



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

February 7, 2018

TO: The Honorable Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

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

Hearing: Friday, February 9, 2018, 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill and offers the following comments.

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.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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

LATE

The Twenty-Ninth Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Health & Human Services

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 8, 2018

H.B. 2277 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of H.B. 2277 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

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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February 7, 2018

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 329
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Mizuno, and Committee Members:

Re: HB 2277 Relating to Child Welfare Services
Hearing Date: 02/09/18 – 8:30 am; House Conference Room 329

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

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 recognizes the reality that it is in East Hawai'i where the State has the best chance to hire and retain the necessary personnel.

If the numbers I have seen are accurate, 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, and the caseload is even out of line compared to other counties in Hawai'i. 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.

I am not sure why the positions and funding requested in HB 2277 should be considered a "pilot project," but 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.

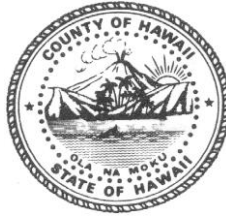
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Wil Okabe".

Wil Okabe
Managing Director, County of Hawai'i

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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2277

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Rep Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Friday, February 9, 2018 8:30 A.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

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

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. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

TO: House of Representatives, Committee on Health & Human Services
Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice-Chair

HEARING: Friday, February 9, 2018
8:30 AM
Conference Room 329

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of HB2277 - 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

TESTIMONY OF TIFFANY BADER
HILO, HAWAI'I - EPIC 'OHANA RECORDER
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
REGARDING HOUSE BILL NO. 2277
RELATING TO CHILDWELFARE SERVICES
FEBRUARY 7, 2018

Chair Mizuno and members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 2277. The purpose of this bill is to establish the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase the amount of staff and reduce the caseloads in the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Section.

Child Welfare Services' mission is to ensure, in partnership with families and communities, the safety, permanency, and well-being of those children and families where child abuse and neglect has occurred or who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect. Bill No. 2277 will not only support Child Welfare Services' mission, but also enhance it by adding more Social Worker positions to reduce the number of caseloads.

These additional positions will provide major support to the crucial areas that affect our children's safety such as: providing services to maintain safety in the family home, maintain safe and appropriate family and community connections while in foster care, and support children's participation in 'Ohana Conferences, Youth Circles, and Family Court Hearings.

Child abuse is one of the biggest challenges Hawai'i island faces with the community. Our hope is that the passage of this measure will increase the number of Social Workers to better serve the needs of the children and decrease the number of caseloads in Child Welfare Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and support of House Bill No. 2277.

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 1:14:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Michele Carvalho		Support	No

Comments:

Dear Lawmakers,

I am in support to establish a five-year pilot program in East Hawaii Child Welfare Services section in Hawaii County that limits the number of children per CWS caseworker to no more than 20 and that funds for additional case managers and support staff will be allocated to this project.

The East Hawaii section of CWS faces unique challenges, the large geographical area, the confirmed cases of child abuse and/or neglect per 100,00 residents, the reduction in staffing that has caused a dramatic increase in average caseloads.

These higher caseloads increase the potential for harm to children and E. Hawaii CWS is in a crisis situation.

There will be better outcomes for our children in foster placement if we can get our social workers to concentrate on a reasonable number of children in their caseloads.

Thank you.

Michele A. Carvalho

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 11:39:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	OCC Legislative Priorities	Support	No

Comments:

**PRESENTATION OF THE
OAHU COUNTY COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
THE SENATE
TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2018
Friday, February 9, 2018
8:30 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 329**

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2277, RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

To the Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair; the Honorable Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee on Health & Human Services:

Good morning. My name is Melodie Aduja. I serve as Chair of the Oahu County Committee ("OCC") Legislative Priorities Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii ("DPH"). Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill No.2277 relating to the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project,

The OCC Legislative Priorities Committee is in support of House Bill No. 2277 and is in favor of its passage.

House Bill No.2277 is in accord with the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i ("DPH"), 2016, as it 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.

Specifically, the DPH Platform provides that "[w]e believe all families should have an equal opportunity to build their assets and become self-sufficient, and we support a strong safety net of programs that will afford them the opportunity to do so. We much protect our children, our future, from violence and neglect and provide them with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and thrive." (Platform of the DPH, P. 4, Lines 184-187 (2016)).

Given that House Bill No. 2277 establishes the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project, it is the position of the OCC Legislative Priorities Committee to support this measure.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ **Melodie Aduja**

Melodie Aduja, Chair, OCC Legislative Priorities Committee

Email: legislativepriorities@gmail.com, Tel.: (808) 258-8889

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 2:22:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Norman Arancon	Private Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2277. I ask that our senators and representatives employ every vital measure to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable children in Hawaii.

I have personally witnessed how youth in foster care are the most vulnerable to needing guidance throughout their lives, it is important for Child Welfare Services (CWS) to be properly staffed to assist substantially these youth, birth families and resource caregivers in a fashion that will allow for timely and quality support.

Please exercise care and show your support to our CWS workers so that we can alleviate the poor conditions of our youth and bring about development that would elevate us closer to national standards for child welfare workers. Your support would enable our CWS workers perform their jobs that is reflective of a caring community where children are well cared for.

I look forward to continuing our collaborative work.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Norman Q. Arancon. PhD

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 3:55:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Karlán Osorio		Support	No

Comments:

This letter is to express our strong support for Senate Bill 2277. 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,

karlan Osorio

TESTIMONY OF STEWART MAEDA
HILO, HAWAI'I - EPIC 'OHANA FACILITATOR
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
REGARDING HOUSE BILL NO. 2277
RELATING TO CHILDWELFARE SERVICES
FEBRUARY 7, 2018

Chair Mizuno and members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 2277. The purpose of this bill is to establish the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase the amount of staff and reduce the caseloads in the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Section.

Child abuse and neglect is a major issue in our community. There are many news articles regarding children being neglected and abused on the Hawai'i island. As a professional working in this area, I know this is only the tip of the iceberg and there are countless cases that the media is unaware of.

One way to start addressing this issue is to increase the number of Social Workers in Child Welfare Services. Child Welfare Services Social Workers protect the most vulnerable in our community, the children. We need to help them, help the children.

Our hope is that the passage of this measure will increase the number of Social Workers to better serve the needs of the children within the community and decrease the number of caseloads in Child Welfare Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and support of House Bill No. 2277.

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 3:46:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Delorese Gregoire	Winners' Camp Foundation	Support	Yes

Comments:

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.

-Delorese Gregoire, Founding Director Winners' Camp Foundation

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 1:01:18 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melissa Mayo		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 I plan to be a nurse one day. 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.

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 5:35:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Karilu Annes		Support	No

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing again in strong support for House Bill 2277. In my last testimonial letter, I shared that I was writing as someone who used to work at EHCWS, as a previous Resource Caregiver, and as a family member who had been hurt by the CWS system. As you review this bill, I urge you to consider the lives of children that have been blasted all over the news and social media after they died while involved with CWS, such as Peter Boy Kema and Fabian Garrett-Garcia. Though we do not have the exact details of these cases to consider, there is one thing that cannot be denied: if the CWS case worker was able to monitor the children, Resource Family, and biological parents much closer, the events that took place could have been very different. Yes, these cases are not the typical cases, but we must recognize that there is this potential fate for each child based on the severe safety concerns that led to CWS involvement.

Please do not let these lost lives be for nothing. I urge you to pass this bill. Invest in the children and families of Hawaii. Give them better opportunities of a future together. You have the power to change and improve lives, and you can exercise that power by passing this bill.

With Utmost Respect,

Karilu Annes

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 10:59:41 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Joseph OConnell		Support	Yes

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB2277

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am a former foster youth that grew up on Hawaii Island. I am able to stand here before you today because me and my siblings' lives were saved by CWS intervention and I am eternally 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 a 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. To hear that each worker is carrying 45-55 children at any given time 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 section in the state that can say this. When the state is needed to step in for the immediate well-being of children they take on tremendous liability. It is in the state on community's best interest to give our social workers the necessary resources to do their job.

Thank you again for this opportunity. Improving outcomes for our CWS children is my passion. Please contact at any time on this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

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



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting HB 2277 – Relating to Child Welfare Services
House Committee on Health & Human Services
Scheduled for hearing at on Friday, February 9, 2018, 8:30 AM, in Conference Room 329

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of **HB 2277**, 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.

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 5:10:04 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Raquel Gali and I individually support HB 2277 with regards to Child Welfare Services. As a life long resident of East Hawaii and someone who has been employed in the Social Service field for over thirteen years, I firmly believe that the passing of this Bill will provide the support needed to improve outcomes for youth in care in East Hawaii.

Respectfully,

Raquel Gali

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 7:48:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 7:15:08 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of this effort to strengthen the Child Welfare Services Social Workers. DHS CWS also need more support staff to assist the needs of the youth in foster care. Child Welfare Social Workers need more help to assist the resource caregivers that step up to help our keiki in need. I have been a foster parent for over 20 years and I know that the system in place needs more workers to handle the case loads that are in place. Please allow the positions to open up so that youth and families involved in foster care can get the support needed to have successful placements and support

Thank you, Jonathan Mendoza

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 7:53:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
kia-lyn.campbell		Support	Yes

Comments:

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 10:45:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bree Cabanilla		Support	No

Comments:

Bree and Ernest Cabanilla

Feb 8, 2018

Re: Support for our child welfare system

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to express our strong support for House Bill 2277. We ask that our senators and representatives do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable children in Hawaii.

We respectfully request that you mandate a cap of 20 children per Child Welfare Services caseworker in East Hawaii for five years as a pilot project to demonstrate that lower caseloads results in better outcomes for our children, and less abuse and neglect.

As 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.

Best wishes!

Sincerely,

Bree & Ernest Cabanilla

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 8:44:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
karen de soto	Ms.	Support	No

Comments:

I am currently a foster parent. I am also a social worker and therapist who worked for four years at CWS. I left that position because I had 80 children on my caseload and knew that was impossible to manage well. Caseloads dropped after I left but are now back up. I know first-hand that this puts children at risk and increases burnout. Cases remain in investigation too long without active case management, which would contribute to positive change for families and children. Home visits cannot be managed in a timely manner, foster parents have difficulty reaching their social worker, and aides get overworked but have no authority to make case decisions.

The rise and fall of caseloads has been a pattern in the state. Funding improves and then drops. Hawaii Island, in particular, has a high rate of abuse and neglect, but this has never really been addressed by extra support. Children pay the price for this neglect by the State. The least among us deserve our best; they have nowhere else to turn.

Please consider decent support for children, who have no power themselves and are in especially dire circumstances...and also support those dedicated to helping them.

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 5:10:35 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Stephen Schaefle		Support	No

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to express our strong support for House Bill 2277. We ask that our senators and representatives do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable children in Hawaii.

We respectfully request that you mandate a cap of 20 children per Child Welfare Services caseworker in East Hawaii for five years as a pilot project to demonstrate that lower caseloads results in better outcomes for our children, and less abuse and neglect.

As 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.

Best wishes!

Sincerely,

Stephen Schaefle

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 10:30:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Patricia	EPIC, Inc.	Support	No

Comments:

I have worked for about 15 years in agencies contracted to provide services to families involved in the Child Welfare System (CWS). Resources, including funding and staffing for CWS, are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of families and children. The workloads for Social Workers and Social Services Assistants are overwhelming. It is important to the health and welfare of the families, and particularly the children who are involved in "the system." The health of our communities is also compromised. Please vote to provide enough support and funding that our CWS workers can do the work. Mahalo.

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 8:58:53 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Letha DeCaires		Support	No

Comments:

Re: Support for our child welfare system

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to express our strong support for House Bill 2277. We ask that our senators and representatives do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable children in Hawaii.

We respectfully request that you mandate a cap of 20 children per Child Welfare Services caseworker in East Hawaii for five years as a pilot project to demonstrate that lower caseloads results in better outcomes for our children, and less abuse and neglect.

As 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.

I worked as a police officer in the Honolulu Police Department and spent half my career as a detective working cases such as child physical and sexual abuse. The CWS workers I had contact with were extraordinary--but really over worked. I also became a foster parent and experienced the same thing. The care we give to the children is one of the ways we will see our society continuing. The best way to care for the children is to offer them CWS workers who are able to do their job.

We look forward to continuing our collaborative work.

Best wishes!

Sincerely,

Letha Ann Sundquist DeCaires

Retired Captain, Honolulu Police Department

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/6/2018 10:13:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Marilyn Yamamoto		Oppose	No

Comments:

I am a student of history and professional essays on CPS reform solutions. This bill does not address the real source of child protection issues. I have watched the proposal to throw money at CPS to hire more staff and recruit more foster caregivers in many states and have never seen any results. The challenge is in the policies and procedures of the child protection administration of each state. Federal evaluations of CAPTA compliance were initiated by law in 2003. No state has passed that review for 2 rounds and 27 states, including Hawaii, that have completed the 3rd round so far have failed yet again. Unless BEST PRACTICES are made policy, no amount of money will fix the systemic flaws that exist in every state.

There is credible evidence that the culture of CPS/CWS is to "grab em and run", meaning needless child removal that results in case overload. The foster care system is broken and options to maintain family relationships at an 80% cost savings to the state should be the mandated policy of the DHS Director. Until that policy is adopted, I oppose spending tax dollars to support "business as usual" with child welfare services.

TO: Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

LATE

HEARING: Friday, February 9, 2018
8:30 AM
Conference Room 329

FROM: Esther B. McDaniel

RE: HB2277 – Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha Representatives:

I am a licensed resource caregiver (AKA foster parent) and strongly 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.

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 cases. 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 services available free of charge including evidence based, trauma informed parenting classes, Kokua Closet a free store in Wahiawa and one 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 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.

Our keiki are precious and should be cherished. 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, 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.

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 Much Aloha,

Esther B. McDaniel
Wahiawa, Hawaii

LATE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

REGULAR SESSION OF 2018
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

DATE: Friday, February 9, 2018
TIME: 8:30 a.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 329

State Capitol

[415 South Beretania Street](#)

Position: SUPPORT SB2790

Chair Mizuno and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support this bill: for some children foster care might be the best and for some, the only solution toward their predicament. Yet sadly in East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services staff have been inundated with calls for service and have a backlog of cases which diminish the services provided to the affect youth. Adequate staffing must be provided with investigating the notion of limiting caseloads per case manager and, additional staffing to deal with the backlogged cases. Please pass this bill "as is" or be certain that every amendment made is to strengthen this bill toward the betterment of servicing the youth in East Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Ken Farm

LATE

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/9/2018 5:09:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Mizuno and Committee Members:

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.

The Great Recession triggered deep cuts in Hawaii's already overburdened Child Welfare system. Of concern today is the long-term impact of those cuts on the safety and well-being of our most vulnerable children. State budget cuts were particularly harmful to the child welfare system on Hawaii Island. Layoffs caused the four CWS units that formerly operated in East Hawaii to be collapsed into three units. The East Hawaii 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.

In all, the East Hawaii CWS office has lost 19 of the 56 positions it had in 2009, and that reduction in staffing has caused an increase in average caseloads. The higher numbers of caseloads increase the potential for harm to children at risk for further neglect or abuse. Caseloads in East Hawaii in October 2017 ranged as high as 55 children for one worker. Five workers had caseloads of more than 40 children. A crisis for a single child can easily consume a workday, and workers face extreme challenges as they attempt to track at-risk children and families; complete investigations and reports required by the department and the courts; arrange services for children and families; and respond to new cases. Social workers, who by statute are required to visit foster children at a minimum of once a month, often have to drive long distances and travel time alone can take hours.

Hawaii County workers also face other special challenges: Hawaii County had 418 children confirmed for abuse or neglect in 2015, for a rate of 213 confirmed abused or neglected children per 100,000 residents. Oahu had a rate of 76 abused or neglected kids per 100,000 population, while Maui had a rate of 158 and Kauai a rate of 151 children per 100,000 residents. About one-third of the children in foster care in Hawaii live on Hawaii Island.

There is precedent for capping workers' caseloads. Legislatures in Texas, Indiana, Delaware and Florida have all required that state and local jurisdictions assess workloads, meet standards, and implement specific strategies such as hiring additional staff. In addition to helping children, House Bill 2277 may also save the state from litigation expenses and damages that can result from a child's death due to an overburdened system.

My thanks to the Chair and Committee for hearing House Bill 2276. Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Aloha,

Kenneth Goodenow

(808) 961-5155

February 9, 2018

Hearing on 02/09/18 at 8:30am in Conference Room 329

Testimony in support of HB2277

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am a former foster youth that grew up on Hawaii Island. I am able to stand here before you today because me and my siblings' lives were saved by CWS intervention and I am eternally 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.

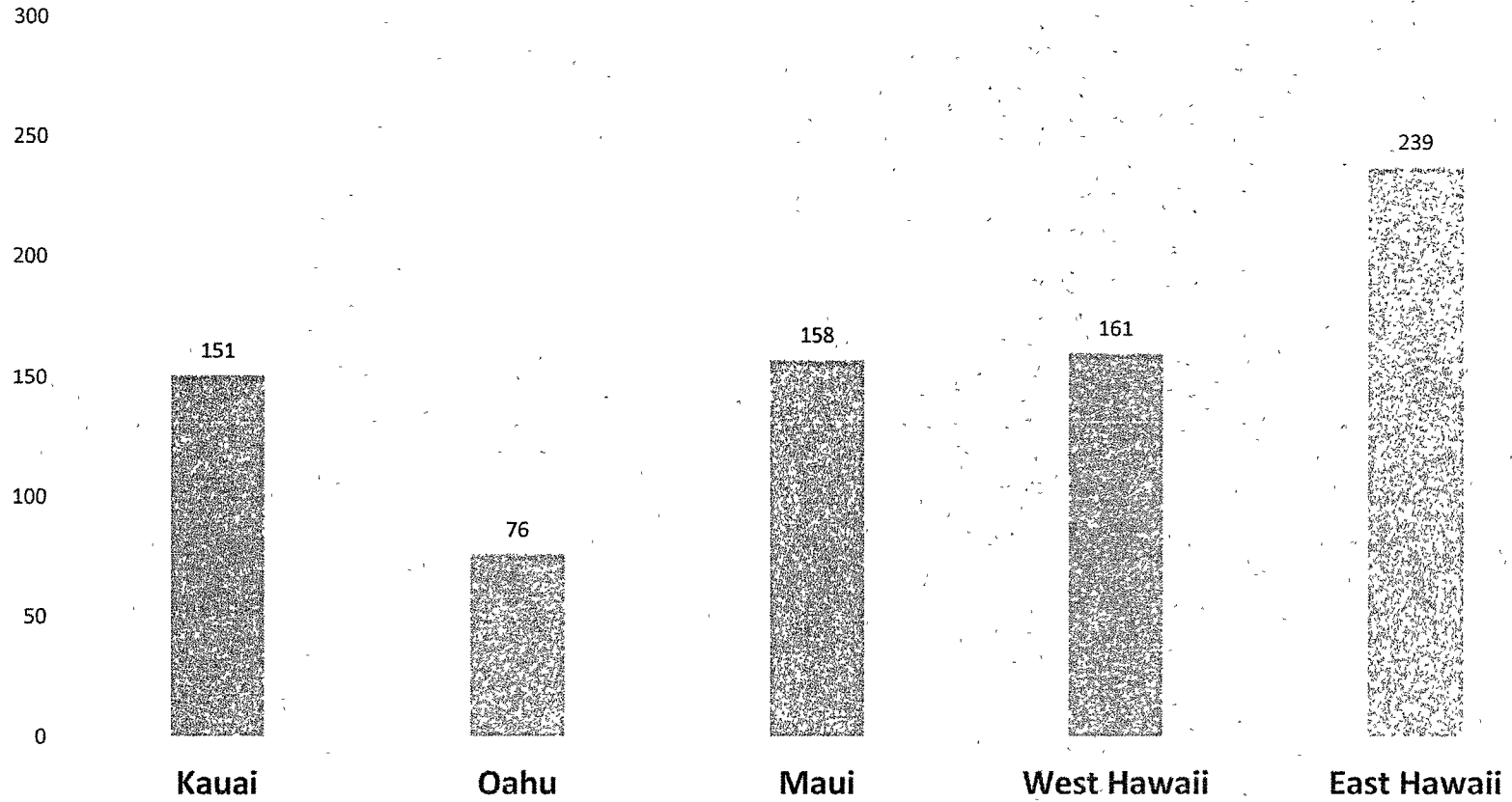
Within the last 10 years East Hawaii CWS has lost 19 positions, lost a regional office, has increased its geographic coverage, and has to comply with more standards. CWS serves the outliers of our community. These children and families are the most vulnerable in our community and deserve better. To hear that each worker is carrying 45-55 children at any given time 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 section in the state that can say this. When the state is needed to step in for the immediate well-being of children they take on tremendous liability. It is in the state and community's best interest to give our social workers the necessary resources to do their job.

Thank you again for this opportunity. Improving outcomes for our CWS children is my passion. Please feel free contact me on this matter.

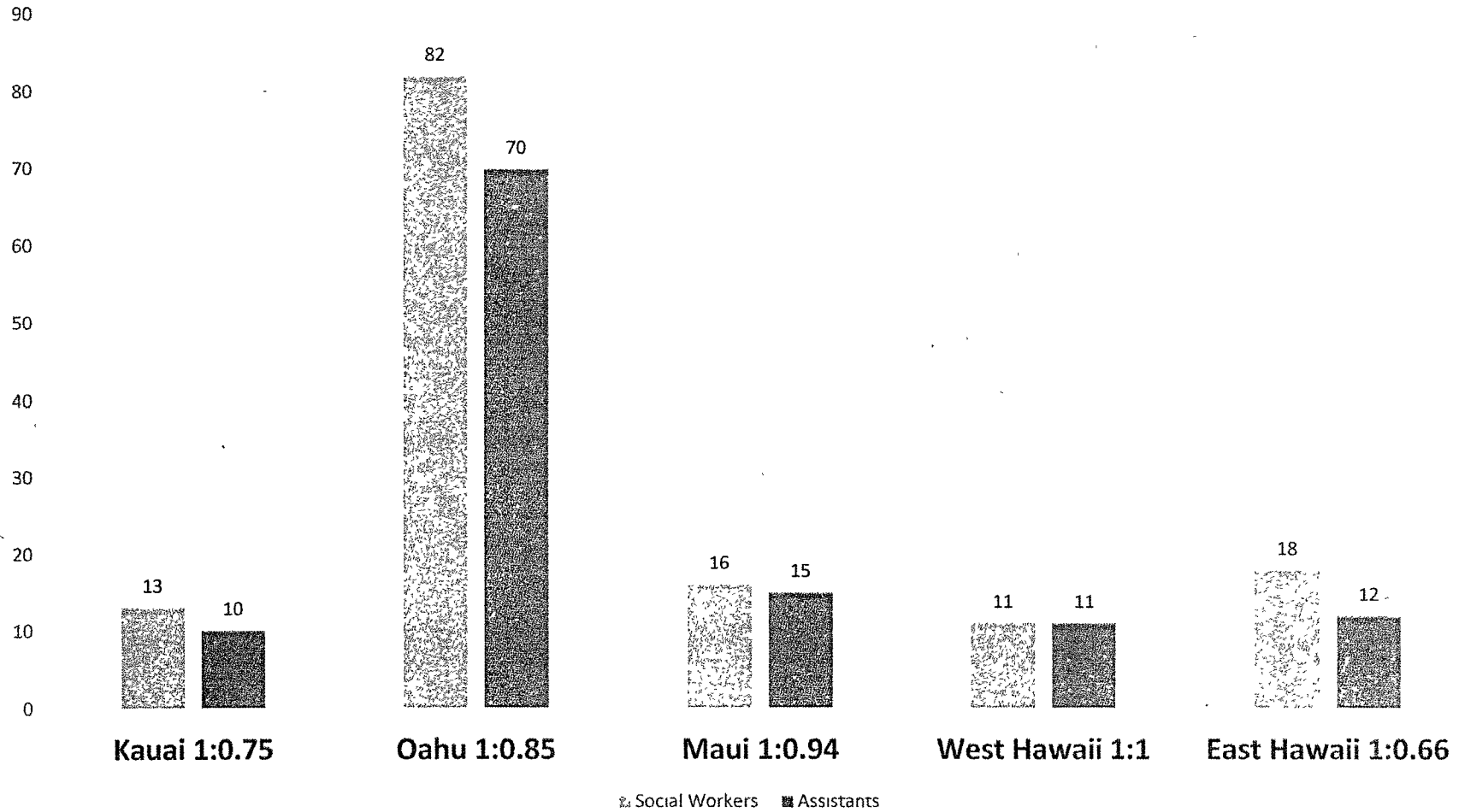
Respectfully Submitted,

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

Child Abuse Rate Per 100,000 Residents



CWS Staffing Positions w/ Ratios



The numbers represent the amount of positions available at each section. Assistants help the case managers with many tasks including supervising visits, transporting youth, and processing payments. Assistants are vital to a social worker being able to operate efficiently. As seen in this graph East Hawaii has the smallest ratio of support staff positions when compared to other sections.

Then & Now

East Hawaii CWS 2008:

- 56 Positions
- 2 Offices (Hilo and Pahoa)
- Covering North Hilo, South Hilo, Puna, and parts of Hamakua and Ka'u.

East Hawaii CWS 2018:

- 37 Positions (34% Decrease)
- 1 Office (Hilo)
- Covering North Hilo, South Hilo Puna and ALL OF Hamakua and Ka'u

LATE

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/9/2018 8:17:48 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am in strong support of this great idea. To launch a pilot project in East Hawaii is an excellent investment in a superb group of professionals who work tirelessly to improve the lives of our youth and families. I have interfaced with these professionals for nearly twenty years in my own social service work, and know firsthand their devotion to keeping our keiki safe from harm and setting them up for productive futures. They do as much as they can with the resources they have, and unfortunately the resources are slim, the caseloads too large. With greater resources (a larger staff), I know their work and our community would benefit!

LATE

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/9/2018 1:13:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Javier Mendez-Alvarez		Support	No

Comments:

LATE

HB-2277

Submitted on: 2/9/2018 5:24:31 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
mellissa anderle		Support	No

Comments:

As a resource caregiver since 2015, I strongly support this bill.