

# HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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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

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

March 19, 2021

To: Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Human Services and Housing

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SCR 63/SR 45 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO CREATE A MODEL STATEWIDE SCHOOL POLICY ON STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND POSTVENTION IN GRADES K-12**

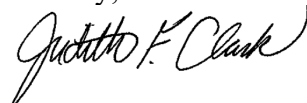
Hawaii Youth Services Network, a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SCR 63/SR 45 Requesting the Department of Education to Convene a Working Group to Create a Model Statewide School Policy on Student Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention In Grades K-12.

According to the Youth Behavioral Risk Survey over the past 10 years, Hawaii's students have consistently had a rate of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts that is greater than the national average. In the Hawaii Street Youth Survey, 39.7% of homeless youth had suicidal thoughts. Among those who considered suicide, 58.3% had actually attempted suicide.

The stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on education and other stressors have increased mental health issues and may have increased suicide risks among our children and youth. We need a comprehensive suicide prevention and intervention plan now more than ever.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director

**HR-40**

Submitted on: 3/19/2021 10:33:26 AM

Testimony for HHH on 3/23/2021 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Maddalynn Seseapasara	HHHRC	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Honorable Members,

Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority [Reports](#) showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Please pass SR45 to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

Mahalo,

Maddalynn Seseapasara

**HR-40**

Submitted on: 3/19/2021 2:07:18 PM

Testimony for HHH on 3/23/2021 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sarah Hamid	AF3IRM Hawai'i	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Honorable Members,

Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority [Reports](#) showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Please pass SR45 to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

Mahalo,

AF3IRM Hawai'i

**HCR51/HR40**

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO CREATE A MODEL STATEWIDE SCHOOL POLICY ON STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND POSTVENTION IN GRADES K-12

Ke Kōmike Hale o ke Olakino, ka Lawelawe Kānaka, a me ka Pilikia Ho‘okuewa  
House Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

Malaki 23, 2021

9:00 a.m.

Lumi 329

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HCR51/HR40, which would require a working group of community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts to convene and create a statewide school policy on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in grades K-12.

OHA has long advocated for meaningful policies that can reduce the health inequities of Native Hawaiians. For example, OHA spearheaded the legislative effort to codify “social determinants of health” through Act 155 (Reg. Sess. 2014), and require state agencies to take a holistic and systemic approach to addressing health disparities seen in Native Hawaiian and other communities. Therefore, OHA appreciates the intent of HCR51/HR40 to address the range of harms and health issues that may drive young people, including a disproportionate amount of young Native Hawaiians, to suicide and suicide attempts.

Recent data has highlighted the negative impacts of suicide, attempted suicide, and suicidal ideation on the Native Hawaiian community. **Alarmingly, Native Hawaiian youth are substantially more likely to ideate and attempt suicide than their peers.**<sup>1</sup> About 24% of Native Hawaiian females in public high schools have seriously considered attempting suicide, compared to 18.7% of non-Hawaiian females.<sup>2</sup> Statewide, the percentage of 10<sup>th</sup> grade Native Hawaiian males that previously attempted suicide (11%) was more than double that of their non-Hawaiian peers (5.2%).<sup>3</sup> Anecdotal reports have also suggested an apparent increase in suicide attempts and deaths among Native Hawaiian youth in recent months, possibly influenced by the abrupt lifestyle changes and social isolation brought on by the pandemic. The tragic impacts of suicide and suicide attempts do not just affect the individuals involved, but carry long-lasting consequences for families and the broader community as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Id. at 19-25.

<sup>2</sup> Id. at 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> Id. at 22.

**HCR51/HR40 may facilitate the implementation of OHA recommendations made over recent years to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians, and that may specifically address the higher incidence of youth suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide deaths within the Native Hawaiian community.** For example, in “Haumea: Transforming the Health of Native Hawaiian Women and Empowering Wāhine Well-Being,”<sup>4</sup> OHA recommended specific mental health interventions for our keiki in schools, by: (1) creating and improving mental health screening programs, (2) **addressing self-harm with gender-sensitive and grade-appropriate strategies in public schools**, (3) working with trained professionals in mental and behavioral health fields to ensure appropriate treatment and follow-up, (4) providing assessments of drug alcohol use disorders among adolescents, and (5) improving educational programs that address the risks and consequences of substance abuse.<sup>5</sup> Establishing an expert- and stakeholder-informed policy for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention can help provide school principles, teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders with clearer and consistent guidance on comprehensively addressing self-harm and suicidal thoughts and actions within our public school student body, and thereby mitigate the impacts of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation on Native Hawaiian and other students, as well as on their families and communities.

OHA appreciates this resolution’s particular focus on youth with disabilities, who experience houselessness, and who may identify as LGBTQ+, who may be at disproportionate risk of suicidal thoughts and actions. In light of the disproportionate rates of Native Hawaiian youth represented in suicide ideation, attempts, and deaths, OHA does respectfully recommend the inclusion of the following amendment after page 3, line 31, to read as follows:

“(4) Native Hawaiian youth; and”

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HCR51/HR40. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>4</sup> OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, HAUMEA—TRANSFORMING THE HEALTH OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN WOMEN AND EMPOWERING WĀHINE WELL-BEING 19-25 (2018).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 25.



March 22, 2021

Chair Ryan Yamane  
415 South Beretania St  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: Support for HR40 - Model Statewide School Policy on Suicide Prevention**

Dear Chair Yamane and the Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness,

The Trevor Project wishes to express strong support of HR40, which would request the Department of Education to create a model statewide school policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in grades K-12 and further addresses the needs of students placed at high risk.

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning) young people. We work every day to save young lives by providing support through free and confidential suicide prevention through our 24/7 phone lifeline, chat, and text. We also run TrevorSpace, the world's largest safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth, and operate innovative education, research, and advocacy programs.

Current data shows that young people in Hawaii are hurting. The Trevor Project's 2020 National Survey of LGBTQ Youth Mental Health showed that 40% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous twelve months, with more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth having seriously considered it. Further, a recent report from Mental Health America showed that 45 percent of 14-18 year-olds are not hopeful about the future, with over half of LGBTQ teens being not hopeful about the future. This lack of hope can lead to increased thoughts of suicide and other mental health challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for mental health and suicide prevention, especially as social isolation has increased due to physical distancing and other preventative measures. In a Spring 2020 survey conducted by the CDC, over a quarter of those ages 18-24 reported having seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days, compared to slightly over one-tenth reporting seriously considering suicide in the past year in a 2019 survey. Recent polling by the Trevor Project also shows that 35% of LGBTQ youth report feeling more lonely during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to 22% of their cisgender/straight peers. A higher baseline of vulnerability means that when a stressor occurs (such as COVID) those who are already at higher risk are more likely to be in crisis. Therefore, it is more important than ever for schools to be prepared to work with young people who are experiencing crisis or suicidality.



When a young person is in crisis, it is essential for the adults around them to be equipped to see the issue and respond appropriately, and for the young person to be able to access resources that provide them the care they need to feel supported and safe. The onus of this responsibility should not be placed on any individual adult in the moment, but rather should be a collective and pre-planned effort by the community to help protect our youth. School aged youth typically spend at least a third of their day in schools, giving teachers, administrators, and other school staff the unique ability to provide a supportive environment. Development of suicide awareness, prevention, and postvention policies that are readily accessible to school officials will help prepare them to react quickly, appropriately, and with care when a student is at risk or in a crisis.

The Trevor Project, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the American School Counselors Association have created a model school policy for suicide prevention that can be utilized as a resource and we would be happy to assist the Department of Education in their efforts to provide this type of life saving resource to educators across Hawaii.

For these reasons and on behalf of the youth who depend upon our services, The Trevor Project strongly supports HR40. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. D. Miller".

Keygan Miller  
(They/Them)  
Senior Advocacy Associate  
The Trevor Project



Hearing Date: March 23, 2021

Hearing Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Via Videoconference Conference Room 329

Re: HCR 51 & HR 40, Requesting the Department of Education To Convene a Working Group to Create a Model Statewide School Policy on Student Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention in Grades K-12

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam and members of the House Committee on Health, Human Services & Homelessness,

On behalf of Sutter Health Kāhi Mōhala, we are writing in support of HCR 51 & HR 40, requesting the Department of Education to convene a working group to create a model statewide school policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in grades K-12

In Hawaii, one person dies by suicide every two days. That translates to an average of 190 suicides among Hawaii residents each year. Another nine non-residents die from suicide in the islands annually.

According to a recent report, statewide suicide rate was highest in 2020 during the months preceding the pandemic. The worst month was February, in which there were 25 suicide deaths in the state, according to the data. That compares to an average of 13 suicide deaths in 2015 to 2019 and an average of 14 suicide deaths in 2000 to 2014. Providing training for teachers is an important step toward helping students and families address the risks of suicide.

Sutter Health Kāhi Mōhala is a psychiatric hospital located in Ewa Beach, embracing an interdisciplinary perspective of care and incorporating an integrative approach to emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioral healthcare treatment. We are committed to serving the mental health needs of our community.

We are in support of HCR 51 & HR 40.

Claudia Crist  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sutter Health Kāhi Mōhala



**HR-40**

Submitted on: 3/18/2021 8:23:05 PM

Testimony for HHH on 3/23/2021 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a teacher who has had unfortunate experience of students attempting suicide, I support anything we can do to curb it.

**HR-40**

Submitted on: 3/19/2021 1:55:36 PM

Testimony for HHH on 3/23/2021 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sarah Michal Hamid	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Honorable Members,

Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority [Reports](#) showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Please pass SR45 to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

Mahalo,

Sarah Michal Hamid

**HR-40**

Submitted on: 3/20/2021 10:24:17 AM

Testimony for HHH on 3/23/2021 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Honorable Members,

As a public health professional and concerned community member, I urge you to **pass HR40 without amendments.**

Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority [Reports](#) showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Passing this resolution will help to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

I personally collaborate with many local LGBTQIA+ community members and agencies, who have contributed to the development of this measure in its current form. **Please pass this resolution as it is.**

Mahalo,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)