

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

TO: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2276 Relating to Child Welfare Services**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 10:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

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

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

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

In SFY 2016, the confirmation rate for child abuse and/or neglect allegations in East Hawaii was the same as the statewide confirmation rate of 40%. Based on November 2017

data, the average caseload per worker in East Hawaii was slightly lower (25 cases) than the average caseload statewide (26 cases). The Department agrees that support is needed to reduce caseloads and increase the Child Welfare workforce, however, that need is not greater in East Hawaii than in other areas of the State.

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

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

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

SSD is also engaged in the development of its IT application to the DHS Integrated Enterprise System. Once the IT platform is fully developed, departmental service and data integration will improve access by SSD to relevant information of the Med-Quest and Benefit, Employment, Support Services Divisions. Eventually, it is envisioned that external state and non-profit partners may also be linked. The investment in our technology systems to share data and streamline processes, improves access to services and information by clients and

staff, improves efficiency and response time, and will support staff morale and mobilize our workforce.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Harry Kim
Mayor



Wil Okabe
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i Office of the Mayor

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February 26, 2018

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 211
Honolulu, HI 96813

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice-Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 211
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran and Committee Members:

Re: SB 2276 Relating to Child Welfare Services
Hearing Date: 02/28/18 – 10:45 am; Conference Room 211

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

My staff and I have been made aware of the critical need to improve child welfare services in Hawai'i County. While both of the State's East and West Hawai'i offices are suffering from a shortage of manpower, the initiative proposed in SB 2276 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 the first hearing on this bill varied a great deal, but it seems clear that the child welfare caseload in East Hawai'i is shocking and disturbing. Child welfare workers have so many clients that it would be considered unacceptable by national standards. Add to that the handicap of being asked to cover a huge geographic area, requiring a great deal of time-consuming travel, and it is no wonder that the community is begging for your assistance.

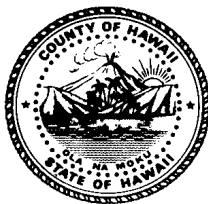
The positions and funding requested in SB 2276 are for a "pilot project," and if that is determined to be the best way to give some relief to the East Hawai'i workers and the keiki they serve, then I defer to your wisdom on that matter. My main concern is that the workers and their clients get the relief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

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Kim
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

From the office of -
Council Member
District 3



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

SUSAN L.K. LEE LOY

25 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
And members of the Committee on Ways and Means

February 26, 2018

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members,

I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting and commenting on SB 2276.

At first glance, it is puzzling that a "five-year pilot program" is needed to determine whether there exists a "positive impact of adequate staffing levels on the safety and well-being of at-risk children in east Hawai'i." It should be self-evident that less attention spent on abused and neglected children must have a detrimental effect on their growth and well-being.

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. 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. While a permanent solution is preferable to a pilot program, I ask for your approval.

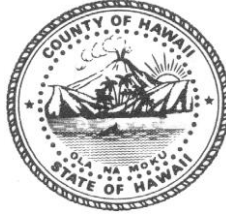
Aloha Piha,

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

Sue Lee Loy
Council Member, District 3

MITCHELL D. ROTH
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

DALE A. ROSS
FIRST DEPUTY
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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2276

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

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 28, 2018 10:45 A.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i submits the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 2276.

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

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/23/2018 7:35:09 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Joseph OConnell	Testifying for East Hawaii Friends of Foster Families	Support	No

Comments:

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 submit testimony to you today because me and my siblings' lives were saved by CWS intervention and I am grateful for the vital work they do. Today I work for EPIC 'Ohana that amongst other things provides conferencing services to CWS and their clients. Additionally, I am a foster parent.

Within the last 10 years East Hawaii CWS has lost 19 positions, lost their Pahoia regional office, has increased its geographic coverage, and has to comply with more standards. CWS serves the outliers of our community. These children and families are the most vulnerable in our community and deserve better. To hear that each worker is carrying 45-55 children at any given time is unconscionable. When we fail our children we fail our community. East Hawaii CWS has consistently proven that when they have open positions they are able to fill them. They are the only section in the state that can say this. When the state is needed to step in for the immediate well-being of children they take on tremendous liability. It is in the state and community's best interest to give our social workers the necessary resources to do their job. Thank you again for this opportunity. Improving outcomes for our CWS children is my passion. Please contact at any time on this matter.

joseoh OConnell

East Hawaii Friends of Foster Families

808-640-0905

josephmoc@gmail.com

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/24/2018 2:13:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting SB 2276 – Relating to Child Welfare Services
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Scheduled for hearing on Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 10:45 AM, in Conference Room 211

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of **SB 2276**, which would establish the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section.

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

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

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

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

We appreciate your consideration of this testimony.

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



February 28, 2018

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

Re: **SB 2276 – Relating to Child Welfare Services**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 211, February 28, 2018, 10:45 AM

Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN) writes in support of SB 2276, 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.



Friends of the Children's Justice Center of East Hawaii (FCJCEH)
P. O. Box 6908 ▲ Hilo, HI 96720
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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

FCJCEH
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Joan Toledo

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

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,



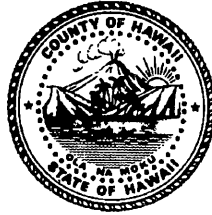
Stephanie Oshiro
Board President



Robin Benedict
Program Coordinator

VALERIE T. POINDEXTER

*Council Chairwoman & Presiding Officer
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HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

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Hilo, Hawai'i 96720*

February 27, 2018

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Email: sendelacruz@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Email: senkeithagaran@Capitol.hawaii.gov

Subject: Testimony Supporting SB2276, Relating to Child Welfare Services
Hearing: February 28, 2018, 10:45 a.m., Room 211

Dear Senators:

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

This bill appropriates funds for DHS 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. SB2276 appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

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

Sincerely,

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



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

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

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Terrence L. Walsh, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer
Hearing: **Wednesday, 2/28/18; 10:45 AM; Conference Room 211.**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith Agaran, and Members, Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of **SB 2276**, 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 lost 19 out of 56 positions (a reduction in force of 34%). Further, the Child Welfare League of America recommends caseloads of no more than 15 children per social worker. Reviews conducted by the United States Department of Health and Human Services show that the more time a social worker spends with a child and a family, the greater the likelihood that protective factors are strengthened and safety risks are reduced. At current caseload numbers in East Hawaii, it is more than difficult for social workers to make monthly visits and assessments in a geographic area that ranges from Honokaa to Ocean View.

We support implementation of this five-year pilot program ASAP. We 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** 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, if you have any questions.



SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/27/2018 9:13:18 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Monica Crum	Testifying for Catholic Charities Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

E kako`o SB 2276

Mahalo nui loa~



ONLINE SUBMITTAL

Hearing on: Wednesday, February 28, 2018 @ 10:45 p.m.
Conference Room #211

DATE: February 26, 2018

TO: Senate Committee on Ways & Means
TO: Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

FROM: Eva Andrade, President

RE: Support for SB2276 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

Submitted on: 2/23/2018 9:32:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
kia-lyn.campbell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/23/2018 9:44:52 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jade	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Jade Perreira. I'm a former foster youth on the HI HOPES Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. With boards across the Hawaiian Islands, we educate, advocate and collaborate with community partners to help create better outcomes for foster youth transitioning into adulthood. SB2276 will directly benefit foster youth by keeping social worker client loads manageable and opens up positions allowing a beneficial and healthy assistance to foster youth currently in the system and transitioning out into adulthood.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/24/2018 8:32:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Daiquiri Miyasato	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/24/2018 7:51:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a former MSW working for CWS and as a current foster parent, I support adequate positions and support for caseworkers and foster children in East Hawaii. Historically, East Hawaii has had a disproportionately high number of cases. The situation is still the same, but caseloads have risen and workers are quitting. The social worker on my foster children's case is an investigator. After five months, she has not been able to transfer the case to case management--and this is not because she is a poor social worker. Nothing runs well when staffing is inadequate. My foster kids have had one home visit in five months. It has been difficult to reach the worker by phone, although her aide makes every effort to fill in. The therapist has also had to wait for contact.

Besides the distances and poor rural roads that workers must contend with, a too-heavy workload just "kills fight". You cannot do your best work and the down side is that kids can get hurt, important information can be missed, and cases get rushed or lost in the mess. One supervised visit had no staff in or near the room. Children may be hurt physically or psychologically and parents may not have the contact and support they need to engage in services.

Please pass this measure to ensure that these things do not happen.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/25/2018 11:14:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Paul Normann	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Friends,

Please support HB2276. The effects of child abuse and neglect on children can be lifelong and expensive. Victims of child abuse and neglect are less likely to finish school and are at higher risk for homelessness and poverty, are at higher risk for teen parenthood, are more likely to be involved in the judicial system, are at higher risk for substance abuse and chronic illness.

The very least we can do to try and help these victimized and traumatized children is to ensure they get the help and support they need. Please support and fund this bill so that we can have sufficient qualified staff in East Hawaii -- a child abuse hotspot in the state -- to make sure these children do not continue to be neglected and lost in the bureaucratic shuffle.

Paul Normann

THE SENATE
THE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2018
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

NOTICE OF DECISION MAKING

DATE: Wednesday, February 28, 2018
TIME: 10:45 a.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 211
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Position: **STRONG SUPPORT HB2276**

Chair **Donovan M. Dela Cruz**, Vice Chair **Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran** and,
Members of the Committee:

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

Mahalo,

Ken Farm

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/24/2018 8:45:10 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
James E. Taylor	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/24/2018 10:32:01 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jaymi Fischer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support the appropriation of funding for additional staffing with Child Welfare Services agencies on the Big Island, specifically on the Hilo side. They are woefully short-staffed and overworked in the Hilo and Puna areas.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/24/2018 9:30:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/25/2018 2:01:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bronson K.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/25/2018 6:11:18 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

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

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Mayo

TO: Senator, Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator, Gilbert S. C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

HEARING: Wednesday, February 28, 2018
10:45AM
Conference Room 211

FROM: Esther B. McDaniel

RE: HB2277 – Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha Senators:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you for your consideration and work on this issue.

Submitted with Sincere Aloha,

Esther B. McDaniel
Wahiawa, Hawaii

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/25/2018 9:51:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB 2276 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.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/25/2018 9:22:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Patricia	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, for over 15 years I have worked with families involved in the DHS/CPS/CWS system in East Hawaii. CWS has been understaffed throuout that time, but has been severely understaffed since the "RIFT" caused a number of vacancies which have not yet been filled. This coupled with the number of families involved in CWS, results in an overwhelming caseloads for each Social Worker. It is not possible for any worker or supervisor to do quality work under these conditions. it is important to remember that each "case" is actually a child or children and parent(s), who frequently have grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins who love them. The CWS system was created to keep children safe, and also to provide the oppourtunities for parent(s) to do what is necessary to reunify, and demonstrate ability to provide a healthy, safe and nurturing home for the children. if this does not work out, CWS needs to provide a safe, stable, and hopefully permanent home for the children. it is not easy work. I have observed that most Social Workers do the best they can, but it is stressful, disheartening, and discouraging to work under the current conditions. This is our community, and the children and their families will likely remain in our community. It is to all of our advantage to care properly for the children involved in CWS. Please support this bill. Mahalo, Patricia Shema, Volcano Hawaii

Judith Wilhoite
Kailua, Hawaii 96734

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing: Wednesday, February 28, 2018
10:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211

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 difference DHS social workers can make in the lives of Hawaii's families, thus 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.

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. It can also "save the placement", meaning the resource caregiver has the support and tools they need to keep the child in their home, instead of asking the child be removed to yet another home.

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 a good place to start.

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

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 9:05:29 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shauntelle Bohol	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 9:18:38 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha WAM 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 didn't 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 family visits weren't 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 my sister could have stay connected to them 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 SB2276 so this type of incidents doesnt keep happening.

Mahalo,

Shandon Cuba

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 9:14:37 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

TO: Finance Committee

FROM: Kalani Pagan

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

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 10:54:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Delia Ulima	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The health and well-being of Hawaii's most vulnerable keiki in foster care can be directly impacted by the number of cases on a social worker's case load. The amount of time and attention given to a family and the children in the family is often compromised because of finite human resources. Hawaii Island, particularly East Hawaii, with a large concentrated population of Native Hawaiian families and children, are affected disproportionately. Please support efforts to really address the needs of families and children in East Hawaii as it relates to case load in the foster care system by supporting this bill. Mahalo.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 11:17:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you for another opportunity to testify on

this matter. Helping to support social workers in order to enable them to do their jobs properly and thoroughly has far reaching positive impacts. When social workers have unmanageable caseloads and vast areas of geographic coverage, there is just no way for them to keep a watchful eye over each and every child "under their wing". I have had the privilege of working with some of the most remarkable individuals in the social work field both as a treatment level foster parent as well as during my employment both as a supervisor of a receiving home for children in the foster care system, as well as in coordinating conferences for families navigating their way through the child welfare system. The long hours, the telephone that never stops ringing, the impossible mountain of paper work, the volatile and heart breaking circumstances that seem to occur without end.. Yet, the good and dedicated social workers keep on keeping on. They are often protectors and champions for the children, but they are only human, and there are only so many hours in the day.

We must limit the amount of cases and children assigned to workers. We MUST put our money where our mouths are and make our most vulnerable children an absolute PRIORITY! Please continue to vote your conscience and be heart led in your decision making. This legislation is a long time coming and deserves to be one of the few measures that makes it all the way through this process. This is exactly the type of purpose that we can all give strong voice to supporting. Let each of us show children that they matter, that we will join together to guarantee that there are safeguards in place to assist worker's in protecting them while they may be most vulnerable.

Thank you for your time. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on such an important matter.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 9:55:33 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
kawai saniatan	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 do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable children in Hawaii.

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. With more support and resources come a higher outcome of positive, safe and cared for youth.

I believe that foster youth that are able to get the proper care and assistance in their lives, will not only benefit themselves, but will relay that same positivity and care to others and back to the community. Please help these CWS workers and their assistants to do their jobs in a caring and reasonable fashion, with support and regulation.

Thank you,

Kawai Saniatan

Current Resource Caregiver

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 9:36:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mandy Jimenez Casian	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 12:05:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Donna Eckersley	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

TO: Senate, Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

HEARING: Wednesday, February 28, 2018
10:45 AM
Conference Room 211

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of SB 2276 - Relating to Child Welfare Services

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

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of 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 a month in advance to approve something, but don't get any return phone calls or e-mails. The only person that suffers is the foster youth.

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

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

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

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

My hope is that the success of this pilot project will inspire the citizens of West Hawai'i to fight for this much needed support. In closing, I strongly encourage this committee to support the passage of SB2276.

With my sincerest gratitude,

Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 1:20:13 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Please consider supporting this bill, I am a retired police officer and former foster parent. I know the hard work that social workers do. With out them the children in care of the state would suffer.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 2:53:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

To whom this may concern,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony for this bill. Please do what it takes to pass this bill to have more Social Workers and Assistants working for DHS/CWS in East Hawaii, to support the families that are providing foster care for our youth and children here in Hilo. I have been a Resource Caregiver for over 20 years in Hilo and see first hand the need for support when taking care of youth in foster care. If the national standards are about 20 children per case worker, we should be following that example to allow for more quality care & support for our youth and families that are involved in this journey. Indeed, this will also help save our precious Social Workers and Assistants from being overworked with impossible expectations. These Social Workers and Assistants come to these positions wanting to help the youth in foster care and it seems that with such a great case load, the quality and time to spend with each case (child, birth parent & foster parent) becomes strained and rushed. Although this may bring about other needs in the department, the help has to start somewhere.

Aloha & mahalo for this opportunity,

Jonathan Mendoza

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/27/2018 5:42:44 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
K-Si Arulong	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The youth is our responsibility as adults and simply ignoring them will lead to criminal victimization. Cutting resources or funds on programs that helps the youth is basically child neglect. Let us take care of these kids so they can take care of Hawaii's future.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 5:42:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lee Lord	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hawai'i Island has the highest rate of abused or neglected children in the state – nearly triple the rate on O'ahu.

Hawai'i County had 418 children confirmed for abuse or neglect in 2015, for a rate of 213 children per 100,000 residents. For every 100,000 residents, Maui had 158 abused or neglected children, Kaua'i had 151, while O'ahu had 76. Caseworkers also report cases on Hawai'i Island characterized by more severe levels of drug abuse than is generally observed in cases elsewhere in the state.

We Have Seen A Dramatic Increase in the Number of East Hawaii Foster Children.

Department of Human Services reports a 56 percent increase in the number of children in foster care in East Hawaii from Fiscal Year 2014 to Fiscal Year 2017, which is double the increase seen in the state as a whole.

Child welfare caseworkers on Hawai'i Island are burdened with caseloads well above national recommendations.

State Department of Human Services caseworkers are responsible for tracking at-risk children and families, completing reports, and arranging services for children and families. The Child Welfare League of America recommends that caseworkers manage a caseload of 12 to 15 children.¹ In East Hawai'i, our caseworkers are regularly carrying 19 or 20 cases that involve 40 to 50 children.

State budget cuts were particularly harmful to the child welfare system on Hawai'i Island.

East Hawai'i Child Welfare Service lost 19 of 56 total positions since 2009, causing the four units that formerly operated in East Hawai'i to be collapsed into three units. The East Hawai'i licensing division, which is responsible for inspecting and certifying safe foster homes for abused and neglected children, was cut from three workers to two. Today, licensing functions with just one worker, and caseworkers cope with impossible caseloads.

The people protecting our children need help.

Child welfare caseworkers face extreme challenges as they are given more and more responsibility to care for the most vulnerable children in our community. We are asking the Legislature to undertake a pilot project to cap the number of children supervised by each caseworker. State data suggests the Hawai'i Island in particular faces special challenges, and we therefore ask that this pilot project be launched on Hawai'i Island.

Link to homelessness

Studies show that 25-30% of youth who age out of the foster care system will experience homelessness, but increased case management and support for these youth reduces the numbers who become homeless.

Let's not be penny wise and pound foolish.

Apart from our moral obligation to protect our children, we understand legislators are frustrated with the large sums of money paid out each year for legal claims and settlements. We ask that the Legislature consider how tragedies in the child welfare system have contributed to these claims in recent years. There is precedent for this approach – legislatures in Texas, Indiana, Delaware and Florida have all required that state and local jurisdictions assess workloads and implement specific strategies such as hiring additional staff.²

Our community deserves better.

This effort is being led by caseworkers, family court lawyers, staff with non-profit organizations, foster parents and public officials from Hawai'i Island. We interact with the child welfare system each day, and see an urgent need to act.

Help the people who protect our children!

Lesley A. Slavin, Ph.D.
317C Olomana Street
Kailua, HI 96734

Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT
SB 2276 RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 28, 2018
10:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

I am a clinical psychologist working in Hawaii's public children's mental health system. In my work I partner frequently with Child Welfare workers, and I see the struggles they are having trying to serve our neediest and most vulnerable children. This is due to the inherent difficulties of the demanding job, and particularly due to insufficient resources and high caseloads. I am very excited to see this effort to develop a pilot project in East Hawaii where the needs are especially great. I know you will get a lot of testimony about the needs in this area, and I would attest to the truth of the problematic situations they are describing. I also would like to add another point to consider having to do with the financing of this project.

The public mental health system [the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) and its contracted agencies along with MedQUEST, Office of Youth Services, School-Based Behavioral Health and other child-serving divisions of state government] spends a good deal of taxpayer money trying to help children who are suffering in the aftermath of abuse and neglect. Often, our efforts are made less effective by a lack of support for the child from their over-worked, over-extended Child Welfare caseworker. When children feel abandoned or ignored by their caseworker (their legal guardian) and they are separated from their birth parents, they have little hope for their future and they can't make the emotional investment needed to benefit from their mental health treatment and other programming. This is a "pay me now or pay me later" situation. We can spend money on higher quality Child Welfare services or we can pay later for high cost mental health treatment or prison. I feel sure that the proposed pilot project will be able to demonstrate cost savings in the long run and improvements in child outcomes that can lead to other savings for the state down the line.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Lesley A. Slavin, Ph.D.
317C Olomana Street
Kailua, HI 96734

Lesley A Slavin

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 8:44:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
christina lampert	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/27/2018 5:07:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Honorable Members:

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

While not meaning to sound dramatic, CWS in East Hawaii is at a crisis point. I am personally aware of three deaths last year involving placement of children already in the CWS system. More “Peter Boy Kema” cases can only result in greater expense to our state’s taxpayers. While helping children should be our main goal, Senate Bill 2276 may also save the state from litigation expenses and damages that can result from an overburdened system.

The Great Recession triggered deep cuts in Hawaii’s already overburdened Child Welfare system. Of concern today is the long-term impact of those cuts on the safety and well-being of our most vulnerable children. State budget cuts were particularly harmful to the CWS East Hawaii office. Layoffs caused the four CWS units that formerly operated in East Hawaii to be collapsed into three units. The East Hawaii licensing division, which is responsible for inspecting and certifying safe foster homes for abused and neglected children, was cut from three workers to two. Today, licensing functions with just one worker and caseworkers cope with impossible caseloads.

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

East Hawaii social workers also face other special challenges: Hawaii County had 418 children confirmed for abuse or neglect in 2015, for a rate of 213 confirmed abused or neglected children per 100,000 residents. Oahu had a rate of 76 abused or neglected kids per 100,000 population, while Maui had a rate of 158 and Kauai a rate of 51 children per 100,000 residents. About one-third of the children in foster care in Hawaii live on Hawaii Island.

There is a precedent for capping workers' caseloads. Legislatures in Texas, Indiana, Delaware and Florida have all required that state and local jurisdictions assess workloads, meet standards, and implement specific strategies such as hiring additional staff.

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

Aloha,

Kenneth Goodenow

(808) 961-5155

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 3:50:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Katherine Wood	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support Senate Bill 2276 to limit the number of cases and children each social worker may be assigned. It is critical for the well being of Hawaii's keiki.

I am the adoptive mother of two wonderful brothers whom we fostered, then adopted. The first social worker we had, was very experienced and met with us in our home monthly despite her giant workload. She took time to speak with our son (then 2), and let him show her his room, or toys, or games, or pictures. She would ask us how we were doing as new parents and answer any questions we had. She would compliment his progress and was amazed by how fast he was adapting to our home. At the time we were only fostering our eldest (our younger child hadn't been born) and we didn't require too much support. However, she readily responded when we reached out for assistance. She was really great and aptly was promoted after about 5 months.

Unfortunately we were then assigned a less experienced (new to CPS) social worker who was not as adept at handling her caseload. We felt like a very low priority and over 16 months had only 2 visits in our home, and only then at our request. She took her time returning phone calls if she returned them at all. We made a host of excuses for her. She's new. She probably inherited our rockstar social worker's caseload. Still though, despite being his fourth home, our foster son was thriving! Certainly she was just spending time with other cases that needed her more? We're we just on the back burner because our foster son was doing so well?

It wasn't until the TPR hearings and we requested to have his infant brother placed with us, that we realized how much her pervasive lack of communication and home visits would negatively impact our family. Despite never really observing us together as a family more than three or four times over the course of 16 months, she made a decision to break apart our family. She removed our older foster son from our home (after 1.5 years) and shipped him and his infant brother out of state to some relatives who had specifically stated multiple times they didn't want a baby. Ultimately we won a court decision (and won a subsequent case in appellate court) to have both boys returned to us to live together. Justice was served but at what emotional cost to our children, all of the parties of the case and to the tax payer?

While it is possible that she was just a really crappy social worker, I'd like to give her the benefit of the doubt. I hope that if she would have had a smaller, more manageable caseload, she would have had time to develop a relationship with our family. She would have had time to observe our foster son in our home, our join us on an outing or adventure to see how he was doing where he was placed. She would

have come to the current conclusion on her own. She would have seen with her own eyes and her heart, that we were the forever home the boys deserved without dragging us all through 2+ years of stressful and expensive litigation.

We personally spent over \$25000 in lawyers' fees and missed out on the first 4.5 months of our younger son's life because of one overburdened social worker. Who knows how much public money was spent on the two separate court cases both for the Guardian Ad Litem and CPS workers, lawyers etc?

The stress and financial toll isn't the only cost though. My husband and I are amazing parents. We were amazing foster parents. We had never intended to foster only 2 boys. We had always imagined fostering many children. The negative experiences we suffered due to one overburdened social worker have cost East Hawaii one set of amazing foster parents. We can't possibly risk going through that again.

Please consider making the social worker's jobs more manageable so they may do a great job for every child. This will have such a giant ripple effect. It will improve the lives of foster children, of foster families, of the social worker and of the community. Please approve Senate Bill 2276.

Mahalo,

Kate Wood

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/26/2018 3:48:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Maile pavao	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

He lei poina 'ole ke keiki.

A child is a gift that should be cherished and never forgotten.

Hawai'i Island has the highest rate of abused or neglected children in the state – nearly triple the rate on O'ahu.

Hawai'i County had 418 children confirmed for abuse or neglect in 2015, for a rate of 213 children per 100,000 residents. For every 100,000 residents, Maui had 158 abused or neglected children, Kaua'i had 151, while O'ahu had 76. Caseworkers also report cases on Hawai'i Island characterized by more severe levels of drug abuse than is generally observed in cases elsewhere in the state.

We Have Seen A Dramatic Increase in the Number of East Hawaii Foster Children.

Department of Human Services reports a 56 percent increase in the number of children in foster care in East Hawaii from Fiscal Year 2014 to Fiscal Year 2017, which is double the increase seen in the state as a whole.

Child welfare caseworkers on Hawai'i Island are burdened with caseloads well above national recommendations.

State Department of Human Services caseworkers are responsible for tracking at-risk children and families, completing reports, and arranging services for children and families. The Child Welfare League of America recommends that caseworkers manage a caseload of 12 to 15 children.¹ In East Hawai'i, our caseworkers are regularly carrying 19 or 20 cases that involve 40 to 50 children.

State budget cuts were particularly harmful to the child welfare system on Hawai'i Island.

East Hawai'i Child Welfare Service lost 19 of 56 total positions since 2009, causing the four units that formerly operated in East Hawai'i to be collapsed into three units. The East Hawai'i licensing division, which is responsible for inspecting and certifying safe foster homes for abused and neglected children, was cut from three workers to two.

Today, licensing functions with just one worker, and caseworkers cope with impossible caseloads.

The people protecting our children need help.

Child welfare caseworkers face extreme challenges as they are given more and more responsibility to care for the most vulnerable children in our community. We are asking the Legislature to undertake a pilot project to cap the number of children supervised by each caseworker. State data suggests the Hawai'i Island in particular faces special challenges, and we therefore ask that this pilot project be launched on Hawai'i Island.

Link to homelessness

Studies show that 25-30% of youth who age out of the foster care system will experience homelessness, but increased case management and support for these youth reduces the numbers who become homeless.

Let's not be penny wise and pound foolish.

Apart from our moral obligation to protect our children, we understand legislators are frustrated with the large sums of money paid out each year for legal claims and settlements. We ask that the Legislature consider how tragedies in the child welfare system have contributed to these claims in recent years. There is precedent for this approach – legislatures in Texas, Indiana, Delaware and Florida have all required that state and local jurisdictions assess workloads and implement specific strategies such as hiring additional staff.²

Our community deserves better.

This effort is being led by caseworkers, family court lawyers, staff with non-profit organizations, foster parents and public officials from Hawai'i Island. We interact with the child welfare system each day, and see an urgent need to act.

Help the people who protect our children!

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/27/2018 9:39:15 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha-

I am a contracted worker for DHS and I see firsthand how the people of Hawaii and it's Keiki are affected by the high caseload of the Social Workers. We have families who do not get the attention necessary for their foster child/ren due to the unresponsiveness of the Workers. I know this lack of attention is not due to negligence, but because the Workers are handling a multitude of cases for which they can only give attention to those at highest risk. This leaves all the others on the backburner, causing liability and possible mistreatment of children. Hawaii has a duty to protect it's people, and this can be done by limiting the amount of cases Workers recieve as well as increasing the amount of Workers in the Agency. I believe this bill is vital to the protection of our vulnerable Keiki, and it will make a world of difference in their lives.

aloha

SB-2276

Submitted on: 2/27/2018 9:44:05 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2018 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shawn A. Humphers	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I work with the DHS CWS; my program processes the Caregivers (that children are placed with) to be Unconditionally Licensed for foster care. I am also a Resource Caregiver, caring for my four year old grandson whose mother is a drug addict. As such, I have directly witnessed the challenges and struggles the Social Workers deal with on a daily basis. In the context of foster care, a system-based response to CHILD ABUSE, it is disturbing and unconscionable that the responders (SWs/HSPs/SSAs) are not afforded the consideration and support such a complicated, emotionally volatile, difficult, time-consuming position experiences on a daily basis! I cannot say enough how much of a difference having a case cap and any other assistance this Bill will allow; and, how much the results would definitely and markedly improve the quality of attention and work every child in foster care deserves from all of us! Thank you for your time, effort and consideration AND **APPROVAL of BILL SB2276!! Shawn Humphers**

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

