

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

January 31, 2017

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

FROM: Merton Chinen, Executive Director

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

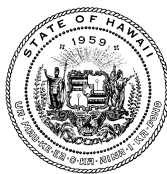
Hearing: Wednesday, February 1, 2017, 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

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

Additionally, if therapeutic prevention and mental health programs are funded, consultation with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division of the Department of Health should occur in the development of this service array.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the measure is to appropriate funds for operational costs to provide therapeutic prevention and mental health programs for high risk youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
W. R. Farrington High School
1564 North King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Dear Committee on Human Services, Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair, Rep. Chris Todd, Vice Chair, And members of the Committee,

My name is Ronald Oyama, Vice Principal of Farrington High School.

I would like to submit a testimony in support of HB 693. I have been at Farrington High School for 10 years, and in the Department of Education for 27 years. Farrington High School has a steady enrollment of approximately 2,400 Students. We are currently servicing about 5 federal housings, and our poverty level is at approximately 59%.

Before I transferred to Farrington High School, I only heard about the gangs in the school. KPT, Kam IV were the only 2 that I “heard about,” but upon arrival here at Farrington my experience was about to change. I soon found out when dealing with fights on campus that most of the students were affiliated with gangs from different areas in the Kalihi district. There are more than 2 gangs on our campus and they are located and hang out at different places around our campus. Since my first day at Farrington High School, I have come to know many students who are members in gangs and let me say, they are the most honest, honors us with their “word,” and when they shake your hand, they mean it. I have learned that if you show them respect, show them that you care, that you can be honest, they will truly respond in kind.

From the outside, off our campus, and even in the community, no one sees up close and personal, the issues and conflicts that these students are dealing with on a daily basis. Growing up in Kalihi, is tough. Many of our students have been influenced by older siblings, parents, uncles and aunties who were formally in gangs. That’s what they know, that’s what they’ve seen, that’s what they grow up around.

Many times students affiliated with, or in gangs are dealing with issues where they have no outlet to express, no one to navigate and help them through their issues within themselves or with others. The feeling of helplessness turn into rage, paranoia, false pride, and then violence. This is when the public then hears about the gang violence on the streets, in our neighborhoods, and the animosity and hostility that stems from deep rooted confrontations from past generations.

Adult Friends for Youth has been a huge force and influence on our campus and in our students’ lives. They take the time to deal with our groups and through their therapeutic discipline, they navigate through the groups’ and individuals’ needs, feelings, and emotions. Our students affiliated with gangs need to be heard, to be supported, to have someone they can truly pour out their feelings to. AFY has been there for them. AFY supports ALL Clients, even after graduation and into their adult lives. Their doors are never closed. AFY clinicians are available to our student clients 24 – 7 and are on the clock with them anytime they need help and support. Our administrators, counselors, social workers, and security has worked hand in hand with AFY whenever we have had confrontations, fights, and gang wars. AFY has very strong relationships with our gang members and they are deeply trusted and respected. This is one of the reasons we have made huge strides when reconciling, mediating, and returning our campus back to normalcy. Without AFY our school cannot function. We cannot duplicate the services, time, and specialty that they have perfected over the years. Without AFY I fear there will be no one that the gangs will trust, relate to, and feel that they are understood.

Addressee

Date

Page 2

I am asking you to please consider supporting this bill, HB 693. We need AFY not only for our school, but our community, and most importantly for the students that need help, love, and understanding. You have the power to pass this bill that will acknowledge the fact that gangs do exist, are part of our culture in Kalihi, but more importantly by providing funds for this organization, you are changing lives. Please use your power and efforts to fund a proven and vital organization that knows how to deal specifically with our gangs and ultimately changes their lives. AFY is proven and have many times kept students from being incarcerated.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ronald Oyama.

Vice Principal of Wallace Rider Farrington High School

DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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**THE HONORABLE DEE MORIKAWA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Twenty-Ninth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2017
State of Hawai'i**

February 1, 2017

RE: H.B. 693; RELATING TO PROGRAMS FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH.

Chair Morikawa, Vice-Chair Todd and members of the House Committee on Human Services, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") supports the intent of H.B. 693, however, would urge this committee to consider reallocating the funds associated with H.B. 693 to Adult Friends for Youth as an alternative agency to carry out the goals and objectives.

The purpose of H.B. 693 is to help reduce youth violence and delinquency in the State by creating therapeutic prevention and mental health programs for high risk youth. The creation of additional programs to assist our youth is consistent with this Department's ongoing concern for at-risk youth. Over the years, our Department has seen increases in crime involving youth offenders who at times are as young as 12 years of age. Yet, despite this rise, there are few programs available to youth offenders in Hawaii, often leaving them with little or no meaningful alternatives.

While the purpose of H.B. 693 is to establish a multi-pronged approach in programs which works to combine elements of community and school counseling, our Department would strongly urge this committee to consider appropriating funds associated with H.B. 693 for the fiscal year 2017-2018 to Adult Friends for Youth as an alternative. Adult Friends for Youth, was established in 1985 at the University of Hawaii, School of Social Work and boasts a stellar track record and history of sustainability which would ensure that any appropriated funds will be allocated properly and effectively. Adult Friends for Youth works with more than 400 high risk youth per week and has established many successful programs such as their Re-directional Therapy which is an effective therapeutic approach to combat violence, drugs, crime, teen pregnancy, family dysfunction, learning disabilities and anti-social behaviors amount the very high risk youth both in and outside of the classroom. Through the programs implemented by

Adult Friends for Youth, their services have successfully changed the attitudes and behaviors of over numerous different gangs. They have also successfully assisted multiple gang members through the difficult task of integration back into the community.

For all the reasons above, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu supports the intent of H.B. 693 and strongly urges this committee to reallocate any funds to the Adult Friends for Youth Program. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

HUStestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2017 1:34 PM
To: HUStestimony
Cc: jclark@hysn.org
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB693 on Feb 1, 2017 09:30AM

HB693

Submitted on: 1/30/2017

Testimony for HUS on Feb 1, 2017 09:30AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Judith Clark	Hawaii Youth Services Network	Comments Only	Yes

Comments: See attached testimony

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Vice Chair

MARGARET WILLE
SEAN SMITH
Legislative Committee Co-Chairs

January 31, 2017
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services

HB693 "RELATING TO PROGRAMS FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH"
Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 9:30 am State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Submitted on Behalf of the Democratic Party of Hawaii

The Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB639 "Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth" including the appropriation of funds for school centered and neighborhood centered programs. **The intent of this legislation supports two of the Democratic Party of Hawaii's legislative priorities for the 2017 legislative session:** Expanding the scope of (community based) educational programs and "drop-in centers" for homeless youth especially, combined with training and certification in skills and trades; mentoring (without requirement of accompanied by parent or guardian). Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Tim Vandever (tim@hawaiidemocrats.org)
Chair of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

/s/ Marie (Dolly) Strazar (hilomds@gmail.com)
Vice Chair of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

/s/ Margaret Wille (margaretwille@mac.com)
/s/ Sean Smith (simashang@yahoo.com)
Legislative Committee Co-chairs

Testimony on House Bill 693
Submitted by Alison Colby, M.S.W.

I am writing in support of HB693, with recommendations of amendments submitted by staff of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY).

I have been a social worker at Farrington High School for the past 28 years. No one school or agency can remedy the issues that our Kalihi youth face. But over the years, I have seen AFY effectively use every penny of the limited resources they have, to address gang violence, guide homeless youth, and keep our schools and communities safe.

In the early 1990s, in response to violent and sometimes fatal gang incidents in Kalihi, AFY began working with our Farrington youth, using their hands-on, re-directional therapy approach. By the late 1990s, largely due to their help, gang violence dissipated. But the potential for violence still persists, and eruptions do occur -- and when they do, AFY's expertise is hugely important. Their presence on campus has prevented and addressed countless conflicts.

The staff at AFY is able to bring about deep and genuine change in the norms and lives of youth at the highest risk of truancy, violent behaviors and incarceration. AFY staff is available around-the-clock, to provide individual and group therapy, neighborhood outreach, gang mediation, tutoring, or whatever else it takes to give our youth hope and vision. They calm emotions and untangle complex situations with skill, patience and respect. Amazingly, AFY continues to support and stay connected with former clients, many of whom were long ago deemed "lost causes", but who are now productive, tax-paying citizens in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

Gang fights arise over differences in ethnic culture, neighborhoods and housing projects; personal and family feuds; other grievances and alliances; and today exacerbated by the speed and power of the internet. But digging deeper, these gang conflicts are rooted in the values that most of us share: the desire for respect, dignity, belonging, loyalty, friends, family and love. These young people want peaceful lives, they want help, and they respond to AFY. What AFY does, works.

In recent years, our state has seen increased numbers of homeless youth and the challenges that homelessness brings to the community. AFY staff reached out to these youth -- some of whom had given up on elementary school. They have been able to foster trust from these young people, and they continue to provide professional and therapeutic help wherever and however it is needed.

I ask that you support House Bill 693, so that AFY can continue to do their critical work for our communities. Their intervention has a long track record of success -- and I do not exaggerate when I say that they are essential to the safety and security of our school and community.

HUStestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2017 2:05 PM
To: HUStestimony
Cc: cchaudron08@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB693 on Feb 1, 2017 09:30AM

HB693

Submitted on: 1/27/2017

Testimony for HUS on Feb 1, 2017 09:30AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Camila Chaudron	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Hi, my name is Camila Chaudron, and I am a constituent from the Manoa/Makiki area. I support this measure. Supporting society's most vulnerable is part of our communal obligation and privilege. Thank you for supporting Hawai'i's youth. Mahalo.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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

HB 693 is an important bill that I feel should be passed and supported to implement preventive measures in preventing youth violence and criminal behavior for at risk youth. Through appropriated funding for therapeutic prevention criminal thoughts and behaviors can be recognized and addressed through counseling. These preventive measures give youth an opportunity to opt out of a life that leads to jails, institutions, and death. Many of the high-risk youths turn to violence and gang life because there is no other option or source of support which inevitably charts them on a path which is set by society. Once these youth turn into adults they already have an extensive criminal record and they're so enmeshed in the criminal lifestyle that it is nearly impossible to rehabilitate them.

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

Garriss Akiona Social Work Student

2401 Kula Kolea Place, Honolulu, HI 96819

Submitted to:
Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Hans Hanis from Farrington High School

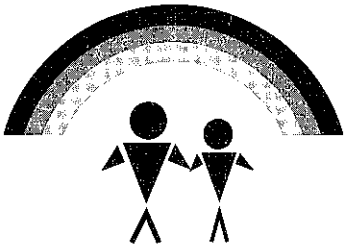
Date: January 31, 2017

My name is Hans Hanis and I support this bill HB 693. I am a Micronesian and I am affiliated with a friendship group from Kalihi Valley Homes and Kuhio Park Terrace. I am writing this testimony or story, on behalf of an agency that I have been with for quite some time called Adult Friends for Youth (AFY).

I met AFY through my 'brothers' and my rugby coach, Molo, who is also a AFY Staff. I was once a boy who did not care about how my life would turn out. I couldn't see myself succeeding in any way and I wanted to give up. When my father was sent to jail, I was left with no hope, no future, and no motivation to become the Hans I am today. I felt like a failure- a failure that had no dream. This all changed when I met AFY. They took the boys and I on an "outing" to experience new things. I knew this was a group I wanted to be part of. I changed schools from Roosevelt to Farrington where regular services were offered. Through weekly therapeutic sessions, I received pep talks, motivation, and ultimately, the courage to seek out opportunities to better my life.

I am now a different Hans. I have made the people I love happy. I know I will be successful. I will work to give people hope that can't find hope as well as to continue to pursue this great ambitious goal of mine all thanks to AFYs job as giving hope to this young individual who was a failure. I will be the man that changes the negative perceptions of Micronesians as well as to let them know that there is a Micronesian who's going to do his very best to get them all where they have to be. Most importantly, I know that AFY will be there to guide me every step of the way. Thanks to the staff at Adult Friends for Youth, I am the man I can be proud of today with goals and ambitions to one day be a politician.

Please pass this bill, HB 693 so that others can receive services from AFY like I do. Thank you for your time and opportunity for me to testify.



Adult Friends for Youth

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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to:

Committee on Human Services
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair
Rep. Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by

Malakai Maumalanga
Director of Redirectional Services
Adult Friends for Youth

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

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

I want to start by stating that I would not be here today testifying if I didn't get the support I needed to change my life. That support came from Adult Friends for Youth (AFY). As a kid growing up in Kalihi I got heavily involved in gangs and violence which seemed like a normal life for me. It's a lifestyle you don't grow out of unless you get the support to deal with these issues. I was expelled from every school I attended because of all the fights. My gang was well known by the police for the destructive behaviors and violence we caused in the communities. It got so bad that the police were often posted on King Street to monitor us. The kids in the neighborhood would not come to the park to play they were afraid of all the trouble. We had been in so many fights and we didn't care that we terrorized our neighborhood. Nobody wanted or knew how to deal with us. Then AFY came into our lives. At first we thought they were another police program to monitor us. We later found out they really wanted to help us and have a peaceful and safe community. I have been blessed to have had AFY help me and my friends deal with our issues so that we could live a productive life. They worked with my whole gang to decrease the violence and to help us begin to hold each other accountable. The accountability that we had for each other helped us to look toward a more productive life. If you only work with one youth or one person from the gang it becomes difficult for that person to try and steer the other members to a positive path. However, if you work with the gang as whole entities –the peer pressure now is easier and becomes positive rather than negative. I went to jail

many times but with the continuous support of AFY, I eventually went to college and got a Master's degree in Social Work. I had all of this experience and today my friends and I are productive people of society. We are not a burden or draining our economy but rather giving back.

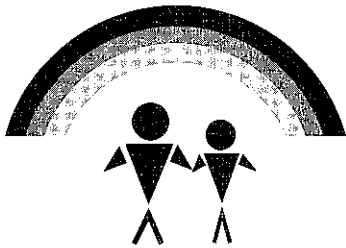
Today, I am the Director of Redirectional Services at AFY. We help students redirect their lives and change their perspectives of life through Redirectional Therapy. We believe that all students have the capacity to enter mainstream of their issues are addressed and their feelings nurtured. By redirecting youth violence and gangs it has a tremendous impact in our schools and communities. By supporting HB 693, it gives these youth an opportunity to reach their full potential. Aggressive behavior and violence is a disease, if left untreated spreads like any other disease. So please support HB 693, give our gang youth a change in life, and help to redirect them from destructive behaviors to a constructive life. Thank you for your time, support and LOVE for our youth and our communities. Mahalo and have a Blessed day.

In addition to supporting this bill we humbly ask the committee to adopt the following friendly amendments (italicized, underlined and bolded):

1. Page 1 lines 1-3: Section 1. The legislature finds that youth violence is a growing concern in the State, particularly **associated with gang membership and homeless youth involved with violence and juvenile delinquency.**
2. Page 2 lines 7-8 and 14-15 ...organization **providing prevention, intervention, group and individual counseling** for high risk youth.

We recommend this amendments for the following reasons:

1. As stated earlier we have learned that some, not all, homeless youth are engaging in gang and criminal activities. We need to stop the cycle from recurring.
2. The change of language will allow for the services to be overseen by the Department of Human Services particularly the Office of Youth Services as they are suited and have had the experience in dealing with these issues.



Adult Friends for Youth

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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by
Tevita Williams
Redirectional Specialist
Adult Friends for Youth

Date: January 31, 2017

Subject: Support for HB 693, Relating to Programs and High Risk Youth

For the past 30 years, Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) has been an intricate force in tackling youth violence in Hawaii, particularly delinquent youth associated with being high risk. As a current staff member of AFY, I am testifying in strong support of HB 693 Relating to Programs and High Risk Youth, which will allow organizations like ours to continue to take on the difficult task of reaching out to these youths who are the most at-risk. It will also allow us to provide them opportunities to develop essential skills needed to become productive and contributing members of society. In my three years at AFY, I have been directly involved with redirecting deconstructing behaviors of youth from deferent demographics by promoting healthy lifestyles and personal well-being. AFY's redirecting and empowering the lives of these youth will not only better these individuals, but the communities these individuals come from as well. Again, with recommendations of amendments submitted by staff of Adult Friends for Youth, I strongly support HB 2163 Relating to Programs and High Risk Youth and hope you will also see the significance of how this Bill will help to combat violence among youth and effectively promote community and school safety for all. Thank you very much for your time and presence.



Adult Friends for Youth

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Submitted to:

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES:

Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair

Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Siutiti Takai

Redirectional Specialist of Adult Friends for Youth

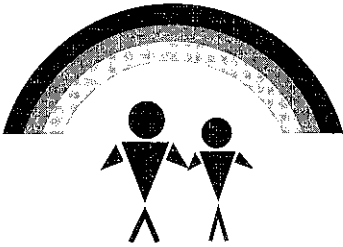
Subject: Support for HB 693

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

In the eyes of many, youth violence and homeless youth involved in acts of violence and juvenile delinquency is a growing problem that needs immediate attention. Rather than spend incredibly high cost on incarcerating the young people of our community. We should invest in programs that have the experienced expertise and relationship building skills to address serious concerns. The concerns around destructive and violent behavior in order to redirect these behaviors toward a positive and constructive solution. Many high risk youth have issues that go deeper than what they portray that often leads to lashing out through violence. Therefore, counseling sessions as a group in school helps express the emotions that are bottled up.

Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) is a nonprofit organization, providing intervention work toward high risk youth for the past 30 years. AFY has gained a notable reputation for its overwhelming success with this specific youth population. By helping to redirect their lives through advocacy and empowerment, continuous effort is further directed toward integrating them into healthy community living and personal well-being. AFY's outreach services help to heighten the potential for achieving community goals, such as reducing extreme poverty, improving healthy lifestyles, and access to educational opportunities that enhances the quality of life. The youth AFY serves are those who believe they have no place in the community. I truly, support the vision and mission AFY stands for and I'm proud to say that I am a part of this agency whom, is making a difference in the lives of youth gang members. We ask the support of this bill, HB 693 because it will help give the youth a chance towards a brighter future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.



Adult Friends for Youth

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Sidney M. Rosen, M.S.W., Ph.D

**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to:

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair

Rep. Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:

Spenser Kunishige

Redirectional Specialist/ Grant Coordinator of Adult Friends for Youth

Good Morning/ Afternoon committee members. My name is Spenser Kunishige and I am a Redirectional Specialist/ Grant Coordinator for Adult Friends for Youth. Adult Friends for Youth is a non-profit organization that provides group therapy for high risk, gang members, and homeless youth in efforts to redirect their destructive behaviors into constructive behavior so that our schools and communities can be safer, and those individuals can become productive members of society.

I am in strong support for HB 693, Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth. On a weekly basis, Adult Friends for Youth services around 350 students. These 350 students vary on their geographical location as they currently service Farrington High School, Waipahu High School, Kapolei High School, Leileihua High School, Dole Middle School, Kalakaua Middle School, and Central Middle school. Adult Friends for Youth has been a key to reducing violence, as well as aiding in school and community safety for these respected schools and communities. Using their therapeutic approach, Redirectional Therapy, Adult Friends for Youth is able to build strong relationships with their students, while working on redirecting their student's lives and breaking the cycle of violence, despair, and unhealthy lifestyles.

Passing this Bill will help qualified organizations to reach out and advocate for these youths, and empower them to becoming positive role models, rather than engaging in violent and destructive behaviors. In the end, promoting healthy communities and safer schools is the overall objective.

Again, I strongly support HB 693, Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

January 31,2017

Aloha Representatives of Hawai'i,

My name is Dawn Tawata and I support HB693: Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth. I am writing to you as an individual who has both personal and professional experience with serving and supporting "high risk" youth.

Many of Hawai'i's youth and adults have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). ACE include emotional, physical and sexual abuse; household challenges, such as, incarceration of a parent, domestic violence, substance abuse, separation/divorce, and mental illness; and emotional and physical neglect.

Research has been extensive on the impact of ACE's. It leads to the impairment in an individual's social, emotional, and cognitive development; adoptions of health-risk behaviors; disease, disability, and social problems; and an early death.

Having organizations to provide therapeutic support to high risk youth has the potential to mitigate the consequences of ACE through the provision of safe and accessible services with qualified professionals.

As much as I would like to provide oral testimony, I will be serving and supporting children, adolescents, and young adults who are/have experienced ACE. However, please contact me if I can be of any help in moving this bill forward.

In conclusion, I passionately support HB693 because it honors the worth of our keiki.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dawn Mari Tawata



Adult Friends for Youth

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**Past Chair of the Board*

Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Deborah L.K. Spencer-Chun
President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth

Chair Morikawa, Vice Chair Todd and members of the Committee on Human Services, I am here to testify in support of HB 693 relating to Programs for High Risk Youth.

Before taking on the role of President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY), I spent over 20 years in the field working directly with youth involved in gangs and violence. What have I learned over the years? Gang members and youth involved in violence are usually acting out as symptom of deep rooted issues. They join gangs because they need a place to belong and the gang becomes their surrogate family. Like drugs, the gang becomes a means to escape dealing with problems that have become overwhelming for them to handle. To break up the gang or to work with a youth in isolation is defeating because you are taking them away from their only support network. We also know that peers tend to have the most influence on each other at this developmental stage in their lives. Youth gang membership and violence is not limited to particular communities nor is it limited to only public housing, it is much more wide spread.

So what have I learned that works? Providing outreach services to these young men and women and engaging them in group counseling sessions helps begin identifying the deep rooted problems, talk about it, and teach them skills to cope with the problem as well as skills to empower them. These services has to be consistent, long-term and infused in their communities. These services should be holistic and include the entire peer group to turn negative peer pressure into positive peer pressure so that they can begin to hold each member accountable for their actions. The Juvenile Justice System has agreed that working with a youth in their environment is much more effective than incarceration and has made stride to provide services to a youth in their communities. Youth involved with gangs and violence should be given the same option.

Over the years, gang membership and violence have become more prevalent because technology namely social media has brought it to the forefront. Fights, name calling, bullying and recruitment of

members are often posted to many of these sites allowing the problem to Spread faster and island wide. This sensationalizes the violence and makes it attracting to watch as well as engage in the behavior. Social media has also been the catalyst that have brought youth (sometimes close to a hundred) from all over the island to engage, participate and/or witness a fight causing members and residents of the community to live in fear.

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

At AFY we reach and provide services to more than 350+ students a week, which involves group counseling as well as outreach, case management, advocacy, truancy reduction, leadership training, and mentorship on and off the school campus. Our Street wise, street smart therapeutic approach works with high risk youth on their own turf and tackles difficult challenges that youth faces. We work with youth gangs as whole entities and for three plus years. Our services are culturally relevant to Hawaii's diverse multi-ethnic population. We also provide Crisis services and interventions 24/7 because we know that the violence do not only occur between 9am - 5 pm. AFY works in partnership with school administrators and faculty to provide effective counseling services to reduce and eliminate destructive behaviors on school campuses in order to create a violence free, safe educational environment where students can thrive. We provide mediation services between rival gangs at schools and between schools. We partner with other programs to refer youth for more services when they have learned to properly conduct themselves in the appropriate settings.

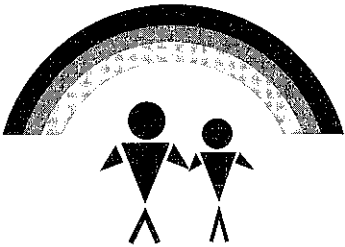
In addition to supporting this bill we humbly as the committee to adopt the following friendly amendments (italicized, underlined and bolded):

1. Page 1 lines 1-3: Section 1. The legislature finds that youth violence is a growing concern in the State, particularly **associated with gang membership and homeless youth involved with violence and juvenile delinquency.**
2. Page 2 lines 7-8 and 14-15 ...organization **providing prevention, intervention, group and individual counseling** for high risk youth.

We recommend this amendments for the following reasons:

1. As stated earlier we have learned that some, not all, homeless youth are engaging in gang and criminal activities. We need to stop the cycle from recurring.
2. The change of language will allow for the services to be overseen by the Department of Human Services particularly the Office of Youth Services as they are suited and have had the experience in dealing with these issues.

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



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**Past Chair of the Board*

Adult Friends for Youth

Submitted to Committee on Human Services,
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair,
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by McKay Schwenke
Vice President,
Adult Friends for Youth.

Date: January 31, 2017

HB 693 Relating to Programs for High Risk Youth

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

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

as they move in a positive direction. Success breeds success and the more positive the experience, the more successful the end result will be.

Helping children and youth believe that they matter is critical in order for self-determination and self-respect to be appreciated. The old adage, "Prevention is better than Cure" is so true! Locking up and incarcerating our youth is not the answer. Prevention and intervention coupled with individual and group counseling services that have the ability and the expertise to relate and impact change among youth, is the key to keeping them from not only hurting themselves, but others as well.

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

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony.

In addition to my support of this Bill, I humbly request that the Committee consider adopting the following friendly amendments to include:

1. Page 1 Section 1, lines 1,2,3; The Legislature finds that youth violence is a growing concern in the State, particularly **associated with gang membership and homeless youth involved with violence and juvenile delinquency.**
2. Page 2 lines 7&8 and 14&15...**organization providing prevention, intervention, group and individual counseling** for high risk youth.

We recommend these amendments for the following reasons:

1. As stated earlier we have learned that some, not all homeless youth are engaging in gang and criminal activities. We need to stop the cycle from recurring.
2. The change of language will allow for the services to be overseen by the Department of Human Services particularly the Office of Youth Services as they are suited and have had the experience in dealing with these issues.

Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Jerry Killion
AFY Student

Date: January 31, 2017

Aloha ladies and gentlemen, Chair Morikawa, Vice Chair Todd and Committee members of the Human Services. My name is Jerry Killion and I am in support of HB No. 693.

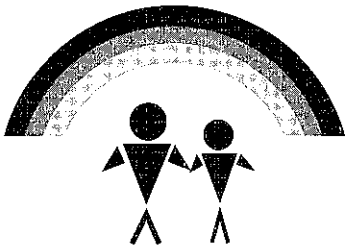
For so long gangs and violence has been a part of my life and raided our society leaving behind a heavy burden for our leaders. They go out into our streets vandalizing at their will causing unnecessary expenses that pile up for taxpayers. I have witnessed violence and crime all my life and observed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

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

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

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

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



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Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Lisa Tamashiro
Director of Operations and Special Programs of
Adult Friends for Youth

Date: January 31, 2017

I am in strong support of HB 693, Relating to Youth Gangs, which will appropriate funds to programs that have the experience and expertise in serving this targeted youth population. Adult Friends for Youth has been providing services to Oahu's youth for over 30 years. The non-profit agency is committed to redirecting the lives and behaviors of the youth from destructive to constructive and building safer communities for all residents.

Hawaii, particularly on Oahu has a rising issue of youth violence, crime and homelessness. It is not a situation to be taken lightly as the epidemic we have seen on the island with the homeless population. It is crucial that we see the value in working with our youth now that will soon become adults. In order to break the destructive cycles of violence, crime and homelessness, it is a necessity that we work with the youth who given the opportunities, has the potential to change and not be a burden of the State and taxpayers.

As a service provider, I have seen the drastic changes that youth can make when given the opportunity. The peer group is considered to be most influential in a youth's life. When the youth are serviced as whole entities, members can learn to hold each other accountable for their actions and progress positively as a group.

Over the years, studies have shown that incarceration has proven to not be an effective approach in the rehabilitation of youth. The targeted youth need services where it is multi-faceted and holistic. The building of trusting and meaningful relationships with service providers has the capacity in redirecting the behaviors of the youth to becoming contributing and productive members of society.

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

In addition to supporting this bill, we humbly ask the committee to adopt the following friendly amendments (italicized, underlined, and bolded):

1. Page 1 lines 1-3: Section 1. The legislature finds that youth violence is a growing concern in the State, particularly **associated with gang membership and homeless youth involved with violence and juvenile delinquency.**
2. Page 2 lines 7-8 and 14-15...organization **providing prevention, intervention, group and individual counseling for high risk youth.**

We recommend this amendments for the following reasons:

1. As stated earlier we have learned that some, not all, homeless youth are engaging in gang and criminal activities. We need to stop the cycle from recurring.
2. The change of language will allow for the services to be overseen by the Department of Human Services particularly the Office of Youth Services as they are suited and have had the experience in dealing with these issues.

By providing the appropriate services for these youth, we will be creating a safer community for all residents of Hawaii and a brighter future for the next generation. We strongly urge the committee to pass HB 693 with recommendations of amendments submitted by staff of Adult Friends for Youth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted to Committee on Human Services
Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair
Representative Chris Todd, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
John Funaki
AFY Student

Date: January 31, 2017

Aloha Chair Morikawa, Vice Chair Todd and Committee members of the Human Services. My name is John Funaki and I am in support of HB No. 693.

Gang violence is a disease. It is a disease of which targets individuals, who all come together and eventually mess up communities. I grew up my whole life witnessing the huge amount of damage gang violence can do to a person, family, community, city, and state. I myself was in a gang and it all started when I was 11 years old. I started having some family issues and I had no one to turn too. My cousins and their gang were the only people who showed me love. Deeper and deeper as I got affiliated into the gang, I started fighting more. From middle school until high school, I was kicked out of 4 schools for fighting. After the last school my senior year, I had nowhere left to go.

However, I was part of Adult Friends for Youth's (AFY) group counseling program since my sophomore year and I knew they had an alternative education program (C-Base). I was referred to their program, roughly 9 months later, I was able to complete my school and graduate.

My person experience with AFY has been nothing else short of great. Time after time I have gotten in trouble and before my gang members were there, AFY leaders were there first. It then triggered me to know that the gang life was not for me anymore. All the group sessions, individual sessions, and outings, I have witnessed how much love AFY has for their kids. They are constantly there for us. People think they

only work their office hours but they are on call 24/7 because some leaders picked us up at times like 3:00 in the morning when we called for help.

All I want out of this and kindly ask for is for us to come together and help programs like AFY cure the disease of gang violence. I would like it for the simple things like making the streets safer for parents to take their kids to the park or for the elderly to be able to walk at nights.

So I ask that you humbly support HB 693. Thank you so much for your valuable time.