



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

March 13, 2018

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

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2276 SD1 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Hearing: Thursday, March 15, 2018, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

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

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

The notion of a five year pilot program is intriguing as DHS continues to examine ways to improve our services and response to families in crisis. DHS acknowledges an increase in children in foster care; the total number of children in foster care statewide has increased 23% from State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014 to SFY 2017. The East Hawaii section has 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 historically experienced a low vacancy rate 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.

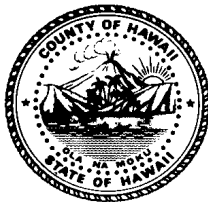
Staff retention is a critical factor in addressing the vacant positions. In the past four years, CWSB has invested efforts to strengthen the leadership team. The Branch developed supervisor training curriculum, tested, and modified it with input from CWS supervisors. The first cohort is currently participating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

*From the office of -*  
Council Member  
District 3



Office: (808) 961-8396  
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**SUSAN L.K. LEE LOY**

25 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Health Human Services

March 14, 2018

Dear Chair Mizuno and Committee Members,

I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting and commenting on SB 2276 SD1. Although East Hawai'i Island is far from the only area in our State that could benefit from the proposed pilot program to reduce the number of children assigned to each case worker, this is a good place to start. Nowhere else in Hawai'i do the conditions of poverty, abuse, and neglect exist in conjunction with the lack of access to critical services as a result of the wide geographical displacement of lots in the Puna district, an area almost the size of O'ahu. But Puna is just one area of East Hawai'i, which also includes Hāmākua, North Hilo, South Hilo, and Ka'ū.

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

The loss of 19 of the 56 positions within the East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services section has resulted in social workers taking in far more cases than they can reasonably handle with the professionalism that the children deserve. Funding for the eight FTE case managers and the 15 FTE support staff positions as proposed in SB 2276 SD1, will help. We can do better, and this bill is a vehicle for it to happen.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2276 SD1, and I ask for your approval.

Aloha Piha,

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

Sue Lee Loy  
Council Member, District 3

Harry Kim  
Mayor



Wil Okabe  
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow  
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i  
Office of the Mayor

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March 13, 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: SB 2276, SD 1 Relating to Child Welfare Services**  
**Hearing Date: 03-15-18 – 10:00 am; House Conference Room 329**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2276, SD 1.

My staff and I have been made aware of the critical need to improve child welfare services in Hawai'i County. While both of the State's East and West Hawai'i offices are suffering from overload, the initiative proposed in SB 2276, SD 1 recognizes the reality that it is in East Hawai'i where the State has the best chance to hire and retain the necessary personnel.

The caseload numbers that were presented at earlier hearings on this bill varied, as some testifiers measured the number of children per caseworker versus the number of families assigned. Either way, it seems clear that the child welfare caseload in East Hawai'i is shocking and disturbing. Child welfare workers have so many clients that it would be considered unacceptable by national standards. Add to that the handicap of being asked to cover a huge geographic area, requiring a great deal of time-consuming travel, and it is no wonder that the community is begging for your assistance.

The positions and funding requested in SB 2276, SD 1 are for a "pilot project," and if that is determined to be the best way to give some relief to the East Hawai'i workers and the keiki they serve, then I defer to your wisdom on that matter. My main concern is that the workers and their clients get the relief called for, and the sooner the better.

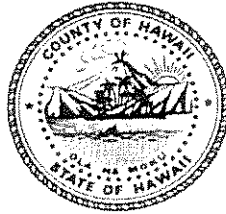
Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Kim  
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

MITCHELL D. ROTH  
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

DALE A. ROSS  
FIRST DEPUTY  
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



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## OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2276, SD1

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair

Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 15, 2018 10:00 AM.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Honorable Chair Mizuno, Vice-Chair Kobayashi and Members of the Committee on Health & Human Services, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i submits the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 2276, SD 1.

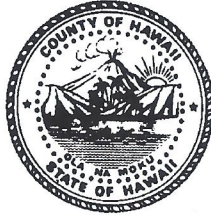
This measure appropriates funds to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty and additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

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 Senate Bill 2276, SD 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

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



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## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

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

March 14, 2018

House Committee on Health and Human Services  
John M. Mizuno, Chair  
Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Email: [repmizuno@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:repmizuno@Capitol.hawaii.gov)  
Email: [repbertrand@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:repbertrand@Capitol.hawaii.gov)

Subject: Testimony Supporting SB2276, SD1 Relating to Child Welfare Services  
Hearing: March 15, 2018, 10:00 a.m., Room 329

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of myself and the constituents of Council District 1 in Hāmākua, County of Hawai'i, I would like to express our support of SB2276, SD1.

This bill appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawai'i child welfare services section in Hawai'i county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty and appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

I strongly urge the enactment of SB2276, SD1. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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



**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 8:28:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Marilyn Yamamoto	National Family Advocacy Team	Oppose	No

Comments:

While a proposal to increase funding to child welfare services is an obvious first response to negative news about the department, it is my position that little research has been done by the authors of this bill to include factors on child protection failures that are not the cause of caseworker overload.. During this past week alone, I have watched forums in other states that clearly expose the failure of policy and department structure as the primary cause of system flaws.

The March 4 StarAdvertiser story on the 3rd failure of the Hawaii CWS of federal evaluations since 2003 is indicative that there is more to the challenge of child protection than understaffing. All 50 states have failed and there has been no complaint that 50 states do not support child protection adequately. One evaluator in Region 10 said that the states have the rules and guidelines and yet support BAD practices.

I object to the portion of the bill that puts DHS and its contracted vendors in charge of reporting the effects of an increase in staff. That needs independent scrutiny and oversight since there is so much lack of transparency via department records.

I would be happy to submit video evidence from prominent child welfare professionals that supports the fact that, without a change in the culture and direction of CWS management, an increase in the staffing at the Hilo unit will not be effective.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 6:11:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Annette Clay	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support SB2276.

to hear that Hawaii is one of only 15 states that failed every section of the federal review two periods in a row is very sad. We have to do better than this. Please please please make sure this goes all the way. Thank you.

Annette Clay

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 6:11:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Norman Arancon	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2276. I ask that our senators and representatives exercise 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,

Dr. Norman Q. Arancon, PhD

**Judith Wilhoite**  
Kailua, Hawaii 96734

To: Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair  
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing: Thursday, March 15, 2018  
10:00 A.M.  
Room 329

From: Judith Wilhoite

RE: SB 2276 Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha,

My name is Judith Wilhoite. My husband and I have been foster parents for over 20 years. I thank you for this opportunity to voice very strong support for SB2276.

Over the past two decades, I have seen firsthand the positive difference DHS social workers can make in the lives of Hawaii's children, youth, and families, *creating a better community for all of us*. Their work includes helping families heal and become stable enough to regain custody of their children. This is not a job for the faint hearted, as often both the birth parents and the foster children have suffered severe trauma in their lives, creating physical and psychological issues for all members of the family. It is imperative that these issues are addressed in a healing, thoughtful way, if we want to see this family become strong again. If we want this family to be able to function in healthy, productive ways.

At the same time, the case workers must support and respond to the needs of the resource caregivers currently taking care of the children, for children who have trauma in their past often present extremely challenging behaviors. A social worker getting needed support to the resource caregiver in a timely matter means the child is also getting what he or she needs to learn, heal, and be resilient.

If we want to see significant improvement of our child welfare system, we must provide the brave souls who embark on a career in child welfare with healthy, supportive working conditions. Giving workers a manageable case load is not only a good place to start, it is absolutely imperative!

I thank you for hearing this bill and strongly support its passage.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 7:40:24 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
jennifer FitzGerald	Licensed Mental Health Counselor	Support	No

Comments:

Please consider passing this bill. It is much needed and these children deserve the best care possible!

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 8:41:23 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Wilma Friesema	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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

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

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

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

Mahalo for your time,

Wilma Friesema

Kaneohe, HI

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 8:42:02 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
margarita ramos	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 8:57:28 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
karen de soto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a retired MSW and former CWS social worker, and as a current foster parent, I support passage of this measure. My two foster children of six months have not been visited by their social worker. I am sure that this is a matter of prioritizing, as well as paperwork, distance travel and general stress; the social worker is fine. After I left CWS in protest over the size of my caseload, the legislature and DHS made some changes over time. It seems to me that East Hawaii's high case numbers have never seemed "believable" to Oahu administration and resources have been lacking for a long time.

As a volunteer GAL for ten years and later as a CWS social worker, I can personally attest to the needs and lack of resources, both in the community and in staffing. Our rural setting, travel distances and level of poverty are problems. Our children deserve better. Increased staffing and lower caseloads can ensure that time and services are provided early on in a case, when chances of effecting a change are better. Good investigation is critical and home visits are essential in order to really know what is going on. Please support this effort to improve the protection of children in East Hawaii.



**MADLINE M. REED**  
ATTORNEY AT LAW



March 13, 2018

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

Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health & Human Services  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: SB 2276, SD 1 Relating to Child Welfare Services**  
**Hearing Date: 3/12/18 - 2:45 PM; Conference Room 016**

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice-Chair Kobayashi and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of SB 2276, SD 1. I have practiced Child Welfare Law here on Hawai'i Island since 2010. Over the past eight years I have represented many children and parents involved with East Hawai'i Child Welfare Services.

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

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

**I urge you to pass SB 2276.**

Yours truly,

Madeline M. Reed, Esq.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 10:45:09 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Raquel Gali	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

March 15, 2018

Hearing on 03/15/18 at 10:00am in Conference Room 329

Testimony in support of SB2276

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.

This bill about spending money on salaries not settlements for tragedies. When social workers have the resources they need we can expect to see:

- More thorough investigations that result in less removals
- Higher reunification rates
- Shorter time in the system for those that do enter
- More supported and happier foster parents
- More satisfied workers with less turnover
- And ultimately better outcomes for our children

Thank you again for this opportunity. I humbly ask that you use your position and influence to ensure this bill continues to do well.

Respectfully Submitted,



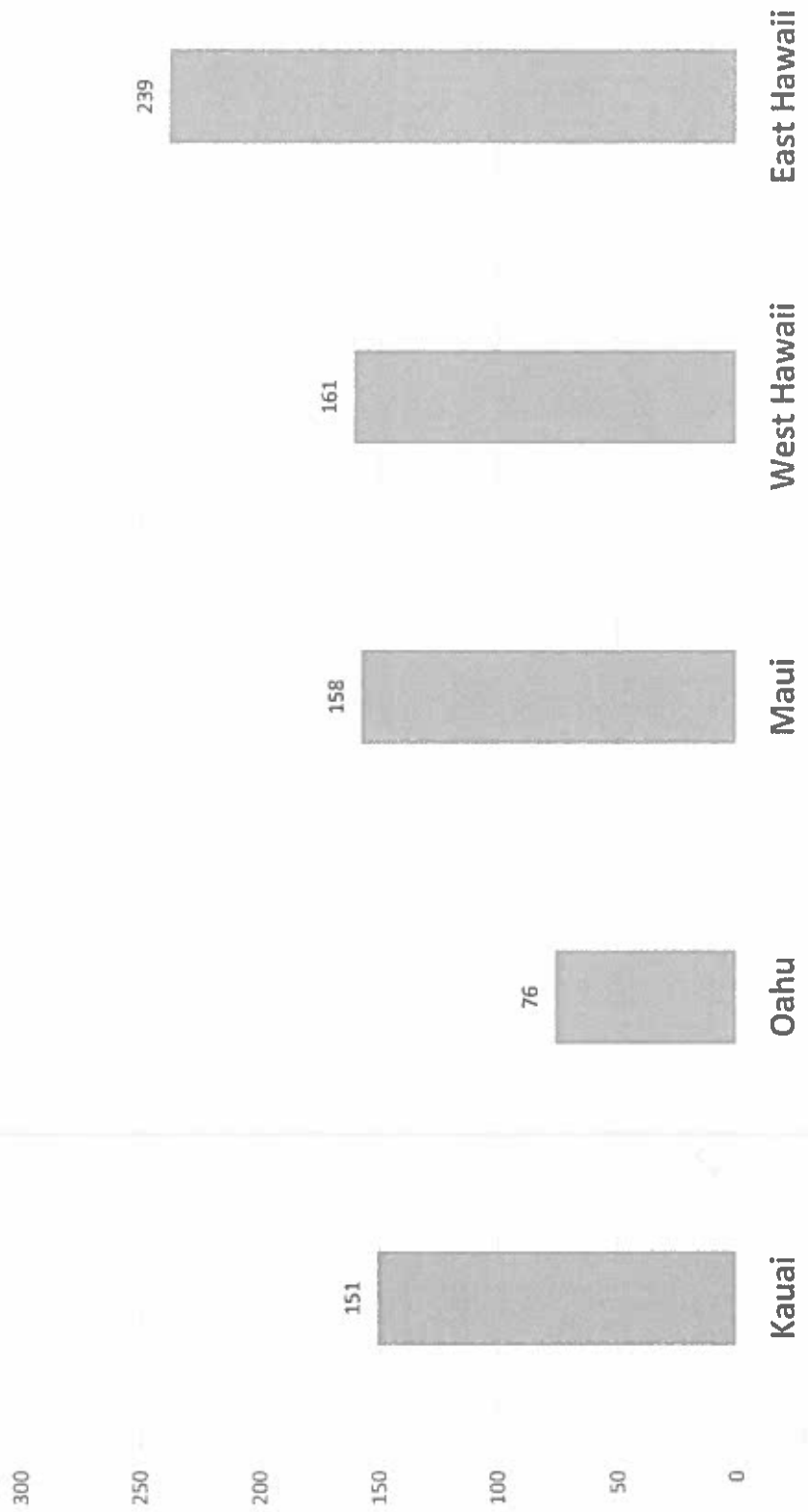
Joseph O'Connell

East Hawaii Friends of Foster Families

[josephmoc@gmail.com](mailto:josephmoc@gmail.com)

808-640-0905

2015 Child Abuse Rate Per 100,000 Residents



## 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.

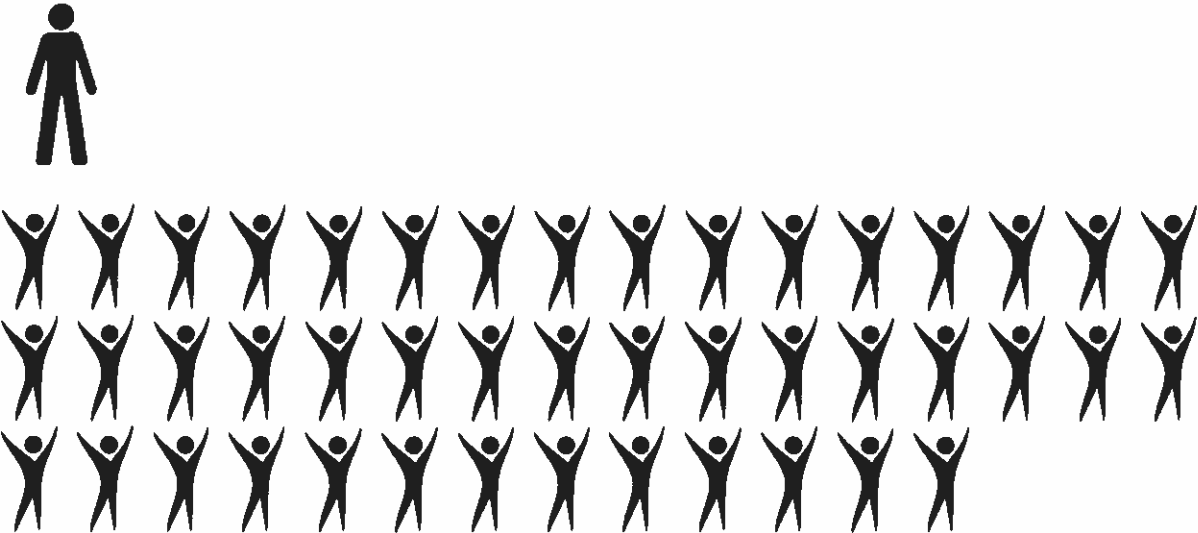
### **East Hawaii CWS 2018:**

- 37 Positions (34% Decrease)

- 1 Office (Hilo)

- Covering North Hilo, South Hilo  
Puna and ALL OF Hamakua and  
Ka'u

**Currently we have approximately one Social Worker and one shared Social Service Aid for every 45 children.**



**HB2277 proposes enough staff to cap the case load at 20 children and give each worker a Social Service Aid**



**We are only 8 social workers and a policy away from being able to implement this in East Hawaii**



ONLINE SUBMITTAL  
March 13, 2017

**HEARING:** Thursday, March 15, 2018

**TO:** Committee on Health & Human Services  
Rep. John Mizuno, Chair  
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

**FROM:** Eva Andrade, President

**RE:** Support for SB2276 SD1 Relating to Child Welfare Services

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii, representing a network of various Christian Churches and various faith-based groups. This year we are celebrating 20 years serving the faith-based community in Hawaii. We support this bill that will create a pilot program on the big island to provide support for the social workers doing heroic work with an unrealistic caseload.

With the increase of children in foster care, lack of resources and overworked case workers, it is apparent that something needs to be done. Every child deserves to be in place where they are protected and free from abuse, neglect and abandonment. This bill is focused and specific, and it provides a response that is measurable and achievable. In fact, it will be great if this pilot program ultimately expands to all the islands.

Keiki in the foster care system are there by no choice of their own. Family circumstances create a wheel of uncertainty and families look to social workers for help navigating the system. Social workers become social workers because they care about families and want to do the best by them. This bill is a practical way to provide them with the support and resources they need to do exactly that.

Mahalo for your continued support of children in the foster care system, the families that are doing their best to support them, and the social workers who provide the glue to keep them together.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 12:21:57 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kalani Pagan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Kalani Pagan

I'm 17 and I have spent most of my life in foster care and have experienced many homes and social workers. Social workers are amazing people that fill the spot of your parent when your real parents can't. They make sure you stay on track with medical needs and in school, they ensure that your foster home is safe and supportive, they show up to youth circles and help plan life after 18 and so much more. I feel they need all the support they can get. Its sad to hear that they give each worker 45-55 kids. How can they fill that roll for all those kids? When promlems arise they need the time to be able to make a complete and accurate decisions. This cant happen when they have that many kids to watch over. Please do evething you can to make sure that HB2277 makes it through the legislature.

Thank you,

Kalani Pagan



**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 12:23:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Shandon Cuba	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Shandon Cuba and I am 18 years old. Me and my three sisters spent three years in foster care. Due to the shortage of foster homes we were initially placed in three different homes. My older sister and I were in two different homes in Hilo and my two younger sisters were placed in a foster home in Ka'u. Ka'u is an hour and a half drive from Hilo and due to that distance I didnt get to see them for the first year of foster care. When I would ask my social worker to see my younger sisters they said they didnt have the time to make that happen. I later found out that not only were family visits not happening but also CPS wasn't visiting them. My 2 and 5 year old sisters were being abused in that home and when it was finanally reported that foster home got shut down. 1 year of abuse could have been easily avoided if the monthly visits happened. Also if social workers had more time they could have arranged for family visits as well and me and sisters could have stayed connected during that crazy part of our lives. If CPS is going to continue to do this work of helping families they need the resources so they can actually help and do the job correctly. Please support HB2277 so this type of nonsense doesnt keep happening.

Mahalo,

Shandon Cuba

# WINNERS' CAMP

HAWAII LEADERSHIP ACADEMY  
LIFE SKILLS TRAINING FOR TEENAGERS  
PERSONAL & ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Coalition for a Drug Free Hawai'i  
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Friends of the Children's Justice Center - East and West Hawai'i  
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Winners' Camp is among the most effective business-supported education improvement projects in the nation.

*-The Conference Board*

March 13, 2018

Testimony regarding Bill SB2276  
Relating to Child Welfare Services

## Aloha

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

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

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

**Please support this bill. Mahalo, malama pono,**

**Delorese Gregoire, Founding Director Winners' Camp Foundation**



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



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

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

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 12:52:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sofia Hergenrader	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2276, SD1: Relating to Child Welfare Services

**TO:** Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair, Representative Della Au Belatti, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Health & Human Services  
**FROM:** Terrence L. Walsh, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer  
**Hearing:** **Thursday, March 15, 2018; 10:00 AM; Conference Room 329**

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Belatti, and Members, Committee on Health & Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of **SB 2276, SD1**, which appropriates funds to establish a five-year pilot program to limit the number of children supervised by social workers in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services (CWS) section to twenty or fewer in order to appropriately care for the safety and well-being of children who have been or are at risk of being abused or neglected. I am Terry Walsh, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

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

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

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

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

We urge you to pass **SB 2276, SD1** to help protect our children in East Hawaii from harm.

Please contact Program Director, Melisa Secola, at (808) 961-7018, or at [secolam@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:secolam@catholiccharitieshawaii.org), if you have any questions.





**Friends of the Children's Justice Center of East Hawaii (FCJCEH)**  
**P. O. Box 6908 ▲ Hilo, HI 96720**  
**Bus: (808) 935-8755 ▲ Fax: (808) 935-8757**  
**E-Mail: fcjceh@hawaii.rr.com / Web Site: fcjceh.org**

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz  
 Ways and Means Chair

Dear Senator Dela Cruz,

The FCJC understands that you will be reviewing SB2276 which address a possible pilot project for increased staffing within East Hawaii Child Welfare Services. We would appreciate your consideration of the information we have provided in this letter when you make your decision on SB2276. This letter is for informational proposes only.

As a well-respected non-profit in the East Hawaii community for 28 years, our mission has been to help sexually, physically, emotionally abused and neglected children. Our vision is to help abused and neglected children of today break the cycle of abuse tomorrow. We do this in partnership with the Children's Justice Center of East Hawaii, by providing funds and resources to support the needs of these children. Our non-profit offers hope, encouragement and opportunity for victims of child abuse.

One of the agencies that we have the opportunity to work with is the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services (CWS) units. We are an additional resource to children in foster custody, as our grants offer funding for emergency, special needs and enhancement items and services that are not available to foster children from any other community resource, or provided for by State of Hawaii funding. In 2016 and 2017 we averaged servicing approximately 600 documented abused and neglected children in East Hawaii, spending approximately \$100,000.00 each year.

In East Hawaii CWS workers can drive more than 112 miles round trip to conduct one home visit. CWS workers have disclosed to us that they are being forced to pick between going on a monthly home visit to see a child or complete paperwork, and that staff are being forced to forgo the non-mandatory parts of their position.

Over the last seven years we have observed CWS worker "burn-out", the lack of CWS manpower and time, and increased CWS work requirements and caseloads, all of which have contributed to the lack in submittal of requests to our organization for foster children. We feel strongly that the items and services provided to foster children by our organization are critical in helping them heal, and gives them the same opportunities as their peers. Please take a few extra minutes to view a video created by one of our board members, which highlights

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**PROGRAM CORDINATOR:**

*Robin Benedict*

**MISSION:**

*The mission of the Friends of the Children's Justice Center of East Hawaii*

*is to help sexually, physically, emotionally abused and neglected children.*

*We do this in partnership with the Children's Justice Center of East Hawaii, by providing funds and resources to support the needs of these children.*

*The "Friends" offer hope, encouragement, and opportunity for victims of child abuse.*



the importance of our work, and gives a voice to former foster youth who are now young adults.

[https://vimeo.com/243736373?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=vimeo-cliptranscode-201504&utm\\_campaign=29220&email\\_id=#share](https://vimeo.com/243736373?utm_source=email&utm_medium=vimeo-cliptranscode-201504&utm_campaign=29220&email_id=#share)

One of the most recent tragedies of 2017, in our East Hawaii community, was of a 9 year old Hilo girl who was starved to death, and had been on the Child Welfare Services radar. How could this have happened? Did the lack of CWS worker positions contribute to her dangerous situation falling through the cracks, and ultimately contribute to her death?

We hope the information provided in this letter will help you make an informed decision regarding SB2276.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Oshiro  
Board President



Robin Benedict  
Program Coordinator

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 1:21:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Danielle Mendoza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 1:59:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Lee Lord	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Lee Lord

Po Box 205

Volcano, HI 96785

March 13, 2018

Re: Support for our child welfare system

To Whom It May Concern:

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

I 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 look forward to continuing our collaborative work.

Best wishes!

Sincerely,



Lee Lord

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 3:28:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jonathan Mendoza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to hear this concern.

My wife and I are foster parents on the East Side of the Hawaii Island. We both agree that the Social Worker's for Child Welfare Services of the Department of Human Services are incredible workers. They are a blessing to the youth that have to grow up in foster care. Bless the Hilo side with this Pilot to beef up the work force for this population. It is a preventative measure for not only protecting and nurturing the future generation, our Keiki. But even more, to assist the families who step up to do the frontline work with these youngsters who have gone through various types of abuse and neglect. Furthermore, it will also protect these amazing folks who go into the field of Social Work to help out this whole situation of youth being removed from their homes due to trauma and such. With more Social Workers and Assistants, these workers will be able to manage a case load that is recommended by the Child Welfare League of America. (20 children per worker, not between 40 and 50). With this type of "Cap" in place, these workers can make a career out of this rather than "Burning Out" or experiencing "Compassion Fatigue" to where they can't do the job anymore and keep up with the expectations of case managing too many children on their work load.

Please allow this Bill to pass, thank you for your time.

Aloha and Mahalo, Jonathan Mendoza

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 3:43:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
mary Vance-Oliver	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

February 27, 2018

Senator Josh Green

Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 407

Hawai'i State Capitol Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB 2276 – Relating to Child Welfare Services

Dear Senator Green and Committee members:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB2276. As an East Hawaii resident, I have had multiple relationships with individuals connected in some way to the Child Welfare Services. East Hawaii, not unlike much of the state of Hawaii, has an interconnecting web of relationships to which most residents have some connection to the foster care program. My experience with persons affiliated, have ranged from children in early transition to workers employed by the state of Hawaii.

Throughout the years, I have seen not only poor examples of fostering, but outstanding parents as well. It is my opinion that these poor examples are due to two reasons. First, these foster parents are not receiving the proper education and support that should be given to deal with the multiple issues children placed in homes have experienced. Second, improper screening and follow-up have allowed adults to enter into the program as caregivers, which are not only unsupportive of these children, but are actually causing harm. Both situations are an effect that is caused by lack of support to the staff of the Child Welfare Services. I have also been witness to care providers that are an outstanding example of what the end result of the fostered children should be. This result, is ultimately achieved by the combined characteristics of the parents, which includes individual ethics, responsibility both as an individual and parental, and a desire to see the children succeed. These parents are not receiving the proper support and are, in fact, supplementing extra time and funding beyond what is given. But what of the children who are not fortunate enough to be placed in these caring homes?

I cannot imagine the logic in why an organization that is established solely to serve our community and protect its children, has to beg for assistance to do its job. Please not only take consideration of this bill but enact it to assist a community in dire need.

John F. Kennedy once said, “Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.” Take time to consider, if the children are our future and for many that future is dim, society will see the ultimate effects. Are your children not part of that same society?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Palama





**HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**  
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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

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

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 13, 2018

**S.B. 2276, SD1 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of S.B. 2276, SD1 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 S.B. 2276, SD1.

Respectfully submitted,

  
for Randy Perreira  
Executive Director

Date: March 13, 2018

To: The Honorable John Mizuno, Chair  
The Honorable Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services

Re: **SUPPORT for SB2276 SD1**, Relating to Child Welfare Services

Hrg: March 15, 2018 at 10:00am at Capitol Room 329

Respected Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services,

**I am writing in strong SUPPORT of SB2276 SD1** that appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawai'i child welfare services section in Hawai'i county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty, and, appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

As a foster parent in East Hawai'i, I have first hand experience of the incredible job that foster youth caseworkers do despite excessive case loads. The challenges faced by caseworkers on a daily basis result in an inadequate ability to respond fully to the unique needs of each foster youth, compromising the important work of providing support, stability and continuity in the lives of these unusually vulnerable youth.

We are a state with a long history of deep love and caring for all of our keiki, whom we recognize to be our future. It is essential that we provide the support and resources for caseworkers to fully conduct their vital work of ensuring safe and appropriate care for each youth who enters the foster system in our community.

I strongly **support SB2276 SD1** and respectfully ask you to pass this bill out of committee.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Forrest Batz, PharmD  
Keaau, HI

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 4:29:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
jewel dupre	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Our Social Worker is worked to the bone! She does such a amazing job but I fear she will burn out soon do to being over loaded! I believe she will be unstoppable with a smaller case load!



**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 5:16:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Michele Carvalho	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



# HAWAII APPLESEED

## CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Supporting SB 2276 SD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services  
House Committee on Health & Human Services  
Scheduled for hearing on Thursday, March 15, 2018, 10:00 AM, in Conference Room 329

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of **SB 2276 SD1**, 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.

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*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.*

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 6:12:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Terri Lynn Lum	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB2277 to fund a five year pilot project for Child Welfare Services (CWS) in East Hawai'i. I have worked as a social worker in various agencies serving abused and neglected children and their families/foster families in East Hawaii for over 20 years. Historically, our community has had some of the highest, if not the highest rates of negative social indicators such as homelessness, domestic violence and poverty in the state. The fact that our children and families are at high risk for child abuse and neglect is clearly documented in the data that shows that East Hawaii has nearly triple the amount of cases per capita than O'ahu. When budget cuts were required in 2008 -09 due to the downturn in the economy, East Hawaii's CWS units were drastically reduced, without taking into account the high levels of negative social indicators, the sheer size of the service area, and lack of transportation and other resources. The land mass of Hawai'i County is equal to or greater than all of the other islands combined. As a result, our CWS workers contend with higher caseloads with less resources, and are required to travel the greatest distances to locate and serve their clients.

If the State of Hawai'i really cares about our children being our future, then clearly we must do all we can to ensure their safety and support them in becoming productive citizens of our community. We must break the cycle of abuse by helping and nurturing child victims so that they flourish and do not become the parents in the CWS system in the future. I urge you to fund this pilot project and help us to find effective solutions to reducing child abuse and neglect.

Thank you for your concern, Terri Lum, LSW

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2018 8:43:57 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kathryn york	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This is a crucial bill that will support safety for our keiki.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 12:56:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kimberly Ferolino-Cantorna	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern

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

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

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

We look forward to continuing our collaborative work.

Sincerely,  
Kimberly Ferolino-Cantorna

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 5:45:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
amanda ishigo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 9:07:32 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

Good afternoon, my name is Melodie Aduja. I serve as Chair of the Oahu County Committee ("OCC") Legislative Priorities Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on **SB2276 SD1**, relating to Child Welfare Services; DHS; Caseworker; Pilot Program; Hawaii County; and an appropriation.

The OCC Legislative Priorities Committee is in favor of **SB2276 SD1** and support its passage.

**SB2276 SD1**, is in accord with the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i ("DPH"), 2016, as it appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section in Hawaii county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty; and appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

Specifically, the DPH Platform states, "We believe that 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 must protect our children our future, from violence and neglect and provide them with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and thrive.

We support initiatives that enhance access and equity in education, employment, and business opportunities intended to lift family and individuals out of poverty and remove existing barriers to equal opportunity in our communities." (Platform of the DPH, P. 4, Lines 184-191 (2016)).

Given that **SB2276 SD1** appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section in Hawaii county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty; and appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program, it is the position of the OCC

Legislative 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](mailto:legislativepriorities@gmail.com), Text/Tel.: (808) 258-8889



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

HEARING: Thursday, March 15, 2018  
10:00 AM  
Conference Room 329

FROM: Esther B. McDaniel

RE: SB 2276 SD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha Representatives:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony for SB 2276.

I am a licensed resource caregiver (AKA foster parent) and I support SB 2276. I'm concerned about our caseworkers who carry a huge responsibility in serving our most vulnerable children, serving us, the resource caregivers and serving birth families in trying to help them get healthy and reunified with their children. Our social workers in licensing, in-take, investigation and case management are our team members and some become our friends. Most do good work and some are exceptional in the work they do. Large caseloads make it difficult for a caseworker to provide quality service.

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

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

The Child Welfare League of America recommends that caseworkers carry 12 – 15 children maximum on their caseload. This pilot program in East Hawaii would place a cap of 20 children per caseworker. I believe increasing the number of workers while enacting the caseload cap is a good start towards helping our social workers achieve improvement goals in our foster care system. 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.”

Manageable caseloads can be a step towards hastening rehabilitation and reunification for those families who want to be restored. For our youth in foster care who are heading towards independence, I believe it is even more vital for them to have access to their social worker. A good caseworker can be the key for a hurting child and their family in turning their lives around or preparing for independent living.

I’ve seen this firsthand with children who came into my home through foster care and are now healthy, productive adults, and whose parents are doing well also. In one mom’s case, at first she didn’t like the social worker, but through referrals and timely case management mom completed all services to get her life in order and was reunified with her 5 children in less than a year.

I also work for a national organization that engages and empowers the faith community to support our foster/adoptive/hanai families. We come together and create free resources for our children and families.

It's a broad spectrum of available services free of charge including evidence based, trauma informed parenting classes, Kokua Closet, a free store in Wahiawa, and Keiki Closet in Hamakua. Our group in Hamakua has taught us a lot about the needs of Hawaii Island and they have worked to increase the number of licensed resource caregivers in their community.

**We can and are filling in gaps, working to increase resources and services, 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-CWS. The legislature can empower them to do so by supporting and funding this pilot program that needs to grow to serve families statewide.**

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

Thank you for your consideration and work on this issue.

Submitted with Sincere Aloha,

Esther B. McDaniel  
Wahiawa, Hawaii

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 9:39:21 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Monica Crum	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

E kako`o; I support this bill!!

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 9:42:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kalani Spain	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill with the hope that children on Hawaii Island will be at lower risk of harm if for resources are available to CWS department on Hawaii Island

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 9:42:29 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Victoria Mse	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 9:45:21 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Melisa Secola	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I continue to support this measure as a top priority...it's an investment in the safety and well-being of our community's youth and families. CWS workers have an impossible job with the caseload numbers they currently manage...despite the challenges, the workers are extremely dedicated, professional, and play an integral role in child welfare. It takes a team and we need the players to be supported too. Please give this pilot project a chance!

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

HEARING: Thursday, March 15, 2018  
10:00 AM  
Conference Room 329

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of SB 2276, SD1 - 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 University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2276 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 over a month in advance to approve something, but don't get any return phone calls or e-mails. The sad part is that the person that suffers the most 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 having been a resource caregiver of several foster children, I stand behind this bill because it 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 by 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 SB2276.

With my sincerest gratitude,

Sharla-Ann Fujimoto





March 15, 2018

To: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair  
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health & Human Services

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

Re: **SB 2276, SD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services**  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329, March 15, 2018, 10:00 AM**

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**Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN) writes in support of SB 2276, SD1, which would appropriate funds to establish a five-year pilot program to limit the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty and appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff.**

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

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

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

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 11:17:50 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Patricia	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, I have worked with families involved in the DHS/CWS system for about 20 years. CWS has not been adequately staffed or funded at any point during that time, and the current situation is the worst I have seen. Dedicated workers have to put in 60 to 80 hours weekly in order to come close to addressing needs of the families they serve as well as the mountains of required documentation/reports, etc. Workers are not able to do their best work under these conditions. I have observed families and children "fall through the cracks." Children have been abused and deaths have occurred due to inadequate services, even when CWS has been advised of the risks, sometimes long before the incidents occurred. Families' needs, concerns, and legal rights have also been neglected. Even one death or one child abused in the system is too many, and there have been many. I am quite sure that there are others who are, at this moment, "falling through the cracks." Most CWS staff want to do their best work, but are impeded from doing so. Many changes are needed in this system, and adequate staffing is a good place to start; to include adequate, active, and competent supervision in all units and by Section Administrators to address and improved conditions within CWS itself.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 1:13:42 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Joni Chun	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi and Members, Committee on Health & Human Services:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of SB2276** which appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section in Hawaii county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty.

The Department of Human Services reports a 56% increase in the number of children in foster care in EH between FY14 to FY17, with caseloads of 40-50/worker. This current caseload is double what is considered best practice to monitor and assure the safety & well being of children. I urge you to pass SB2276.

Joni Chun

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 2:05:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Marcella Alohalani Boido	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The coverage of this issue in the Honolulu Star-Advertiser seems detailed and incisive to me. Having driven around on the Big Island for work and to visit family and friends, the distances and the area to be covered are pretty obvious. I am also aware that there are plenty of people living off the grid, at the end of long dirt roads, squatting on someone else's property, and in general, being difficult to locate. Please support this measure. Thank you.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 2:11:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
pearl nakamura	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I do collaborate with CWS workers and know how overburdened they are with the amount of cases they are handling. I am in support of this bill as the increase in workers will help alleviate the case worker's caseload, improve the quality of work and attention case workers would love to provide for their families and increase the safety of our children who are our future.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 5:30:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Melissa Mayo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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

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

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Mayo

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 5:50:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Corissa Holman	Friends of Foster care	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for supporting this bill.

I am a psychology major at University of Hawaii and a resident of Mountains view, Hi  
i support this bill.

**SB-2276-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2018 5:42:33 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/15/2018 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Miranda Thomas	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Miranda Thomas. I'm a resident of Hilo, Hawaii and I support this bill.