



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 03/21/2018  
**Time:** 02:15 PM  
**Location:** 325  
**Committee:** House Judiciary

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SB 2790, SD2, HD1 RELATING TO THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.

**Purpose of Bill:** Replaces the guiding principles for children in foster care under the Child Protective Act with the rights of children in foster care, which preserves the current rights of children in foster care and provides certain additional rights. (SB2790 HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2790, SD2, HD1. The measure recognizes the unique needs of children in foster care by codifying children rights, increasing educational stability, and improving educational outcomes for these youth.

Further, SB 2790, SD2, HD1 better aligns Hawaii statute to key elements of the foster care provision under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including but not limited to: dispute resolution process, transportation procedures and immediate enrollment and records transfer, as well as identifying key points of contact at each school.

The Department, in collaboration with Hawaii Department of Human Services, has also worked to develop guidelines for implementation of statewide guidance that will provide information about the significance of educational stability in the life of a foster child.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2790, SD2, HD1.

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at [www.hawaiipublicschools.org](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org).



## *The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i*

### **Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary**

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at 2:15 p.m  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

By  
Catherine H. Remigio  
Deputy Chief Judge, Senior Family Judge  
Family Court of the First Circuit

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 2790, S.D.2, H.D.1, Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care.

**Purpose:** Replaces the guiding principles for children in foster care under the Child Protective Act with the rights of children in foster care, which preserves the current rights of children in foster care and provides certain additional rights. (SB2790 HD1)

#### **Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary writes in strong support of this bill because it expresses the Legislature’s strong support of foster children—their welfare and their independence.

This bill codifies best practices; practices that were developed with significant input from foster children and former foster children. In our own state, these practices have been discussed at annual gatherings among foster youth, former foster youth, the family court, and child serving public and private agencies. These practices garnered strong consensus among all of the participants.

Whenever possible, the Family Court applies best practices that are within our control. For example, at page 5, from line 20, the bill affords a foster child the right to “meet with and speak to the presiding judge in the child's case.” For years, the Family Court of the First Circuit has required that foster children be informed of the court’s invitation to them to come to court. When the system first began, we had very few “takers.” However, as the entire system became



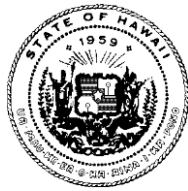
Senate Bill No. 2790, SD2, HD1, Relating to the Rights of Children in  
Foster Care  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at 2:15 p.m.  
Page 2

accustomed to this requirement, more and more children and youth came to court to talk to “their” judge. Just recently, in one morning calendar for one judge, 22 children claimed this right and each individually spoke to “their” judge.

We wish to acknowledge that Senate Draft 2 made an important change to the original senate bill. At page 4, from line 20, the original bill recognized the importance of equipping the aging out youth with basic documents that we all take for granted, including, certified birth certificates and social security cards. However, as it was originally drafted, there was not sufficient time for the documents to be gathered before the youth’s “aging out.” Further, it appeared that the primary task of navigating different and sometimes labyrinthine bureaucracies rested on the youth. Senate Draft 2 improved upon the original bill by expanding the time period as well as clearly placing the primary responsibility for gathering the documents on the department.

We commend the Legislature for its care and support of one of the most vulnerable populations in our community. These children have very few family resources and are ill equipped to move toward adulthood. And yet, in our courtrooms, we are consistently moved and impressed by the resilience and grace shown by these children. On their behalf, we respectfully urge immediate passage of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96808

March 20, 2018

TO: The Honorable Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2790 SD2 HD1- Relating to Rights of Children in Foster Care**

Hearing: March 21, 2018, 2:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration bill; DHS requests that the committee pass this measure as it is currently the remaining vehicle.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to amend the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), by deleting the existing section 587A-3, Guiding Principles for children in foster care, and replacing it with a new section 587A- , Rights of children in foster care. This aligns with Federal Public Law 113-183 which requires that the rights of children age 14 and older regarding education, health, visitation, and court participation to be documented in the child's case plan, as well as a signed acknowledgement of the provision of these rights.

Similar Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care have been enacted in 14 states and Puerto Rico. Many of these rights are included as Guiding Principles for Children in Foster Care, in statute, 587A, HRS. Some of the new rights include culturally responsive services, requests for an attorney, and transportation to attend the school of origin.

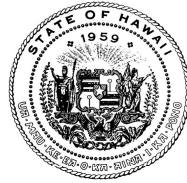
This administration measure is a collaboration developed with youth formerly in foster care, partners, and stakeholders, and especially honors the voice of the young people we serve. Increased support and guidance for the care of children and youth in foster care will facilitate the young person's continued development, well-being, and permanency options. Positive

outcomes, such as an increase in educational achievement and employment stability, will contribute to the social and economic well-being of the youth, as well as the well-being of the State. Studies show that with increased support and guidance children and youth in foster care have additional positive outcomes, which include decreases in homelessness, dependency on public welfare benefits, and drug dependency, and incarceration.

With regard to obtaining immigration documentation as requested by the Judiciary, as the Department assesses the process of obtaining immigration documentation for minors, DHS may be required to request that the effective date for this section of the measure be January 1, 2019.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



VIRGINIA PRESSLER, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2790 SD2 HD1  
RELATING TO THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT Y. NISHIMOTO, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: March 21, 2018

Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports this bill, which is part of  
3 Governor Ige’s Administrative Package.

4 The Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) supports  
5 SB2790 SD2 HD1 a measure which adds, clarifies and protects the rights of youth specifically in  
6 the foster care system. Hawaii Revised Statute 587 speaks to the right for children to have a safe,  
7 nurturing environment in which to thrive in. Similar bills have been established across the  
8 country and are well aligned with best practices of care for young people.

9 While this bill assures that youth in foster care will have the many basic amenities for a healthy  
10 life such as food and clothing or basic resources such as healthcare insurance with access to  
11 medical, dental, vision and mental health services, CAMHD applauds three particular areas of  
12 protection. First, is the protection of a normal life by ensuring the youth’s ability to participate in  
13 extracurricular activities such as sports, cultural activities, i.e. hula, and other social activities.  
14 Secondly, the bill advocates for family strengthening whenever possible. The youth’s connection  
15 and sense of belonging predicts positive outcomes and is paramount to a healthy resilient future.  
16 Along with family strengthening, the bill speaks to the right to life skills training which may  
17 span a variety of skills from opening a bank account to developing interpersonal skills, the latter,  
18 predicting more meaningful relationships, employability and greater wellbeing. Finally, the bill  
19 ensures the youth’s voice in determining their own future.

1 Because of CAMHD's concern for the youth of Hawaii, we are in support of all efforts that care  
2 for, protect and respect the youth and families in our communities. SB2790 SD2 HD1 adds  
3 further assurance to this need.

4 **Offered Amendments:** None

5 We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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# HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 904 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: [info@hysn.org](mailto:info@hysn.org)

Rick Collins, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive Director

Bay Clinic

Big Brothers Big Sisters of  
Hawaii

Bobby Benson Center

Child and Family Service

Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii

Domestic Violence Action Center

EPIC, Inc.

Family Programs Hawaii

Family Support Hawaii

Friends of the Children of  
West Hawaii

Hale Kipa, Inc.

Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.

Hawaii Children's Action  
Network

Hawaii Student Television

Ho'ola Na Pua

Kahi Mohala

Kokua Kalihi Valley

Maui Youth and Family Services

P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.

Parents and Children Together  
(PACT)

Planned Parenthood of the  
Great Northwest and  
Hawaiian Islands

PHOCUSED

Salvation Army Family

Intervention Services

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Susannah Wesley Community  
Center

The Catalyst Group

March 21, 2018

To: Representative Scott Nishimoto, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Judiciary

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2790 SD 2 HD 1 RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 2790 SD 2 HD 1 Relating to Rights of Children in Foster Care.

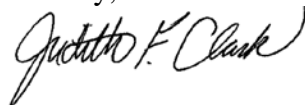
Some of the rights specified in the bill ensure that basic health and safety needs are met. Others enable and empower children and youth in foster care to participate in planning for their own futures. Efforts to keep foster children in their home schools help them to maintain their natural support systems.

Children and youth in foster care often feel that their lives are out of their control. They often feel that their voices are not heard.

This bill of rights will protect children from harm while in care, enable them to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and is likely to lead to better outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director





## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2790, SD2, HD1: Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care**

TO: Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair, Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Terrence L. Walsh, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer

**Hearing: Wednesday, March 21, 2018; 2:15 PM; Room 325**

Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and Members, Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of SB 2790, SD2 HD1, which amends the Child Protective Services Act re the rights of children in foster care. I am Terry Walsh, with Catholic Charities Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii 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 Hawaii. Children in the foster care system are particularly vulnerable. We need to do all we can to ensure that appropriate family connections are maintained and children feel that they have rights, vs. being helpless in this complex system.

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports this bill since it would bring Hawaii's law into compliance with federal guidelines on the rights of children who end up in the foster care system.

We believe that every child has inherent dignity and deserves to grow in a safe environment. This bill would enhance the Department of Human Services current rights for children/youth in foster care to ensure safety and quality of life in a nurturing environment.

Children who end up in foster care have already suffered much trauma. When it is safe, they should have the right to see or contact their siblings and parents. In fact older siblings may often have taken over the parenting role in a family with smaller children. Keeping family connections and other provisions of this bill would enhance children's ability to grow and develop their potential in a nurturing environment.

We urge you to pass this measure. Please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at 373-0356, or at [bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org), if you have any questions.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Delia Ulima, EPIC 'OHANA  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Delia Ulima, I am a Statewide Initiative Manager for the HI HOPES Initiative at EPIC 'Ohana and I would like to testify in strong support of SB 2790-relating to the rights of youth and children in foster care.

I oversee the statewide work of the HI HOPES youth boards. These boards are made up of current and former foster youth who advocate for changes in the systems and support for young people impacted by foster care. I have worked in this field for several years, listening to and assisting young people in their advocacy efforts to transform child welfare and speak on behalf of other foster youth.

This bill conveniently codifies in one place the several federal, state and department policies that already exist to support foster youth while in care. It updates an existing statute to reflect current law and the current needs of young people in care. It is both practical and essential in that it outlines for adult supporters and key people in positions of authority like a judge, social worker or GAL-the provisions afforded foster youth. These rights are a foundation for empowerment and success for foster youth. Knowing that they have the right to attend their court hearing, play a sport, stay in the same school, see their siblings, and more, are just basic things we can provide for these young people who suffer loss, separation, trauma and are moved around and disempowered in so many ways. Having a bill of rights is the legal, ethical and sensible thing to do so we can provide a path for well-being and success for Hawaii's most vulnerable keiki.

I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



JUDITH WILHOITE · KAILUA · HAWAII · 96734

To: Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing: Wednesday, March 21, 2018  
2:15 p.m.  
Room 329

From: Judith Wilhoite

RE: SB 2790 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care

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 SB2790.

Each and every Right in this bill is important and can help our youth grow into healthy, productive adults.

Reading this bill, I am struck by how comprehensive it is and I support each and every article in it. I would like to comment specifically on rights 5, 6, 7, and 10.

(5) Family is the most important thing for most of us. It has been said that heaven on earth is having a happy family. This is just as true for foster youth as it is for us. Committing to making sure our youth have regular visits with their parents and siblings is, in most cases, the right thing to do and can result in better outcomes for all. Research shows that when visits begin early in a case and are consistent, there is a much higher rate of reunification for the family. This benefits the family and the community at large. In addition, I have seen many youth age out, only to become licensed resource caregivers themselves so that they are able to care for their younger siblings. This is the perfect example of just how important family is to our youth.

(6) When youth attend their court hearings, they can get information about what is happening with their parents and other family members, can ask the judge for help with something that is important to the youth, can have a say in planning for educational or vocational goals and in planning for their future. The state of Hawai`i has made great strides in making the court room a welcoming, supportive environment for our youth, in part by the creation of an In-Court Youth Facilitator. The facilitator greets youth when they come to court, describes the type of hearings that take place, goes over the guiding principles and resources, and encourages youth to talk to the judges about needs, concerns, wants. These important and wonderful things can only happen IF the youth receives notice of court hearings and is transported to the court hearings. Thus I strongly support Right # 6.

(7) Having consistent, in-person contact with their child welfare services worker is paramount to the youth's needs being understood and met. However, for this to happen, we need to be sure that the Department of Human Services staff has a manageable case load and the tools they need to help our youth and families.

(10) Being able to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities helps to instill a sense of self in youth by encouraging them to be active in dance, music, art, student government, clubs on campus, sports teams, etc. These are all meaningful ways to develop a sense of identity. Learning new skills will lead to greater self-confidence, which will in turn help youth make good life choices.

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

To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Tiffany Darragh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**  
**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Tiffany Darragh, I am 23 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care. When young people are placed into foster care, they sometimes feel lost and confused as to what is happening and feel that their whole life is going to be planned for them from now on. All youth in foster care should be informed of their rights.

I entered care at the age of 13. I was never informed of any of my court hearings. I never met my guardian ad litem until after my first hearing. I felt like my opinion on how my life was going to be was irrelevant. When I heard that my brother and I were going to be placed into legal guardianship with my grandparents, I was happy that I wouldn't have to move homes again. My guardian ad litem asked if I was okay with guardianship but never told me I could go to my hearings. If I would have been given the opportunity to be involved in my case plan and my court hearings, I would have felt more comfortable having someone speak on my behalf in regards to my "Best interest". Currently, there are 23, 346 young people who aged out of foster care without a permanent legal connective to a parent, family member, or adoptive parent. If youth were informed they can go to those hearings that impact their lives, we could impact those numbers dramatically. Having a voice for yourself and your case plan is empowering and so crucial for the youth.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Glenn Perreira Jr., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**  
**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Glenn Perreira Jr. I am 24 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

I know first-hand that this law will set a strong foundation for the up and coming youth in foster care. I entered the foster care system when I was 15 years old. I attended my mom's court hearing and when she was sentenced to jail time, I found myself completely alone and so I walked across the street in Hilo from the courthouse to Child Welfare Services to turn myself in.

When I entered foster care, my social worker asked me if I had a place/people that could take me in and I identified hanai family and I was allowed to live with them. This made a huge difference in my life because I was cared for and learned how to fix cars and was given money to follow my dreams and goals. Today I am an auto mechanic with a certificate and I support my family this way.

The bill of rights supports foster youth in living in stable and safe homes, having the opportunity to be a part of their case plan, make decisions that affect their lives and the chance to pursue extra-curricular activities, dreams and goals to have a successful life as a young adult.

Young people have a right to go to court and if they knew they could go to court and talk to the judge about their lives and ask for help, they could be empowered and be a part of their decisions and have the chance to thrive. The more young people can be a part of their case, involve their judge and social worker and foster parents and be part of activities that promote social capital, they can follow their dreams and reach their goals.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Patricia Duh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Patricia Duh. I am 22 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 2790 which asks to amend the current 587A – Rights of children in foster care to ensure that a child in foster care and resource caregivers understand a foster youth’s rights to the fullest extent possible.

Many young people are not aware of the current bill of rights and even those who are aware of their rights do not fully understand what it means due to the wording being too vague or too complicated. Why are foster youth being asked to sign the current 587A when they may not fully understand what they are signing? Youth in foster care miss out on many opportunities to enhance their personal development due to not fully understanding that they have a right to obtain a job, practice their own religious beliefs, or even have family visitations.

Currently, only 16-25% of 24 year-olds who experiences foster care work consistently. While I was in foster care, I always wanted to obtain a job and gain some work experience. I never had the chance to do this because I was not aware of my rights and was always told no when wanting to do something that I thought would enhance my personal development. Upon exiting foster care, I did not know the necessary skills and had a difficult time in obtaining a job as well. If I was aware of my rights and fully understood them, I would have advocated more for myself and would have gain more knowledge in the employment area. Having the knowledge of fully understanding your rights as a foster youth will allow youth to feel more comfortable in advocating for what they believe is right for themselves.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)

Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**

**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto and I am the board advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. I am an employee of EPIC Ohana. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I have been working with youth in foster care for almost ten years. During this time, I have seen many youth enter and exit the foster care system without the adequate support and resources needed for all young adults to prepare for the challenges they will face in adulthood. Many foster youth are unaware of their rights in foster care, which has led to the severance of their sources of social capital. They are taken from their homes, and told they cannot keep their job, go to the same school, participate in extracurricular activities, or even see their siblings when their siblings are placed in another foster home. A lot of these young adults are unaware that they can have access to their vital documents to get things like a driver's permit and a job.

By passing SB 2790, youth in foster care will gain more information about how they can take an active role in case planning with their social worker, they will be able to learn how to advocate for themselves, but most of all, they will be able to learn the skills necessary to become successful adults.

I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.





To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Samantha U'u, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Samantha U'u. I am 24 years old and I am the vice-president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Young people who experienced foster care have higher rates of physical and mental health issues. We did not ask to be physically and mentally ill due to the limited amount of information to gain opportunities that were crucial to our health and well-being. The majority of young people in foster care experience trauma in some form as a result of maltreatment and foster placement. Between 25 and 60% of youth in foster care have at least one chronic or acute health condition.

When I was 15, my vision was getting worse while I was in care. I had no glasses to help me see better, and I was not able to get annual exams with my eye doctor. It wasn't until I turned 18, and aged out of foster care that I was able to see an eye doctor on my own. If I knew that I had a right to ask my social worker to take me to the eye doctor because I was guaranteed medical exams, it would have made things much easier for me and helpful in school and in my life.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Lyu Burdette, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**  
**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Lyu Burdette and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

All young people in foster care have a right to maintain contact with their siblings / parents. When I was in foster care, I was not allowed to speak to my mother. When I exited out of foster care, 17 year-old my sister was not allowed to maintain contact with me.

In 2013, there were 23,346 young people who aged out of foster care without a permanent legal connection to a parent, family member, or adoptive parent. Young people with supportive adults in their lives are more likely to report being able to cover their expenses and have a savings and less likely to incur debt in adulthood.

By encouraging youth to exercise their rights or not be afraid to speak up when violated or prevented from contacting their family members. Also, those young people should be informed of their rights.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Kekoa Abellera., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Kekoa Abellera. I am 17 years old and I am the historian of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Every child should have the right to “Live in a safe and healthy home free from physical, psychological, sexual, and other abuse.” As a former foster youth, I often believe the main focus is on “physical” abuse. When in reality it may be the least. Being alone and going through the system, foster youth suffer through a lot of mental and emotional abuse. We are not at fault for being in those circumstances, so I feel entitled to a safe house free from all abuse.

“Young adults who experienced foster care as teens are more than twice as likely to have a mental health problem as their non-foster care peers.” Many kids go into the system as teens, which is a crucial time for young adults. From figuring out what they want to do in life, to building important relationships. Going into the system will disrupt your thought process you’ve been building for years. Having rights for foster youth will help them know they should expect to live in a safe home, free from physical and mental/emotional abuse and that they have rights for so many other things that will help them thrive.

I thank you for your time and consideration of my written testimony. We hope that you support SB 2790, let’s move forward with creating more safe foster homes free from all abuse. Thank you very much for your time.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Jade Perreira, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Jade Perreira. I am 25 years old and I the secretary on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Foster youth who come from bigger families are more likely to be placed into separate homes during their time in care. This being the situation for me, visitation with them was the light that kept me sane in a situation that was less than ideal. Allowing visitation for foster youth is essential for a positive transition through care and is a right that would be afforded to our peers who live with their biological families, and should not be denied to youth in the foster care system.

70% of foster youth receive support from their family members to help them achieve their life goals vs. the 26% of youth who claim child welfare service professionals do the same. Your 'ohana are the first line of social capital we encounter in our lives + losing that connection could be detrimental to foster youth not only being not only behaviorally but mentally + social which will show its negative effects well into adulthood.

Keeping foster youth connected to their family members and allowing that positive influence will potentially help to create a person who feels stable and confident in themselves and is able to carry on wholeheartedly and make positive decisions in their lives. Rights to see siblings and family is just one right that is in this bill of rights and it is critical for the health and well-being of foster youth.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Tuan Giang, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Tuan Giang. I am 22 years old and I am a Board Member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Oahu. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 2790 which asks to amend the current 587A – Rights of children in foster care to ensure that a child in foster care and resource caregivers understand a foster youth’s rights to the fullest extent possible.

The Foster Youth Bill of Rights can help many youth find self-empowerment to speak for themselves about what they want to do.

For the duration of time that I was in foster care, I went to two different middle schools and three high schools. The unpredictable timetable of changing school as a young person in foster care makes it hard to develop friendships. But, like any other young people in schools, I wanted friends to hang out with. When I was a junior in high school, I asked my foster parents if I could join a sport and then I joined the Cross Country high school team. It was there that I met my best friend Cri and Daniel. The three of us ran Cross Country together after school.

Although we would eventually go separate ways after high school, I went to college in Hilo, Cri in California, and Daniel in Texas, we would often meet each back in the summer and winter on Oahu. We do not run Cross Country together anymore but we have crossed countries when the three of us took a backpacking trip through Italy, Germany, and France in summer 2016.

For me, the right to participate in an extra-curricular activity means more than just running three miles as fast as you can. It means to meet people that want to run the three miles with you and maybe run together for a memory of a lifetime.

I’m grateful that my foster parents supported and encouraged my decision to pursue extra-curricular activities. Unfortunately, not all young people in care have the same opportunity that I did or know that they have the right to pursue extra-curricular activities. This is why SB 2790 is important. In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Anastasia Neumann, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Anastasia Neumann and I am 17 years old. I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on OAHU. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Foster youth should have rights that give us the same opportunities as other children. Young people will have the right to access their vital documents such as a birth certificate, social security card, and even obtain a driver's license, which in turn helps me to obtain employment while in foster care and as I exit foster care.

This is particularly important to me because I want a stable, productive future. Unlike my father who had to work two jobs and still struggled to keep food on the table.

Through a Jim Casey Initiative study, I've learned that 22% of employed young people who experienced foster care do not earn enough to rise out of poverty, and 71% earn less than \$25,000 a year. Having a right that ensures we receive our vital documents while in care and as we exit care to adulthood is important for us to get a job, housing and go to school.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Kapua Brock-Kuanoni, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)

Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**

**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Kapua Brock-Kuanoni, I am 24 years old and I am the vice-president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Many youth in care are unaware of the rights they possess while in foster care. I was fortunate enough to have a social worker who knew about these rights and told me about them. Because of her, I began going to my court hearings where I was able to advocate for myself instead of having a room full of adults speak about, and make decisions for me.

Unfortunately, most social workers today, and even some Guardian ad Litem are unaware of our rights, or they don't promote them. With this bill, it would provide awareness for all that are unaware, and help inform youth of their rights.

In closing, I ask that you support this bill so that foster youth may properly advocate for themselves and have a sense of ownership in their lives and I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Krystal Chavez, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**  
**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Krystal Chavez, I am 17 years old and I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care. Many of the youth in foster care are in their prime growing years. They should be able to play sports, get a job or even start driving. After all, good driving habits start when you're young and the world could use a lot more safe drivers. Frankly, many of them are not able to because their legal documents are sadly "unobtainable."

When I was 16, a little over a year ago before I was in care, I had planned my life out. Everything had a "due" date and had to be done right away. All of that was stopped when I was taken into the system, along with my two younger siblings. I could no longer drive, get a job or even open a savings account all because we could not access my documents.

Less than 5% of today's youth currently own a savings account. That is a small percentage of the huge number of youth. More than 43% of foster parents have claimed that their foster child's documents were unobtainable. My family is a part of that 43%. Wouldn't you want your children to be able to have a bright and certain future? I feel it is safe to assume you would give your children the same opportunities.

This bill gives foster youth the right to engage in age-appropriate activities and access to vital documents that will help them with education, housing, transportation and employment so that they can have a head start on a successful life.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.





To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Rachel Burke, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Rachel Burke. I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

For youth in care it is very important for them to know about their rights and how to effectively advocate for themselves. I've witnessed and experienced first-hand too many times where youth were not aware of their rights.

I entered care at the age of 14 and I wanted to know and be a part of everything going on with my case. However, with all of my attempts to be part of my case planning, all I got was, "You're just a kid. You don't know what you want or what is best for you."

Getting to be part of your case planning teaches you about decision-making, which is something you will have to do after you turn 18. I wish I would have been able to be part of where I wanted my life to go and it would have given me more confidence to make healthy decisions after I aged out of foster care.

Our goal is to help youth successfully transition into adulthood. By knowing their rights, and being able to advocate for themselves while in foster care, youth can start practicing making decisions while they have a safety net and a network of support to work towards their goals.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Melissa Mayo, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Melissa Mayo and I am 18 years old. I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care. Included in this bill are supports for foster youth to receive a timely notice and encouragement to attend court hearings. Imperatively, foster youth should have the basic right of being involved in the planning for their lives and engaging in the direction of their lives. In particular, being informed of their court hearings in a timely manner and having the right to attend these court hearings. Foster youth already enter care without the stability and the knowledge of what their future holds. Therefore, foster youth should be able to have the choice to be present at court hearings that plan the direction of their lives. Along with being able to self-advocate for themselves and their future. For foster youth being able to be a part of the direction of their own life at court hearings gives the opportunity to advocate for other basic rights all foster youth should be granted. Such as, medical, employment, housing and education. Relating to education, only 4% of foster youth attain a four year degree compared to 36% of the general population. I was fortunate enough to attend, participate in many of my court hearings, and have a voice in my permanent plan and housing. I was given the support to be able to advocate to go to college and reside in the dorms while still in foster care.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Noy Worachit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Noy Worachit. I am 25 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Oahu. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB 2790 which asks to amend the current 587A – Rights of children in foster care to ensure that a child in foster care and resource caregivers understand a foster youth’s rights to the fullest extent possible.

Foster youth should be afforded rights that keep us safe and help us to thrive. Young people lose everything when placed into foster care and the only thing certain is uncertainty. We never know where we are going to live, when we are going to see our siblings or parents again, or if we are ever going back home. Nothing is ever guaranteed. With these Bill of Rights, we should be guaranteed the basic human necessities like: a safe place to live that is free from any type of abuse, nutritious food, access to medical care, as well as the right to see our families. And other rights that ensure normalcy, social capital, and healthy brain development that helps us to be successful and contributing members of our communities.

Hawai’i is leading the nation in child welfare reform and is considered “best practice.” In 2011, 95% of 17 year olds in foster care in Hawaii reported having a current connection to an adult or social capital. This is looking at the quantity and quality of social relationships and the kind of value it adds to the lives of young people. Having this social capital was crucial for me when transitioning out of the foster care system as a young mother. If it were not for these lifelong supportive relationships that I have made, I would not be here today - in the military, working for the Judiciary, advocating for foster youth, and parenting my own children (because our children are twice as likely to end up in the child welfare system.) It truly takes a village.

I humbly ask that you continue to do right by my fellow foster brothers and sisters by supporting and passing SB 2790. Mahalo for your time.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Alison Kilpatrick, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**  
**RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Alison Kilpatrick, I am 16 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Young people are placed in foster care and are usually separated from their parents and siblings. I feel like it's an issue for a lot of the foster youth because family is a major complication in a young person's life. SB No. 2790 supports the foster youth's right to have supervised or unsupervised visits with family.

Studies show that strong, positive connection with families and communities are associated with lower levels of unhealthy risk-taking and the development of caring, confident, and competent young person. Only 70% claim that they have family members to help achieve their life goals.

To me this is a problem because some foster families don't allow or like youth visiting their biological families. For me, I have a hard time seeing my family and it's very important to me because family means everything to me and I also have a 9-month old baby brother and another one on the way, and I would like to be part of their lives. Not only are these rights important and important for me to know while in care but the adults need to know so that our rights are honored and we can feel whole and happy in care and have family when we become adults.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Deza-Rae Desa, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Deza-Rae Desa. I am the secretary of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on OAHU. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

To have basic necessities and basic rights to all foster youth is critical. To me, this means knowing that there are rights here to protect us, when no one else really can. For example, being told that I'm not allowed to visit my brother because he's at on the West Side of O'ahu and associating that side with being a "bad influence" was hurtful and depressing.

To quote the words of my fellow board member, Noy, she said that, "For children entering foster care, it is a time of loss. Loss of familiarity, family, friends, community, and school. But the greatest loss is of siblings. Separating siblings / severing permanent life-long connections while in foster care inflicts further trauma. About 70% off children in foster care have one sibling and more than half are separated." If I knew that I had a right to see my siblings, I would have advocated with my social worker, GAL and judge to see my siblings and would have been less depressed and happier in care. When I became an adult, I reconnected with them but it would have meant the world to me if that was done while I was in care. It would have helped with my mental and emotional well-being.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Ehukai Goias-Medeiros, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Ehukai Goias-Medeiros, I am 16 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Youth in foster care don't know they have rights, but those who do, don't think it is being enforced and taken seriously by Child Welfare Services.

Noticing more support is needed from social workers to be serious about the Bill of Rights for youth in foster care. Social Workers and other community members should give all kids an equal chance to prove themselves. The only way that would happen is if the social workers include them in their case planning.

Data says that only 26% of youth in foster care say they receive support from Child Welfare professionals. I feel that more youth should receive support from their social workers because they play a huge role in making decisions in the lives of foster youth.

In my experience, I know that I have Rights, but I didn't feel that they were enforced, and I wasn't given the chance to have a monthly meeting with my social workers. I also wasn't given an opportunity to be involved in case planning for my case. Rights are the first step but enforcing these rights so young people are successful and empowered and happy are critical.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Elizabeth Rodriguez, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Elizabeth Rodriguez, I am 19 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Many foster youth don't realize the laws that are available for them. My rights were followed, therefore, I was able to go to school, work, etc. and to me it means I was able to proceed life as a normal teen instead of feeling different because I was in foster care. I was able to work 30 hours a week. I was able to go to the same school even though it isn't in the same district.

The data supporting my statement is 8% achieve a post-secondary degree. Compared to 46% of the general population. Also, 34% reported that they were employed either full- or part-time by the time they were 19.

Because of the adults in my life that knew I had rights and supported my rights, I have a head start on life and lead a pretty normal teenage life, despite being in foster care. I am fortunate compared to so many youth. All youth need rights and adults to enforce those rights so we can be healthy, happy and thrive.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
From: Aponi Boyer, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)  
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,  
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Aponi Boyer, I am 17 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

All youth in foster care deserve to know, advocate, and practice their rights.

Being in foster care, I have been in and out of different homes. I have been worried about moving to new schools, making new friends, and building new social capital. But with the right to attend school and to remain in the child's school of origin that helps foster youth to stay in the same school with friends, counselors, teachers and coaches they know and have social capital with. Living in a different town that is far away from my school, I take the city bus down from where I live to the mall, then walk to school from there. It means a lot to be able to stay in the same school even if it is far.

Just over half of young people with foster care experience graduating high school by the age of 19 compared to 87% if all young people.

The bill of rights protects young people to stay in their school of origin even if they move foster homes and this makes a huge difference with their education and college and employment.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.





**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2018 2:39:11 PM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2018 4:49:36 PM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

March 12, 2018

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

**Re: S.B. 2790 S.D.2 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care**

**Hearing: Wednesday, March 21, 2018, 2:15 p.m., Room 325**

Dear Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Stephanie Batzer. I am the Chair of the Board of Directors for Family Programs Hawaii, a Child Law attorney, and I have been a Court Appointed Special Advocate Volunteer Guardian ad Litem (CASA VGAL) for nearly six years. I am submitting testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of S.B.2790 S.D.2** Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care. This no cost measure amends the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by repealing the existing section "Guiding Principles for Children in Foster Care," and inserting a new section "Rights of Children in Foster Care," which will update current policies and law to meet existing federal laws, as well as the needs of foster youth in care.

Children are Hawaii's most valuable resource. They are our future. Family Programs Hawaii is a unique non-profit agency that provides quality care to the children of Hawaii. Our goal is that every child in Hawaii has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. We help foster children and children at risk with three areas of service: prevention, transition, and support.

The federal Foster Children Bill of Rights is designed to inform foster children of their rights within the child welfare system. Part of this helps inform the children why they are in foster care, how the process will proceed, their right to participate in extracurricular activities, to have educational stability, to have access to Guardians ad Litem, access to mental, behavioral and physical health care, access to siblings and family members. It also requires that foster parents adopt a reasonable and prudent parenting standard, particularly when making decisions regarding extracurricular and other activities. Very importantly, the Foster Children Bill of Rights empowers children of age fourteen and older to be an active part of the development of or revision to his or her case plan. Foster Children Bills of Rights have been enacted in fifteen states and Puerto Rico thus far.

I have worked with three teenagers as a CASA VGAL and ensured that their voices were heard. The knowledge that the Judge will listen and take their participation seriously is very empowering.

Hawaii's proposed Foster Children Bill of Rights will keep our keiki in foster care safe, informed, empowered, and thriving. For this reason, I ask that you pass SB 2790 S.D.2, and support our foster children and youth.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Stephanie W. Batzer, Esq., MSW



We help kids



To: House Committee on Judiciary  
Hearing on Wednesday, March 21, 2018, in CR 325 at 2:15 p.m.

Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

Re: S.B. 2790, SD2, HD1 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care

Testimony of Josephine Chang, in strong support of S.B. 2790, SD2, HD1

Dear Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of S.B. 2790, SD2, HD1 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care, that seeks to update the Child Protective Act by incorporating the existing guiding principles of children in foster care currently set forth in section 587-3, HRS, of the Child Protective Act, into a replacement section that provides rights for children in foster care, also strengthens protections, and gives clearer guidance for the care of children and youth in foster care. The amendments in this bill also makes clear that culturally diverse children and youth in foster care, who are among the most vulnerable and often fall through the cracks in the “system”, also have rights and protections. These strengthening provisions will help to assure that all foster children and youth in the State’s care will be supported towards healthy and positive outcomes. Enacting rights for children in foster care is in keeping with federal law and with an increasing number of states across the nation, as reported by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Hawaii, too, should provide the strongest support possible for our foster children.

I respectfully ask all of you for your support for S.B. 2790, SD2, HD1.

Mahalo,

Josephine L. Chang, Esq. (Ret.)  
LGBTQ Consultant and Trainer,  
Community Resource and Parent Support

"Aloha, my name is Michael B. Wood. I am calling/writing today to encourage Representative Nishimoto to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth."



**MW Group, Ltd.**  
Real Estate Development

**MICHAEL B. WOOD**  
**Principal**

Honolulu

To: The Honorable Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
The Honorable Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Brianne Lyn Nagamine

Re: Testimony in Support of S.B. 2790 SD 2 HD 1, Rights of Children in Foster Care

Hrg: Wednesday, March 21, 2018 2:15 PM State Capitol, Conference Room 325

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, & Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of S.B. 2790 SD2 HD1 which amends the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by replacing section 587A-3 “Guiding Principles for Children in Foster Care” with a new section 587A- “Rights of Children in Foster Care”. Bill of Rights for Foster Youth have been enacted in 15 states in the U.S including Hawaii. However, the state of Hawaii is the only state that refers to it as the “Guiding Principles”. Certain states like California, Florida, and Texas have similar laws in place that are referred to as “rights” of youth in foster care<sup>1</sup>.

It important to make the necessary updates and provide specific details within the “Bill of Rights for Foster Youth” so that youth in the foster care system are able to understand it clearly. The Bill of Rights for Foster Youth provides young people with empowerment and a voice to advocate for themselves while in the foster care system. There are many things that have been added to the new section which I think are extremely important. I appreciate the line added to section (5) in regards to visitation rights. Which states that “withholding visitation should not be used as a punishment”. As an Alumni of the State of Hawaii’s Foster Care system, I understand how not being able to see or have contact with loved ones can feel like a punishment. Going forward, I think it’s important that foster youth are informed about the specific reason(s) why visitation was not granted or arranged.

It should be required that service providers working directly with youth in the foster care system post visibly and/or provide information about these rights for foster youth. I believe foster youth in the state of Hawaii will benefit greatly, if the recommended updates to the existing statute are made. This is why I strongly ask the committee to pass S.B. 2790 SD2 HD1.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2790 SD2 HD1.

Sincerely,

  
Brianne Lyn Nagamine

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/foster-care-bill-of-rights.aspx>

Karen Worthington  
66 Puakea Place  
Kula, HI 96790

March 20, 2018

To: Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

From: Karen Worthington, JD, CWLS  
EPIC 'Ohana Board Chair

Re: SB2790-HD1 – Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 325, March 20, 2018, 2:15 PM**

**Position: I strongly support SB2790-HD1 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care**

Dear Representative Nishimoto, Representative San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2790-HD1, which will ensure that the state provides youth in foster care with rights that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving.

In 2017, over 2,600 children were involved in our state's foster care system. These are young people who are victims of maltreatment by their parents. They experienced trauma in their homes and then experienced the trauma of being taken from the only people and places they have known. While foster care can be a life-saving intervention for some children, removing a child from his or her home is always a traumatic event.

The accumulation of trauma puts children in foster care at a much higher risk of lifelong physical and mental health illnesses, school failure, homelessness, teen parenthood and incarceration than youth who were not in foster care. Mitigating these risks requires a concerted effort by service providers, courts, and communities. Protective factors for youth in foster care include the maintenance of relationships that are important to them, including with their families of origin, extended family (blood-related and other), and home communities. Other protective factors include learning financial literacy, leadership, and life skills. Receiving educational and emotional supports also help tip the balance toward healthy, positive futures for these youth.

SB 2790-SD1 ensures that children in foster care will have as many protective factors in place as possible. The state has a federal and state obligation to protect foster children's mental and physical well-being and their spiritual and emotional health. The state must also protect and promote other aspects of their development, such as education and socialization.

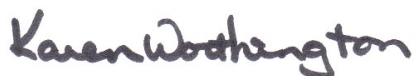
Under current law, the state's duties to children in foster care are characterized as "guiding principles" for the state rather than rights of the children. It is time for Hawai'i to acknowledge that when it assumes the role of parent for maltreated children, those children have a right to the care and protections listed in SB 2790-SD1.

My perspective on SB 2790-HD1 is informed by my 24 years as a children's law and policy attorney working with child welfare systems and the families they serve. I am certified as a Child Welfare Legal Specialist through the National Association of Counsel for Children. My view of SB 2790-HD1 is also informed by my work as chair of the board of EPIC 'Ohana, a non-profit providing crucial services to families involved with child welfare services (CWS), including 'Ohana conferencing, 'Ohana Finding, Youth Circles and 'Ohana Connections. In addition, EPIC 'Ohana facilitates the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative, which helps youth successfully transition from foster care to independent adulthood.

SB 2790-HD1 will improve the lives of youth in foster care in Hawai'i. It will also bring clarity to the state's role when CWS removes children from their homes to bring them into foster care. I urge you to pass SB 2790-HD1 for Hawai'i children.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information. I can be reached at 808-214-9336 or [karen@karenworthington.com](mailto:karen@karenworthington.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karen Worthington, JD  
NACC Certified Child Welfare Legal Specialist  
EPIC 'Ohana Board Chair



March 21, 2018

To: Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair  
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

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

Re: **SB 2790 SD2, HD1 – Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care**  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Room 325, March 21, 2018, 2:15 PM**

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**On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing to support SB 2790, SD2, HD1 – Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care.**

Children and youth in foster care represent one of our State's most vulnerable communities. Entering foster care can be a traumatic experience in which a child has their entire world turned upside-down. This can leave foster children with feelings of uncertainty about when or whether they will see their siblings or friends again, or even whether their new foster family will provide them with food to eat. Additionally, the State has a special legal relationship with foster youth and a duty to ensure that they are protected while in foster care. Establishing the "Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Youth" in statute is necessary to ensure that foster youth are aware of their rights, such as the right to be free from emotional abuse, and know to speak up if these rights are not being respected. SB 2790 would update the existing *Guiding Principles for Children and Youth in Foster Care* by renaming the section and including a more comprehensive list of rights, including rights for LGBTQ youth, clarification around vital documents, and references to case planning and educational stability.

**For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests the Committee to support this measure.**

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

**LATE**

**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2018 8:13:43 PM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Donna R Walker	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As resource grandparents of 4 of our 19 grandchildren, we ask and encourage you to pass SB2790. This no-cost bill will ensure our foster youth are provided rights in the foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Mahalo for considering our request, please continue your support of Hawaii's foster children and youth by passing this bill. We support and encourage our grandchildren to speak up as they should have a voice in all of their care and life decisions.

**LATE**

**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2018 4:02:06 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Melodie Aduja	Oahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2018 6:38:48 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

SB 2790 is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Hawaii's foster children and youth.

**LATE**

**To: Senate Committee on Judiciary, March 21th, 2018**

**From: KEOLA LIMKIN**

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT OF SB 2790 SD2 HD1**

Hello and aloha Chair and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary. My name is Keola Limkin, I am 26 years old, and I am in strong support of SB 2790. I am a former member of the HI HOPES Youth Leadership Board, a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and am currently employed with EPIC 'Ohana. I am submitting this testimony as an individual and not as a representative of EPIC 'Ohana.

I spent three years growing up in foster care in Hilo up until I graduated from high school. As I spent time with my foster dad growing up, I was not notified or encouraged to go to my court hearings. In result, I was filled with negative images of my family court judge without truly understanding their role. According to a survey taken by a convient sample of Hawai'i foster youth in 2016, seven out of 43 youth did not know they had a right to attend their court hearings. Any youth that does not know is unacceptable.

Lastly, I feel blessed to have been involved with my high school's Leo club and judo team. It meant the world to me when my foster dad came to watch my judo matches. These activities and positive relationships definitely helped my brain to rewire past trauma. Now, I serve on the National Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Policy Council and I possess the social knowledge to work collaboratively with others.

These proposed rights of children in foster care upholds the vision for these youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. I ask that we move forward to create a stronger collective community in our Island chain, ka pae 'āina Hawai'i, and pass Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much for your time.

**LATE**

My name is Le'a Alcover.

I am writing today to encourage Representative Nishimoto to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving.

Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth.

Mahalo,  
Le'a Alcover, MSW

PSSF Outreach Counselor

Na'alehu, HI 96772

**LATE**

"Aloha, my name is Christina Basham. I am writing today to encourage Representative Nishimoto to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth."

Mahalo for continuing to support our community. 😊

Christina Basham, M.S.  
Program Director I  
ATV, DVA, DVSF, WHDAS,SATS  
Child and Family Service

**LATE**

**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2018 11:04:03 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hello, my name is Candice Kirby, parent and resident of Kailua Kona. I am writing today to encourage Representative Nishimoto to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. These youth deserve our protection and our current system is not adequately funded or staffed to meet their needs. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth."



**LATE**

**SB-2790-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2018 1:24:13 PM

Testimony for JUD on 3/21/2018 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Support for foster kids are critically important for students to be nurtured to learn and grow from responsible adult mentors that are so willing to support and teach these kids tools to become independent.

Please support SB2790 bill to help our foster students grow up to become "independent" thriving community serving adults to learn and grow from other adult volunteers that support the initiatives for foster kids.

mahalo!

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

DOUGLAS S. CHIN  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



**LATE**

LEONARD HOSHIGO  
DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 321  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

[www.labor.hawaii.gov](http://www.labor.hawaii.gov)  
Phone: (808) 586-8844 / Fax: (808) 586-9099  
Email: [dlir.director@hawaii.gov](mailto:dlir.director@hawaii.gov)

March 21, 2018

To: The Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair;  
The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair; and  
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

Date: Wednesday, March 21, 2018  
Time: 2:15 p.m.  
Place: Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: Leonard Hoshijo, Director  
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

**Re: S.B. No. 2790 SD2 HD1 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care**

Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 2790 SD2 HD1. SB 2790 SD2 HD1 proposes to amend the Child Protective Act, chapters 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by deleting the existing section 587A-3 (Guiding Principles for children in foster care) and replacing it with a new section 587A- , (Rights of children in foster care).

DLIR supports this measure. DLIR has been a part of the community partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and its providers and defers to DHS for technical issues.

Foster youth who age out of the foster care system as working age adults are a vulnerable group with a high risk for homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

The Department supports the intent of this measure to keep foster youth in the same school to the extent possible and otherwise give youth a more positive foster care experience that enables them to learn how to take care of themselves in productive ways and sustain good relationships during their childhood and teen years. Brain research has shown how having positive role models and greater connections with supportive adults can shape young people at risk into successful adults who contribute to society and the economy.

**LATE**

Aloha, my name is Johanna Park and I live on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am writing today to encourage Representative Nishimoto to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth.

**Johanna Park, MA, LMHC**

Clinical Supervisor Crisis Mobile Outreach/Therapeutic Crisis Homes