloy@hawaiicounty.gov

SUSAN L.K. LEE LOY

25 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

The Honorable Josh Green, Chair
And members of the Committee on Human Services

March 9, 2018

Dear Chair Green and Committee Members,

I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting and commenting on HB 2277 HD1. Although East Hawai'i Island is far from the only area in our State that could benefit from the proposed pilot program to reduce the number of children assigned to each case worker, this is a good place to start. Nowhere else in Hawai'i do the conditions of poverty, abuse, and neglect exist in conjunction with the lack of access to critical services as a result of the wide geographical displacement of lots in the Puna district, an area almost the size of O'ahu. But Puna is just one area of East Hawai'i, which also includes Hāmākua, North Hilo, South Hilo, and Ka'ū.

Less attention spent on abused and neglected children will have a detrimental effect on their growth, health, and well-being. The annual required evaluation as proposed in this bill will determine the effectiveness of a reduced caseload on the social workers' effectiveness in helping our most vulnerable citizens. Targeted early interventions such as this can break the cycle of failure and result in major savings in social services in the long term.

The loss of 19 of the 56 positions within the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services section has resulted in social workers taking in far more cases than they can reasonably handle with the professionalism that the children deserve. Funding for the eight FTE case managers and the 15 FTE support staff positions as proposed in HB 2277 HD1, will help. We can do better, and this bill is a vehicle for it to happen.

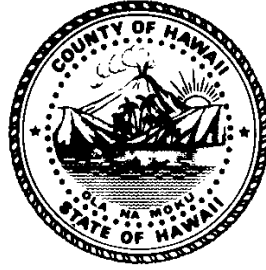
Again, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2277 HD1, and I ask for your approval.

Aloha Piha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Lee Loy".

Sue Lee Loy
Council Member, District 3

JEN RUGGLES
Council Member
District 5 – Puna Mauka,
Pahoa Mauka, Kalapana



*Public Works & Parks and Recreation
Committee Chair
Public Safety & Mass Transit
Committee Chair*

Phone: 808-961-8263
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HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

March 9, 2018

Senator Josh Green, Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 016
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Please Support HB 2277 HD1
Hearing Date: March 12, 2018 2:45pm Conference Room 016

Dear Chair Green and Committee Members:

I'm writing you to humbly request you support SB 2276 SD 1 to better fund our child welfare services and improve the quality of care our children receive. Since large cuts were made in 2009, case workers struggle with less resources to keep up with increasing children to care for. Ten years ago our county had 2 offices on the island. We currently only have 1 office, with more children to take care of.

Children do not choose their parents, the circumstances they are born into and sometimes our Child Welfare Services is all a child has to survive. Additional case managers and support staff as provided by SB 2276 will make a world of difference for these children. So will a work load cap on each case worker, which will allow case workers to give each child the care they need to simply survive. Please support SB 2276 SD 1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

Jen Ruggles

MITCHELL D. ROTH
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

DALE A. ROSS
FIRST DEPUTY
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2277, HD1

A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO RELATING TO
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Monday March 12, 2018 2:45 P.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Honorable Chair Green, Vice-Chair Chang and Members of the Committee on Human Services, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i submits the following testimony in support of House Bill 2277, HD1.

This measure appropriates funds to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty and additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

We are all too familiar with the tragic consequences to children when the child welfare system is inadequately staffed to properly supervise children who are already at high risk of abuse and neglect. The improvements made since the Peter Boy Kema case were essentially wiped out by the loss of workers in 2011. For years now, East Hawaii CWS caseworkers with up to 50 children on their caseload placed in homes in Honokaa to Naalehu and beyond, are faced with an impossible task to visit these children on monthly basis. The cases involving death or serious harm to children is extremely heartbreaking. A social autopsy of the cases often indicate numerous missed opportunities to save them. The civil liability to the state alone is more than sufficient to pay for this project.

CWS workers are our essential partners to help keep our community healthy and safe. We participate with them in multi-disciplinary teams in areas of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. We observe first-hand the stress endured, resulting in burnout and turnover. We have been made aware of procedures workers have been forced to institute in order to keep afloat, and that the family court has started imposing fines against workers. We need to change this dynamic. Our children and families, and our CWS professionals deserve support.

The Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i supports the passage of House Bill 2277, HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2277 HD1: Relating to Child Welfare Services

TO: Senator Josh Green, Chair, Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair, and Members,
Committee on Human Services
FROM: Terrence L. Walsh, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer
Hearing: **Monday, March 12, 2018; 2:45 pm; CR 016**

Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang, and Members, Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of HB 2277, HD1 which appropriates funds to establish a five-year pilot program to limit the number of children supervised by social workers in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services (CWS) section to twenty or fewer in order to appropriately care for the safety and well-being of children who have been or are at risk of being abused or neglected. I am Terry Walsh, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 60 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, developmentally disabled, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Our keiki deserve services that can protect them from harm and ideally prevent abuse and neglect.

Higher caseloads (40 – 50 per worker) are burdening CWS's ability to protect children as seen in high rates of child abuse and neglect as well as legal sanctions, claims, and settlements that have occurred when safety is compromised and court deadlines are unmet. Confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect in East Hawaii are documented at triple the rate of confirmed cases on Oahu. Since the great recession, the East Hawaii CWS section lost 19 out of 56 positions (a reduction in force of 34%). The Child Welfare League of America recommends caseloads of no more than 15 children per social worker. Reviews conducted by the United States Department of Health and Human Services show that the more time a social worker spends with a child and a family, the greater the likelihood that protective factors are strengthened and safety risks are reduced. At current caseload numbers in East Hawaii, it is more than difficult for social workers to make monthly visits and assessments in a geographic area that ranges from Honokaa to Ocean View.

We support implementation of this five-year pilot program ASAP. We strong support:

1. Limiting the number of children supervised by each social worker to 20 or fewer.
2. Adding eight full-time equivalent case managers and 15 full-time support staff positions.

We urge you to pass **HB 2277 HD1** to help protect our keiki in East Hawai'i from harm.

Please contact our Program Direction, Melisa Secola, at secolam@catholiccharitieshawaii.org or at 961-7018, if you have any questions.





HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Twenty-Ninth Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Human Services

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 9, 2018

H.B. 2277, HD1 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of H.B. 2277, HD1 which seeks to establish a pilot project and appropriate funds for the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section.

The reports of insufficient resources, overburdened staff, and lack of prevention programs in the Child Welfare Services Section are alarming. Coupled with the unique challenges of servicing a large geographic area, particularly in East Hawaii, we must be willing to consider practical solutions to ensure that our state agencies are adequately staffed and prepared to safeguard these vital services for the safety and well-being of at-risk children and families in our communities. Therefore, we strongly support the concept of a pilot project which will provide the necessary resources and oversight of these programs in order to better serve our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 2277, HD1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

Date: March 12, 2018

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

From: NASW Hawai'i Chapter

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2277 HD1 Relating to child welfare services

Chair Josh Green, Vice Chair Stanley Chang, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

The National Association of Social Workers- Hawai'i (NASW-Hawai'i) strongly supports HB 2277 which develops a pilot program in the east Hawai'i child welfare services section in Hawai'i county that caps the number of cases that a child welfare caseworker is assigned to 20 children. The bill also allows for an expansion of caseworker and support staff for the program.

This area of the state faces geographic challenges, covering such a large area. In addition, the rate of cases of child abuse and neglect for this area are 213 per 100,000 residents, which is nearly 3 times the rate of cases in urban Honolulu. The children in this area need more caseworkers and the caseworkers need to have a manageable caseload, to ensure each child gets the help and protection that they deserve.

Children who suffer abuse and neglect often suffer long term consequences and have higher rates than the general population of: physical health problems, mental health problems, re-victimization/exploitation, suicidal tendencies, eating disorders, alcohol or substance abuse, aggression, violence, high risk sexual behavior, and homelessness.

Not only is funding this pilot program ethically the right decision, it is also the right decision economically. Intervention now can prevent a life time of problematic behavior that require costly interventions as a result of childhood abuse.

Sonja Bigalke-Bannan, MSW, LSW
Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers, Hawai'i Chapter

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2018 2:40:00 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melodie Aduja | Testifying for OCC Legislative Priorities Committee, Democratic Party of Hawai'i | Support | No |

Comments:



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

P.O. Box 833
Honolulu, HI 96808

www.hawaiipsychology.org

Email: hpaexec@gmail.com
Phone: (808) 521-8995

Testimony SUPPORTING HB2277
RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Monday, March 12, 2018
2:45 p.m.
Conference Room 016
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

The Hawaii Psychological Association strongly supports HB2277 and applauds this effort to develop a pilot project in East Hawaii that would provide sufficient staffing to significantly lower the caseloads of Child welfare workers in this needy area.

In our work as clinical psychologists treating children and families in the aftermath of abuse and neglect, our members partner frequently with Child Welfare workers, and observe the struggles they are having trying to serve our neediest and most vulnerable children. This is due to the inherent difficulties of the demanding job, and particularly due to insufficient resources and high caseloads.

Improving the child welfare system is highly fiscally prudent! Psychological research over the past two decades on Adverse Childhood Experiences (Felitti et al., 1998) has demonstrated conclusively that abuse, neglect, separation from parents, and other traumatic early experiences play a major role in the development of substance abuse disorders and mental and physical illnesses, and can lead to early death for those impacted. Effective early support and intervention to help these children heal is extremely important. Having a caseworker who can pay attention and make sure their basic needs are met is an important foundational part of such efforts. This is a "pay me now or pay me later" situation. We can spend money on higher quality Child Welfare services now for these children or we can pay later for high-cost mental health treatment, healthcare costs for chronic illnesses, substance abuse programs, or prison.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important bill.

Respectfully submitted

Tanya Gamby, Ph.D.
2018 HPA President

Reference

Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, Koss MP, Marks JS. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: the adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *Am J Prev Med.* 1998;14:245–258.





HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting HB 2277 HD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services
Senate Committee Human Services
Scheduled for hearing at on Monday, March 12, 2018, 2:45 PM, in Conference Room 016

Dear Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of **HB 2277 HD1**, which would establish the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section.

Over seven years ago, Hawai'i Appleseed released our first policy brief on the state of support for our foster youth. In the creation of the report, we talked with and learned from dozens of community members with direct legal experience and knowledge of youth in foster care and the impacts of delayed and inadequate services for youth in foster care.

We have continued to focus on the plight of these vulnerable children, most recently advocating in the legal system for foster parents to receive payments adequate to cover the expense of caring for their foster children.

As the preamble of this bill states, the Child Welfare League of America recommends that social workers carry caseloads of no more than fifteen children. Hawai'i should strive to bring our caseloads to this level, in order to ensure that the health and well-being of these children are being properly safeguarded while they are part of our foster care system.

Starting with a five-year pilot project that would limit caseloads to 20 children seems like a prudent and reasonable first step towards that goal. That timeframe will allow policy makers to determine if this level of reform has measurable effects. If it does prove successful, we hope that this pilot will serve as a model for statewide policy.

We appreciate your consideration of this testimony.

The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is committed to a more socially just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, advocacy, and coalition building.



March 12, 2018

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

From: Mandy Finlay, Director of Public Policy
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **HB 2277 HD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 16, March 12, 2018, 2:45 PM

Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN) writes in support of HB 2277, HD1, which would appropriate funds to establish a five-year pilot program to limit the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty and appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff.

Manageable caseloads for child welfare workers will result in better outcomes for the children they serve by allowing caseworkers adequate time to engage with families and successfully handle complex cases. This measure supports workers who provide critical services to keiki in East Hawaii by ensuring that caseworkers are not being tasked with an impossibly large caseload. To support children within the child welfare system, we must also support the caseworkers who help them.

For the above reasons, HCAN respectfully requests the Committee to pass this measure.

HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 10:10:40 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Joseph OConnell | Testifying for East Hawaii Friends of Foster Families | Support | Yes |

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB2277

HMS Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am a former foster youth that grew up on Hawaii Island. I am able to submit testimony to you today because me and my siblings' lives were saved by CWS intervention and I am grateful for the vital work they do. Today I work for EPIC 'Ohana that amongst other things provides conferencing services to CWS and their clients. Additionally, I am a foster parent.

Within the last 10 years East Hawaii CWS has lost 19 positions, lost their Pahoia regional office, has increased its geographic coverage, and has to comply with more standards. CWS serves the outliers of our community. These children and families are the most vulnerable in our community and deserve better. The Child Welfare League of America recommends a caseload of 12-15 children per Social Worker and to hear that each one of our Hawaii Social workers are carrying a case load of 45-55 children is unconscionable. When we fail our children we fail our community. East Hawaii CWS has consistently proven that when they have open positions they are able to fill them. They are the only CWS section in the state that can say this. When the state is needed to step in for the immediate well-being of a child they take on tremendous liability. It is in the state and community's best interest to give our social workers the necessary resources needed so they can do the job right.

When social workers are given the tools to do their job properly we can expect to see:

- Higher reunification rates
- More thorough investigations that result in the preservation of more families
- Shorter stays in the system for youth that do need to be removed
- A less burdened court system
- Increased staff satisfaction and moral with decreased turnover

Lets spend our state money on slaries, not settlements for tragedies. In East Hawaii we are 8 social workers away from having more being able to meet a 20 child cap. Please vote to pass this measure and use your influence to help this bill come to

fruition. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph OConnell
East Hawaii Friends of Foster Families
josephmoc@gmail.com
808-640-0905

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2018 8:52:21 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Samantha Miller | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2018 9:00:46 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Annette Clay | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Our foster children deserve to be treated at national standards. To hear that we completely failed the federal review again is sad. Something needs to be done. We can't be treating our most vulnerable youth in this manner. Please let this bill be one of the fruits of the 2018 legislative session.

Annette Clay

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2018 8:39:08 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sofia Hergenrader | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2018 8:47:37 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Wilma Friesema | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Aloha. My name is Wilma Friesema, and I work at a non-profit agency that contracts with CWS, but I am not speaking on my agency's behalf. For the past 10 years I have worked alongside social workers as we try to reconnect the children and youth in foster care to their biological families. I have witnessed, first hand, the workers' intense caseload and the toll it takes on them.

Social workers are trying to help families in crisis; they want to understand the issues and find effective solutions. But it's hard to reach that understanding and find those solutions when conversations have to be cut short because so many families need to be seen that day, or when promises are not followed up on because another family's crisis got in the way, or when a youth is left waiting for a response that comes weeks late. Helping people when they're most vulnerable requires trust -- parents and children need to be able to *trust* their social worker in order to accept help and make the hard changes they need to make. Without it, they just see the social worker as someone who is out to control them or, worse, tear their family apart.

Having a realistic caseload would enable social workers to deliver better service and, I believe, will prove to be more cost effective. Social workers would have more time and emotional bandwidth to get to know the families, to partner with them and engage the families' strengths to help them address their own problems. I believe, this collaborative approach would result in more successful resolutions which, in turn, would reduce the long-term costs of foster care. It would be a win-win, and would likely help stabilize CWS's workforce as well.

We need to support our social workers. They step into the ground zero of a family's pain every day, and they do so with great heart and courage. Please pass this bill so we can find out if there's a better way for them to care for Hawaii's children and families.

Mahalo for your time,

Wilma Friesema

Kaneohe, HI

MADLINE M. REED
ATTORNEY AT LAW



March 9, 2018

Senator Josh Green, Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 2277, HD 1 Relating to Child Welfare Services
Hearing Date: 3/12/18 - 2:45 PM; Conference Room 016

Dear Chair Green, Vice-Chair Chang and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of HB 2277, HD 1. I have practiced Child Welfare Law here on Hawai'i Island since 2010. Over the past eight years I have represented many children and parents involved with East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services.

During that time I have seen firsthand how social workers are forced to triage their caseloads. In my experience, handling emergencies takes up the vast majority of their energy and leaves little time to manage the needs of the rest of the children and families in their care. Social workers are often difficult to reach and many are not conducting their minimum monthly face-to-face visits. It may seem like a small thing, but is hard to put into words how deeply unfair this is to foster children. By definition, the most important adults in their lives have already failed them. When we entrust their care to a state agency without the means or the staff to meet their needs, we send them a powerful and damaging message about their worth.

Please listen to the testimony provided by mental health professionals about the downstream costs of failing to properly care for foster children. Moreover, it is ultimately our state's moral obligation to care for the most vulnerable members of our society. I believe capping social worker caseloads and adding staff has the potential to dramatically improve the lives of foster children and to benefit our community as a whole.

I urge you to pass HB 2277.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Reed'.

Madeline M. Reed, Esq.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2018 11:24:18 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rosemary Strong | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

This is a very important issue for the families and keiki of Hawaii. I believe this legislature will make a positive impact on keeping our people safe and protected. Aloha

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2018 1:12:29 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| sarah rogers | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

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Emma Pavich
Pam Chambers
Positive Connections
Robbins Research International
Bobbie Sandoz
Alan Silva
Sam Slom
Koana Smith
Turning Point for Teachers
Marshall Thurber

ORGANIZATIONS

Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development
Coalition for a Drug Free Hawai'i
Friends of the Children's Advocacy
Friends of the Children's Justice Center - East and West Hawai'i
Girl Scout Council of Hawai'i
Kamehameha Schools, Character Education
MADD & SADD
Merimed Foundation
New Horizons
Rotary Club of Honolulu
Rotaract – Interact – RYLA
Shannon Smith Scholarship Fund
Soroptimist International

Winners' Camp is among the most effective business-supported education improvement projects in the nation.

-The Conference Board

February 24, 2018

Testimony regarding Bill SB2277
Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha

I am a survivor of thirteen foster homes and endured eight years of physical and sexual abuse. I can testify to the importance of having a case/social worker available to young people in foster care.

During the eight years of my first foster home, I never saw a social worker until one glorious day Mr. Oliveira came to visit me and I was able to tell him what was happening after he finally built trust with me. Because of the eight years of abuse and neglect, I was never able to build relationships with other foster families and therefore was continuously bounced around.

To this day, I still cannot secure trusting personal relationships. I have succeeded in creating a leadership program for teenagers called Winners' Camp Hawai'i Leadership Academy. Through Winners' Camp I am able to work with many foster kids. They trust me because they know I've been through it all. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having constant regular visitations by social/case workers so that foster kids can expose abuse and confide in a trustworthy adult.

Please support this bill. Mahalo, malama pono,

Delorese Gregoire, Founding Director Winners' Camp Foundation



Delorese Gregoire
& Winners' Camp Foundation Board of Directors
winnerscamp.com



"I heartily endorse this...program as a critical step in stopping the deterioration of family life and community that is presently threatening so many families and youths in Hawai'i."

-Dr. Neal Mazer, past Chief of the State's Child and Adolescence Mental Health Department

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 12:40:27 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kimberly Ferolino-Cantorna | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern

This letter is to express our strong support for Senate Bill 2276. We ask that our senators and representatives do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable children in Hawaii.

Youth in foster care are the most vulnerable to needing guidance throughout their lives, it is important for CWS to be properly staffed to be able to assist these youth, birth families and resource caregivers in a fashion that will allow for timely and quality support.

Please do what is necessary to help our CWS workers be supported in a way that will bring us closer to national standards for child welfare workers. Please help these CWS workers and their assistants to do their jobs in a caring and reasonable fashion, with support and regulation.

We look forward to continuing our collaborative work.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Ferolino

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 10:01:24 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| shannon magnuson | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

For the countless reasons shared in my past testimonies, I continue to support the above measure as worthy and vitally necessary to the children in my community. I lend my voice and support to the impassioned pleas of my friends and neighbors in championing this objective- to secure more social workers in East Hawaii. Please continue to vote your consciences and to remain on the right side of this issue. Please pass this measure.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 10:06:25 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| matthew magnuson | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Please consider this bill. I was a police officer and a foster parent and know first hand how valuable a social worker is. Every child in the state of Hawaii deserves the chance to have access to a qualified and trained social worker in the event of a crisis. Thank you

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 10:15:04 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Shandon Cuba | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Aloha Human Services Committee,

My name is Shandon Cuba and I am 18 years old. Me and my three sisters spent three years in foster care. Due to the shortage of foster homes we were initially placed in three different homes. My older sister and I were in two different homes in Hilo and my two younger sisters were placed in a foster home in Ka'u. Ka'u is an hour and a half drive from Hilo and due to that distance I didnt get to see them for the first year of foster care. When I would ask my social worker to see my younger sisters they said they didnt have the time to make that happen. I later found out that not only were family visits not happening but also CPS wasn't visiting them. My 2 and 5 year old sisters were being abused in that home and when it was finanally reported that foster home got shut down. 1 year of abuse could have been easily avoided if the monthly visits happened. Also if social workers had more time they could have arranged for family visits as well and me and sisters could have stayed connected during that crazy part of our lives.

If CPS is going to continue to do this work of helping families they need the resources so they can actually help and do the job correctly. Please support HB2277 so this type of nonsense doesnt keep happening.

Mahalo,
Shandon Cuba

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 10:17:08 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kalani Pagan | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

TO: Human Services Committee

FROM: Kalani Pagan

Im 17 and I have spent most of my life in foster care and have experienced many homes and social workers. Social workers are amazing people that fill the spot of your parent when your real parents can't. They make sure you stay on track with medical needs and in school, they ensure that your foster home is safe and supportive, they show up to youth circles and help plan life after 18 and so much more. I feel they need all the support they can get. Its sad to hear that they give each worker 45-55 kids. How can they fill that roll for all those kids? When promlems arise they need the time to be able to make a complete and accurate decisions. This cant happen when they have that many kids to watch over.

Please do evething you can to make sure that HB2277 makes it through the legislature.

Thank you,

Kalani Pagan

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 2:38:19 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melisa Secola | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I want to see this pilot project funded for the good of our community...primarily safe youth and families as a result of investing in resources to support that goal. We have to do something different to expect different results, and this bill offers an opportunity to measure the impacts of additional resources (CWS workers who are trained to provide the needed intervention and prevention) on the youth and families we are all mandated to protect.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 8:44:11 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| karen de soto | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

As an MSW with CWS back in the 1990's, I left my position because I had 87 people on my caseload and knew I could not serve them appropriately. Positions were added and then taken away. The needs of children, particularly in East Hawaii, have always been high and have not decreased--in fact, the rate is much higher than the rest of the State. The pilot project has potential to immediately improve their care. As a current foster parent, I have seen my social worker once in six months. This is not because she doesn't care or try. But the children in my care deserve better than text responses to questions that I have to ask--and even though the children are siblings, their needs are very different and unique. More time and attention would be terrific but that is impossible at this point.

Please give this project consideration. East Hawaii's children have long been underserved.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2018 9:17:08 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kathryn york | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

This bill is a much needed measure to improve safety and well-being for keiki in our community.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2018 4:45:39 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kenneth Goodenow | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Dear Chair Green and Honorable Members:

Thank you for passing SB 2276 and for now hearing HB 2277. I am very concerned about Child Welfare Services (“CWS”) in East Hawaii. My work as a lawyer has involved me in many CWS cases, including service as a Guardian ad Litem for numerous children. I have seen first hand many of the problems facing the overburdened CWS office in East Hawaii.

CWS in East Hawaii is at a crisis point. We need to protect the safety and well-being of our most vulnerable children. Unfortunately, the consequences of having a social worker monitor too many children can be extreme; missing the chance to save a child from death. Even less extreme cases, however, can have a long-term negative impact on our community as the ability to positively affect a child can provide a lifetime of benefit.

My thanks to the Chair and Committee for hearing House Bill 2277. Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Aloha,

Kenneth Goodenow

(808) 961-5155

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

HEARING: Monday, March 11, 2018
2:45PM
Conference Room 016

FROM: Esther B. McDaniel

RE: HB2277 HD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha Senators:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony for HB 2277.

I am a licensed resource caregiver (AKA foster parent) and I support HB 2277. I'm very concerned about our keiki in foster care. I'm also concerned about our caseworkers who carry a huge responsibility in serving our most vulnerable children, serving us, the resource caregivers and serving birth families in trying to help them get healthy and reunified with their children. Our social workers in licensing, in-take, investigation and case management are our team members and some become our friends. Most do good work and some are exceptional in the work they do.

Our keiki are precious. Those who carry the hurt and pain of abuse and neglect can have hope and healing. A good caseworker can be the key for a hurting child and their family in turning their lives around. I've seen this firsthand with children who came into my home through foster care and are now healthy, productive adults, and whose parents are doing well also. In one mom's case, at first she didn't like the social worker, but through referrals and timely case management mom completed all services to get her life in order and was reunified with her 5 children in less than a year.

In the past I've participated in the federal review process of CWS as a community member. In reading the 2017 Final Report Hawaii Child and Family Services Review there are strengths in our foster care system and areas that need improvement.

“The CFSR identified cross-cutting practice concerns that affect the state's ability to meet safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The Children's Bureau encourages Hawaii, in developing its Program Improvement Plan, to focus on the following key cross-cutting priorities: conducting quality safety assessments, achieving timely permanency for children in foster care, engaging parents in quality caseworker visits, and strengthening the agency and contract case management workforce.” (page 3 of the 2017 Hawaii Final Report CFSR)

Again referring back to children in my home who were reunified with parents or other family members, these parents were in regular and direct contact with their case worker and the case worker was responsive and at times following up and/or looking for the parent or family member. I believe increasing the number of workers is a step towards helping our social workers achieve improvement goals in the foster care system.

Please give the support our social workers need in order to help and heal our children who are suffering the consequences of abuse and neglect. Large caseloads make it difficult for a caseworker to provide quality service. The Child Welfare League of America recommends that caseworkers carry 12 – 15 children. This pilot program in East Hawaii would place a cap of 20 children per caseworker. It's a good start in enabling a caseworker to meet the individual and specialized needs of traumatized children and their families. According to the July 2016 Issue Brief of the Child Welfare Information Gateway it states that, “Manageable caseloads and workloads can make a real difference in a worker's ability to engage

families, deliver quality services, stay with the agency and ultimately achieve positive outcomes for children and families.”

I also work for a national organization that engages and empowers the faith community to support our foster/adoptive/hanai families. We come together and create free resources for our children and families. It's a broad spectrum of available services free of charge including evidence based, trauma informed parenting classes, Kokua Closet a free store in Wahiawa and Keiki Closet in Hamakua. Our group in Hamakua has taught us a lot about the needs of Hawaii Island and they have worked to increase the number of licensed resource caregivers in their community. We can and are filling in gaps, but we cannot fill in the gap of vacancies that need to be filled by capable social workers. Those gaps must be filled by CWS-DHS and the legislature can empower them to do so by supporting and funding this pilot program that needs to grow to serve families statewide.

Please invest in the lives of our keiki in foster care and help strengthen our families.

Thank you for your consideration and work on this issue.

Submitted with Sincere Aloha,

Esther B. McDaniel
Wahiawa, Hawaii

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2018 2:44:48 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melissa Mayo | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

My name is Melissa Mayo and I am from the east side of Hawaii Island. I first entered foster care at the age of 13 when it was discovered that I was living in an abusive situation with inadequate food, water, and shelter. During the next 5 years I lived in 7 different foster homes and attended 3 different schools. Each move meant I had to adjust to a new set of rules and make new friends. During this time I also had 3 different social workers, all of which are truly amazing people. These workers consistently went above and beyond. They each visited me far beyond their working hours, seeing me in the evenings and even on weekends to ensure that I was doing okay and to see if I needed anything. They filled out the necessary paperwork to ensure I could get a computer, attend prom, have proper clothes for sporting activities etc. When my foster parents would not pay for a field trip fee or a school uniform they would take money out of their own pockets to ensure that this could be done. When a child enters foster care, they lose everything from family to friends to community. The case manager takes on a huge role by doing everything in their power to promote and supply as many "normal" experiences as possible. When I saw two of my case managers move on to other positions due to being overwhelmed it was devastating. I wondered "Why aren't they being supported?" "Does no one see they importance of the work they are doing?" "What if my next case manager doesn't like me?" Thanks to the amazing support I received from our Child Welfare Social Workers I am currently a Freshman at UH Hilo and currently double majoring in Sociology and Aministration of Justice.

I sincerely ask the legislature to allocate the appropriate resources to our child welfare social workers to ensure they supported in serving most vulnerable children.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Mayo

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2018 3:00:31 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Terri Lynn Lum | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Aloha Senator Green, Senator Chang and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, I am writing in strong support of HB2277 HD1 relating to Child Welfare Services. This bill, **if adequately funded**, could make a monumental difference in the lives of children in East Hawai'i. As documented in an article in today's (March 11) Star Advertiser, DHS workers in East Hawai'i have caseloads nearly four times the recommended national best practice of fifteen children per worker. Compounded by some of the highest rates of poverty and substance abuse and being the largest geographic area served in the State, our East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services office is faced with the daunting task of ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable citizens.

Working as a social worker for various agencies in East Hawai'i, I have seen the hard work and dedication of the Child Welfare Services staff. Most work well into the evening and on weekends to fulfill their mandate to protect children. No amount of overtime pay can compensate them for the time lost with their own families, loss of sleep, impact on their personal health and the emotional toll of dealing with serious physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children that many people don't even want to believe occurs in our island state. They deserve so much more support and resources in order to continue to investigate and provide services to children and their families.

I urge you to support and fund HB 2277. Making a positive difference in the lives of children today will make a difference for generations to come.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2018 3:12:48 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Danielle Tamala | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Aloha,

As a foster and adoptive parent of medically fragile children, whose level of care require more and idividualized attention from Social Workers, I strongly encourage you to support this bill to allowing our Keiki O Ka Aina the best oppportunity to become fruitful and productive contributors to our community through the necessary support of Child and family services.

Thank you very much,

Danielle Tamala

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

HEARING: Monday, March 12, 2018
2:45 PM
Conference Room 016

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of HB2277, HD1 - Relating to Child Welfare Services

My name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto. I am a resource caregiver, I work in the human services field for EPIC 'Ohana, Inc., and I am also the advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative's Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i, which is a local and national effort to create and support successful outcomes for transitioning foster youth. I am also a second-year graduate student of the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 2277 and its intent to establish the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Section.

Foster youth are amongst the nation's most vulnerable population—they come into the system by no fault of their own, and they are left without the much-needed support and social capital, which leads them to face poor outcomes as adults. Additionally, the parents involved in the foster care system are left trying to navigate this complex system on their own without any help from their social worker. Parents, resource caregivers, and foster youth have lodged complaints to Section Administrators because they can't reach their social worker and because they haven't seen nor heard from their social worker in months and have no idea what is happening with the case.

As a resource caregiver, my job is to provide a safe and stable home for the youth in foster care. To continue to do this, social workers must connect with us and the children in our homes. Sometimes the children in foster care have needs greater than what resource caregivers are able to provide. Resource caregivers need the extra support and resources from the social worker to sustain these placements and keep the resource caregivers from experiencing burn out as well. It is frustrating as caregiver when you reach out to the social worker a month in advance to approve something, but don't get any return phone calls or e-mails. The only person that suffers is the foster youth.

I have been working in the field for almost ten years. In that time, I have seen horrific amounts of injustice and harm done to our extremely vulnerable foster youth, which is partially due to the lack of support and staffing within Child Welfare Services. I have worked with many foster youth that have been in care for over a year, and they report seeing their worker only once or twice in the last eight months. The youth has had to fend for themselves to get the things they need, or they just settle to "go without," which is something that no young person should have to experience. Other youth have been horribly mistreated in their resource homes, and when the youth was calling and calling to reach out for help, the only thing they could do was leave a voicemail on an already overloaded answering machine. It is very clear: the foster youth need their social worker.

The role of the Child Welfare Services Social Worker is not an easy one—they are expected to be ever present for everyone and connect to the many individuals and systems involved in the case. I've seen the social workers in Kona do the best that they can with each case, but the truth is that they just don't have enough time to see parents and children when they have over 150 people they have to see face-to-face each month. Some workers are too busy that they don't get to check their voicemail for over a month because they're out in the field. The high demands and stress of this job leaves our social workers vulnerable to burn out.

As an aspiring social worker, I want to be there to help the youth and parents involved in the system. I want to be the type of worker that commits to seeing the children and parents monthly, as is mandated by the law. However, I'm terrified of the overwhelmingly high caseload that will be looming over my head, and the number of children and parents that will be negatively affected, simply because there isn't going to be enough time and support for me to work on all of my cases.

As a professional that works with current and former foster youth and as the resource caregiver of several foster children, I believe that this bill supports the federal mandate to ensure that children do not "linger" in the foster care system. By mandating a limitation on the number of cases that social workers must take and providing funding to increase the staff and staff support, it will not only retain the workers we have, but it will lessen the amount of burn out these workers have faced from carrying a high and unmanageable caseload.

My hope is that the success of this pilot project will inspire the citizens of West Hawai'i to fight for this much needed support. In closing, I strongly encourage this committee to support the passage of HB2277.

With my sincerest gratitude,

Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2018 6:33:21 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rita Kama-Kimura | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I support the passing of this bill to reduce the case load per Child Protection Service employee to a manageable number. Also need to find ways to work with these families to resolve these issues and unit these child with their families in a loving and safe environment.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 8:12:12 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Joni Chun | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Chair Green, Vice Chair Chang and Members, Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of HB2277**, which establishes the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section and appropriates funds to support the project.

Through a recent article, we've learned:

- State Department of Human Services caseworkers are responsible for tracking at-risk children and families, completing reports, and arranging services for children and families. The Child Welfare League of America recommends that caseworkers manage a caseload of 12 to 15 children.¹ In East Hawai'i, our caseworkers are regularly carrying 19 or 20 cases that involve 40 to 50 children.
- East Hawai'i Child Welfare Service lost 19 of 56 total positions since 2009, causing the four units that formerly operated in East Hawai'i to be collapsed into three units. The East Hawai'i licensing division, which is responsible for inspecting and certifying safe foster homes for abused and neglected children, was cut from three workers to two. Today, licensing functions with just one worker, and caseworkers cope with impossible caseloads.

With these high caseloads, vulnerable children are at-risk of further harm. I urge your support.

Thank you, Joni Chun

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 9:21:53 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Raquel Gali | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 10:17:19 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Georgina Failautusi | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

As a FosterCare Mother I strongly SUPPORT Bill HB2277 HD1

Aloha, Georgina Failautusi

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 10:20:41 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Geniel Hernandez Armstrong | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Our hardworking colleagues at Child Welfare Services (CWS) are overworked and unable to meet the needs of our community and youth as needed without additional support. I work directly with CWS workers and their youth daily and see the difference we can make if we do a good job with these cases and the detrimental outcomes that occur when CWS workers are unable to meet the needs of the case. Please support our youth, our community, and our CWS workers by passing this bill.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:18:41 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Danielle EL Makaike | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Please consider this bill. Workers caseloads are far to big to effectively manage, monitor, and ensure the safety of youth. All caseworker- investigators, ect. should have no more than 20 youth.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:36:08 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Danielle Mendoza | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:42:37 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Allan Sebastian | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I'm in support of HB2277. As a former case manager, I understand and can empathize with other case workers having a large case load. From my experience, at one point, I had nearly or just a little over 30 clients on my case load. It can become too much and balancing administration and client care seems like a balancing act. I can imagine with a case load of 40 or more and the stress that comes along with it. I also had to take care of myself/health or self-care to "recharge" over the weekend just to be prepared both physically and mentally for another work week. There were many occasions where I felt "burned out." Again, the thoughts that come to my mind are; "Are they safe? Are they stable on medication(s)? Do they have a place to stay? etc." All these I tend to take with me at the end of the work day and sometimes I think about them throughout the weekend. Again, I could only imagine the stress these workers go through with a very large case load i.e.. worker's health, client's safety, the quality of care for clients or administrative work. Again, I support HB2277. "Many the hands, lightens the load." as a pastor once told me.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:45:11 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Monica Crum | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I support this bill to mandate a cap of 20 children per CWS caseworker in East Hawaii.

HB-2277-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:57:25 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/12/2018 2:45:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jonathan Mendoza | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a Resource Caregive for children and youth of our Hawaiian Islands for over 20 years. I am so grateful to be able to assist our Islands with care and support for our children in need. Also grateful for the our State Department of Human Services and the workers who sign up to do this type of work for our Keiki. My mother was raised in foster care in the 1940's along with her three sisters, unfortunately they got split up while in foster care. We need more families to step up to help these children, and we need more Workers to support these families who step up or who have been providing care for the youth in foster care. We need to make sure that our Social Workers have adequate support and assistance to be able to do their jobs. This Bill HB 2277 needs to be passed so that our Children and Youth that are going through this challenge and life style have Foster Families that have the proper Social Worker's and support to get through this type of upbringing. Please do what it takes to be able to hire more Social worker's and assitants for East Hawaii as the case loads are too large for quality assurance. Thank you for hearing our concerns.

Also, thanks to the Star Advertiser for running a front page article about this Crisis and for Hawaii Public Radio to have a segment on Child Welfare and have the opportunity to voice come concerns about this pilot that we are discussing.

Aloha & Mahalo,

Jonathan Mendoza