

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
HONOLULU

February 16, 2021

TO: The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness

FROM: Scott Morishige, MSW, Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

SUBJECT: **HB 282 – RELATING TO MINORS**

Hearing: Thursday, February 16, 2021, 11:00 a.m.  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**POSITION:** The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness appreciates the intent of this measure, offers comments, and defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS).

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to expand circumstances where a minor may consent to no cost emergency shelter and related services to include cases where the provider is coordinating with child welfare services.

This measure appears intended to increase access to emergency shelter for homeless minors under the age of 18. Increasing access to shelter aligns with the goals of the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) ten-year strategic plan, which include a specific focus on improving access to services that address youth development, including strengthening support for homeless minors.

As currently drafted, the bill may not achieve the intent of expanding emergency shelter options. A "provider," as currently defined in 346-17.6, HRS, already coordinates with DHS child welfare services, both in consenting to licensing as a "child placing organization" or "child caring institution," as well as being a mandatory reporter of child abuse and neglect. Based on feedback from service providers, a key barrier to access to emergency shelter for minors is the fear from minors that they will be reported to child welfare services or law enforcement if they enter shelter, as well as the overall lack of immediate beds to offer to this population.

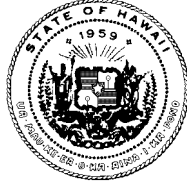
In regard to the shortage of beds, the Coordinator notes recent programs being implemented in Hawaii add new bed capacity and services for homeless minors and youth. Partners in Care – the Continuum of Care (CoC) for Oahu – was recently awarded a three-year \$3.8 million Youth Homelessness Development Program (YHDP) grant to support innovative strategies to address youth homelessness, including the needs of unaccompanied minors. DHS and the Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) currently serve on the YHDP steering committee and are providing feedback regarding the implementation of these funds. The RYSE Youth Access Center, partially funded through the `Ohana Zone program, is also beginning to strengthen the network of youth homeless services on Oahu.

Despite this addition of resources, unaccompanied minors have distinct needs that cannot be safely addressed in a shelter or other program intended for the general adult population. For example, section 346-17, HRS, requires DHS to adopt administrative rules establishing standards for child caring institutions and child placing organizations, including requiring criminal history record checks and child abuse and neglect registry checks. Concerns regarding safety should be addressed as this measure proceeds.

If this bill moves forward, the Coordinator suggests seeking feedback from youth homeless service providers and other stakeholders on how to balance the safety of minors, while also acknowledging the factors that inhibit many minors from consenting to shelter.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 11, 2021

TO: The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
House Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 282 – RELATING TO MINORS.**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 11:00 a.m.  
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

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

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to expand the circumstances where a minor may consent to no cost emergency shelter and related services to include cases where the provider is coordinating with child welfare services.

DHS supports these efforts to address the needs of minors to have greater access to shelter and the ability to independently consent to shelter services whether they are involved with child welfare services or not. Following the hearing of the companion measure SB 22 and upon further consultation and discussion with community partners, the Child Welfare Services Branch (CWS) reconsidered its position to require providers ("and") to be in coordination with child welfare services.

To facilitate further discussion, the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness, scheduled a meeting with CWS, and Partners In Care, the Oahu Continuum of Care for Homeless services for Wednesday, February 17, 2021. The group intends to discuss the shelter needs of minors, minors' fears of being reported to the police or CWS if they seek shelter, how shelter providers

and CWS can find a solution or process that will provide minors with a safe place to shelter while perhaps assuring that a safety assessment of the minor is conducted, and where appropriate, a case of suspected child abuse or neglect or suspected trafficking is reported to the CWS.

The parties all agree that minors should be allowed to access appropriate shelter, that shelters be available specifically for youth to avoid mixing with the sheltered adults, and that a variety of services be available to support the minor to transition from the streets to safer permanent housing.

DHS needs more time to discuss these issues and appreciates all efforts to better serve these vulnerable minors.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



February 11, 2021

House's Committee on Health, Human Services & Homelessness  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street, Room 329  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: House Bill 282 - RELATING TO MINORS**

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam and Committee Members,

I am writing in SUPPORT for House Bill 282 on behalf of the LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, Hawaii's oldest and largest policy and political LGBTQIA+ focused organization. HB 282 would expand the circumstances where a minor may consent to no cost emergency shelter and related services to include cases where the provider is coordinating with child welfare services.

There is currently only one full service shelter in the entire state for homeless unaccompanied minors. It is RYSE (Residential Youth Services and Empowerment) located on the Windward side of O'ahu and RYSE serves 18 – 24 years old and they have 30 beds, 20 male & 10 female.

Hawai'i needs to be expand circumstances in which a minor can consent to entering a no-cost shelter and have the Department of Human Services work to make sure we have such shelters for unaccompanied minors on every island across the state.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration,

Michael Golojuch, Jr.  
Chair  
LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

**HB-282**

Submitted on: 2/11/2021 9:43:26 AM

Testimony for HHH on 2/16/2021 11:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Pride at Work - Hawaii	Pride @ Work - Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

Pride at Work - Hawai'i, the state-wide chapter of Pride At Work (a constituency group of the national AFL-CIO) and an affiliate of the Hawai'i State AFL-CIO, fully supports HB 282.

Mahalo nui loa,

Pride at Work - Hawai'i

# 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)

Carole Gruskin, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive Director

Bay Clinic

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hawaii

Big Island Substance Abuse Council

Bobby Benson Center

Child and Family Service

Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii

Collins Consulting, LLC

Domestic Violence Action Center

EPIC, Inc.

Family Programs Hawaii

Family Support Hawaii

Friends of the Children of West Hawaii

Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui

Hale Kipa, Inc.

Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.

Hawaii Children's Action Network

Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center

Ho'ola Na Pua

Kahi Mohala

Kokua Kalihi Valley

Kokua Ohana Aloha (KOA)

Maui Youth and Family Services

Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems

Systems

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

Parents and Children Together (PACT)

PHOCUSED

PFLAG - Kona Big Island

Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and

Hawaiian Islands

Residential Youth Services & Empowerment (RYSE)

Salvation Army Family

Intervention Services

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Susannah Wesley Community Center

The Catalyst Group

February 11, 2021

To: Representative Ryan Yamane  
And members of the Committee on Human Services  
and Homelessness

## Testimony in Support of HB 282 Relating to Minors

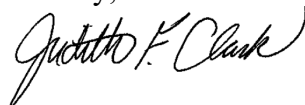
Hawaii Youth Services Network, a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 282 Relating to Minors

Enabling minors to consent for admission to an emergency youth shelter ensures that they are able to escape the dangers of living on the streets in those rare situation in which consent from a parent or guardian cannot be obtained.

In some circumstances, notifying parents or guardians of the minor's location could increase risk of harm by family members or guardians. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse committed by a family member or guardian is often the reason why the minor is seeking a safe shelter. Adding provider coordination with Child Welfare Services as a reason to allow minor consent for shelter will increase the safety of these vulnerable youth.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director

# PARTNERS IN CARE

*Oahu's Continuum of Care*

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*Our mission is to eliminate homelessness through open and inclusive participation and the coordination of integrated responses.*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB282 Relating to Minors Consent to No Cost Shelter

TO: Senate Committee on Housing  
FROM: Partners In Care (PIC)  
Hearing: Tuesday, 2/16/21; 11:00am; via videoconference  
Position: **Strong Support**

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Members, Committee on Health, Human Services and Homelessness:

Partner In Care, Oahu's Continuum of Care, stands in **Strong Support of HB 282**, Relating to Minors Consent to No Cost Shelter. Youth experiencing homelessness in Hawaii is a growing issue that needs to be addressed separately from adult and family homelessness. For those adults and families experiencing homelessness, they often have a head of household who is at least 18 and can give legal consent to enter a shelter. For those younger than 18, their options are extremely limited. Programs that provide services to youth are currently not allowed to shelter youth under 18. This puts these youth, who are already very vulnerable, in an impossible situation. Even if they are willing to ask for help, we must close the door on them when it's time to sleep. They are left to fend for themselves on the streets when they need help the most. We have qualified and dedicated providers in our community who currently work with the hundreds of youth throughout the year. They are ready to make sure that those doors are no longer closed to those in need.

The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project was awarded to the Oahu CoC in 2019 and addresses many of the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. Allowing these same youth entrance into youth specific shelters will further the assistance that our system can provide to youth in Hawaii.

Thank you for your consideration of this measure. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Aloha



**HB-282**

Submitted on: 2/13/2021 12:00:29 AM

Testimony for HHH on 2/16/2021 11:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Pride at Work - Hawaii	Pride @ Work - Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

Pride at Work - Hawai'i, the state-wide chapter of Pride At Work (a constituency group of the national AFL-CIO) and an affiliate of the Hawai'i State AFL-CIO, fully supports HB 285.

Mahalo nui loa,

Pride at Work - Hawai'i

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## Residential Youth Services & Empowerment

February 15, 2021

TO: The Honorable Rep. Ryan Yamane, Chair  
Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

The Honorable Rep. Adrian Tam, Vice Chair  
Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Carla Houser, Executive Director  
Residential Youth Services & Empowerment (RYSE)

SUBJECT: HB282 Relating to Minor Consent to No Cost Emergency Shelter

Hearing: Tuesday, February 16 2021  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

**POSITION: RYSE strongly supports this measure.**

As a homeless youth service provider, I have watched a growing number of unaccompanied youth take care of themselves on the street at a very young age for far too long. The 2018 UH Center on Family *Street Youth Survey* found the average age a young person first experiences homelessness on Oahu is 14 years old and over 77% of these youth had experience physical, mental and sexual abuse. It is time we step up our efforts to deal with this issue and capitalize on the strengths and resilience of our young people.

We continue to criminalize minors who run away from abusive homes as status offenders and their only path to shelter currently is to reunite with family or to enter the foster care system. Hawaii also has no emancipation path for unaccompanied youth. Many unaccompanied homeless youth have developed a mistrust of services following negative experiences with adults and/or fear social service agency notification or legal intervention. So, they stay hidden in plain sight, utilizing trusted, low barrier drop in centers and street outreach workers to meet their basic needs of food and clothing. At night, they often partner up with older adults and often find themselves forced to engage in unlawful, exploitative activities just to sleep safely.

Our current model of allowing these unaccompanied minors to linger on the streets

and not providing the necessary resources to address the trauma they've faced is not working. The recently released Child & Family Service report *Sex Trafficking Experiences Across Hawaii* shows that 23% of the sex trafficking victims were first sex trafficked before they turned 18 years old. Of the participants that were first sex trafficked as children: 39% had experienced homelessness, 44% reported addiction to drugs and 70% reported having a mental health diagnosis. 24.7% of the victims said they were forced to exchange sex for a place to stay.

By the time these youth turn 18 and can enter a shelter catering to adolescent specific needs, it's often too late. The trauma of living on the streets has compounded. Their substance use, mental health and sexual exploitation has been exacerbated because of a need to survive.

**This bill is the first step in creating a mechanism to shelter these unaccompanied minors, giving them respite from the streets and time to make choices that improve their current situation with the appropriate safeguards and staffing in place.**

In 2019, our outreach team had multiple encounters with 21 unaccompanied minors living on our streets of Oahu. None of those youth were identified on the Department of Human Services Missing Children's website and they often live in or around homeless encampments with older chronically homeless individuals. These unaccompanied minors want to go back to school, they want help with their substance use, and they want mental health services. They may not trust the child welfare system to resolve their situation and they need a different approach.

The intent for homeless youth providers to coordinate with child welfare services to ensure these youth have a fighting change. We want the ability to notify CWS without, necessarily, a removal response. We want to better partner with intake at CWS so that we have open communication and eyes on these kids as they navigate their way out of homelessness. The idea should be to intervene early, with services targeted toward the particular needs of young people — before homelessness becomes chronic, and it's much harder to move them off the street.

Through a collaboration of both state agencies and private organizations and a coordinated system of care, this measure will provide temporary stable housing as well as supportive connections to caring adults and services that can guide at risk youth from the streets towards a productive life and brighter future.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Carla Houser  
Executive Director, RYSE

February 12, 2021

House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness  
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference room 329  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To: **Ryan I. Yamane, Chair**  
**Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair and**  
**Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness**

From: Wehi Kamakawiwo'ole  
University of Hawaii at Manoa Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health  
First year BSW junior student class of 2023

Hearing: February 16, 2021 at 11:00 am via videoconference

Subject: **HB 282 Relating to Minors**

Position: **I strongly support measure HB 282**

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and House committee members on Health, Human Services and Homelessness. My name is Wehi Kamakawiwo'ole and as an aspiring future social worker for the state of Hawaii and also a constituent of the community which you serve I strongly support HB 282.

In Hawaii there is currently only one full service homeless shelter in the entire state that services unaccompanied minors specifically. Hawaii is in great need of expanding its circumstances where a minor may consent to enter an emergency shelter at no cost while coordinating with child welfare services to meet every need of the minor seeking safety in services and shelter as well.

According to *The 2018 UH Center on Family Street Youth Survey* the average age a person first experiences homelessness is at the age of 14. At a devastating 77% of these minors disclosed having experienced physical, mental, and or sexual abuse by someone who they were in care of. It is helpful to allow a minor to give consent when family members or other guardians, instead of protecting them, may actually cause harm to them.

In closing I would like to thank you for your time and consideration on this matter. Again I am in support of HB 282 and I hope that you will be too.

Thank you,

Wehi Kamakawiwo'ole

**HB-282**

Submitted on: 2/12/2021 8:25:10 PM

Testimony for HHH on 2/16/2021 11:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

HB282 is definitely needed to help minors who need emergency shelter. Please pass.

**HB-282**

Submitted on: 2/14/2021 9:05:01 PM

Testimony for HHH on 2/16/2021 11:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support HB282.

Eileen McKee

Kihei, HI