

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 2482, S.D. 1, H.D. 1

**March 21, 2022**  
**2:00 p.m.**  
**Room 329 and Videoconference**

**RELATING TO WELLNESS**

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 2482, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, amends Chapter 27, HRS, and does the following: 1) establish within the Office of the Governor (GOV) an Office of Wellness and Resilience (Office) as a semi-autonomous authority on a temporary basis and for special purposes to comply with Article V, Section 6, of the Hawai'i State Constitution; 2) authorize the Office to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force established pursuant to Act 209, SLH 2021; 3) require the Office to submit an annual report to the Legislature that contains a summary of activities during the preceding year; 4) appropriate an unspecified amount of general revenues to GOV for FY 23 for the establishment and operations of the Office; and 5) provide an unspecified sunset date for the bill.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that

states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

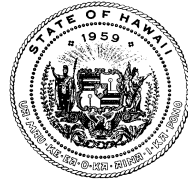
- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2482 SD1 HD1  
RELATING TO WELLNESS**

REPRESENTATIVE AARON LIND JOHANSON, CHAIR

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

Hearing Date: 3/21/2022

Room Number: VIA  
VIDEOCONFERENCE

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health **supports** this bill provided that its passage  
2 does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Governor's Executive Budget.  
3 **Department Testimony:** Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.  
4 Complex and prolonged trauma can have overwhelming effects on a person's physical, mental  
5 and behavioral health outcomes throughout their lifespan. Research on adverse childhood events  
6 known as ACEs, beginning in the late '90s, first brought the impact of early childhood trauma  
7 into public awareness. This resulted in more attention to support services needed by young  
8 children who have experienced traumatic events.  
9 The good news is, more and more, promising practices are emerging that can shield children,  
10 adults and families from the effects of adverse experiences and to prevent the worst of  
11 consequences. And in Hawai'i, we have an incredible foundation of cultural wisdom and  
12 practices to build upon that connect families back to themselves and their culture, which we  
13 already know positively impacts their lives and communities. Culture is health.

1 While there have been siloed efforts on behalf of state agencies and departments to train up the  
2 family-serving workforce in trauma-informed care, the Trauma-Informed Task Force is the first  
3 step we have taken as a state in our mission to make our trauma work more collaborative and  
4 strategic. We have exceptional challenges in the islands when it comes to trauma-informed care  
5 because many of our populations suffer from complex trauma involving intergenerational  
6 historical, cultural and/or racial trauma. This also presents an exceptional opportunity. We can  
7 lead the nation, as well as those serving Indigenous populations, in sharing our mana‘o and what  
8 we learn as the proposed Office of Wellness and Resilience implements the task force’s  
9 framework. The ability for our workforce to provide the services children, youth and families  
10 deserve has been severely hindered by the collective trauma of the pandemic and its effects. As  
11 just one example, we experienced a whopping 25% increase in teachers leaving our public  
12 schools during the 2020-2021 over the previous school year, and we were already in a teacher  
13 shortage.

14 As a semi-autonomous unit, the Office of Wellness and Resilience would be able to more  
15 quickly respond to the ever-changing needs of our communities, both now and into the future, as  
16 we anticipate upcoming challenges such as new pandemics, immigration and the effects of  
17 climate change. We urge you to create the Office of Wellness and Resilience to provide this  
18 preventive and trauma-responsive care to Hawai‘i’s children and families, and stand in strong  
19 support of this bill to create it.

20 **Offered Amendments for SB2482:** The Department of Health respectfully requests, the  
21 following amendments to assure the Executive Director possesses the necessary qualifications to  
22 lead this office (the department is willing to assist the committee in determining qualifications

1 for the job), and recommends a staffing structure as follows: 1.0 FTE for an Executive Director  
2 position, 1.0 FTE for an administrative assistant position, four FTE positions to serve as liaisons  
3 to departments to fulfil the objectives and purpose of this office, and two .50 FTE graduate  
4 research assistants to support this office. Additionally, Department of Health requests the office  
5 be permanently transitioned and housed to the Department of Health by FY24 and requests the 6-  
6 1.0FTE and 2-.50FTE positions be funded by available ARPA funds until the transition in FY24.

7 **"§27- Office of wellness and resilience;**

8 **established.** (a) There is established within the office  
9 of the governor, on a temporary basis and for special  
10 purposes, the office of wellness and resilience.

11 (b) The office shall be headed by an executive  
12 director, [~~who shall be appointed by the governor without~~  
13 ~~regard to chapter 76, and who shall serve at the pleasure~~  
14 ~~of the governor~~] through a competitive process.

15 (c) The governor may use moneys from existing,  
16 unfilled and unneeded staff positions from other  
17 executive branch agencies to appoint additional staff for  
18 the office. Staff appointed pursuant to this subsection  
19 shall be exempt from chapters 76 and 89 but shall be a  
20 member of the state employees' retirement system and

1 shall be eligible to receive the benefits of any state  
2 employee benefit program generally applicable to officers  
3 and employees of the State.

4 (d) Department directors may assign additional  
5 employees from existing positions within their respective  
6 department to the office; provided that the staff shall  
7 represent their respective department's needs and shall  
8 have direct communication with the respective  
9 department's leadership during the course of their  
10 assignment with the office."

11 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure impacts the priorities identified in the Governor's Executive  
12 Budget Request and the Department of Health requests this bill's passage does not replace or  
13 adversely impact priorities indicated in the Governor's Executive Budget.

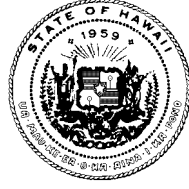
14

15

16

17

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

March 19, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2482 SD1 – RELATING TO WELLNESS.**

Hearing: March 21, 2022, 2:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure.

**PURPOSE OF THE BILL:** The purpose of this bill is to establish a temporary office of wellness and resilience within the office of the governor. Authorizes the office of wellness and resilience to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the trauma-informed care task force. Appropriates funds. Sunsets on an unspecified date. Effective 7/1/2060. (HD1) The SD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that the placement of the Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor shall be for special purposes to comply with Article V, section 6, of the Hawaii State Constitution; and
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2050, to facilitate further discussion on the measure.

The HD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that departments may assign additional employees from existing positions to the Office of Wellness and Resilience;

- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2060, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

Act 209, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021, established the Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Task Force within the Department of Health to create recommendations on how the State could become trauma-informed. Embedding trauma-informed care (TIC) response throughout government is necessary to bolster resilience and well-being, particularly now as we continue to see the pandemic's lasting mental, physical, and social-emotional impacts.

The TIC task force is tasked with: creating and adopting a statewide framework for trauma-informed and responsive practice; identifying best practices, including those from native Hawaiian cultural practices with respect to children and youth who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing trauma and their families; providing a trauma-informed care inventory and assessment of public and private agencies and departments; and identifying various cultural practices that build wellness and resilience in communities.

This work must be collaborative, cross-sector, and multigenerational. Most notably, it requires vested interest and commitment from all branches of government, private sector stakeholders, and community members to create and sustain needed change. Creating an Office on Wellness and Resiliency will assist with creating and embedding TIC across State government and could have a positive lifetime impact on Hawaii's residents and future generations.

The shift to become a TIC State is necessary. National reports document the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income families, children, and youth.<sup>1</sup> When schools and child care facilities closed, women with less than college degrees, especially mothers with children under five, left the workforce to provide child care, reducing family resources and increasing household stress. The impacts are startling for youth and young adults: global and national reports of increased anxiety and depression amongst youth,

---

<sup>1</sup> See, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/low-income-covid-19-impacts.pdf>



in the U.S., increased emergency department visits for pediatric mental health patients,<sup>2</sup> and continuing decreases in college enrollment, especially in public colleges and universities, since the fall of 2019.<sup>3</sup> Also, due to school closures and the shift to distance learning, in addition to unmet academic needs, youths' social and emotional developmental needs were not being met during the critical child and adolescent development phases.

COVID-19 amplified the need for coordinated service delivery so residents could access benefits and services quickly and efficiently, and government processes did not create further stress and anxiety. While many new relationships and processes developed during the pandemic, departments need additional resources to lead and continue to make needed changes so that our systems and processes provide services mindful of "what happened" to a person and their families. Negative and traumatizing experiences trying to access government services leads to a loss of faith in government and less citizen engagement.<sup>4</sup>

As part of the Wellness and Resiliency Office, DHS emphasizes the need to include employee mental health as part of the trauma-informed strategies. In a department like the DHS, the human services workforce has experienced significant and long-lasting stressors during the pandemic. The number of residents that need assistance for their basic needs dramatically increased and remains at all-time highs. COVID-19 highlighted a need to create an open and safe space for employees to address their anxieties, stresses, and grief while balancing the numerous programmatic changes, new technology, and changed working conditions. As we anticipate the end of the emergency proclamation and lifting of the mask mandate, we will need to support staff and the public through a trauma-informed lens as we return to the offices.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

---

<sup>2</sup> See, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2779380>

<sup>3</sup> See, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/>

<sup>4</sup> Watch, Jamila Michener, Ph.D., Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid Federalism and Unequal Politics, September 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gye6y1U3GUJ>.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

March 19, 2022

**TO:** Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

**FROM:** Coleen Momohara, Interim Director  
Executive Office on Early Learning

**SUBJECT:** **Measure:** S.B. No. 2482 S.D. 1, H.D 1 – RELATING TO WELLNESS  
**Hearing Date:** Monday, March 21, 2022  
**Time:** 2:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

**Bill Description:** Establishes a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor. Authorizes the Office to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Appropriates funds. Sunsets on an unspecified date. Effective 7/1/2060. (HD1.)

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support**

Aloha. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL supports S.B. No. 2482 S.D. 1, H.D. 1 and defers to the Department of Health (DOH).

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development of the State's early childhood system that shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality development and learning opportunities for children throughout the state, from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic experiences that occur during childhood and include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; chronic neglect; caregiver and household substance abuse; incarceration of a household member; domestic violence; and burdens of economic hardship. ACEs impact lifelong health and learning opportunities and can contribute to toxic stress for young children, severely impacting brain development, learning, and overall well-being. Research has identified critical factors that predispose young children to positive outcomes in the face of such adversities and the capabilities that promote the development of resilience. Integrating strategies that enhance the capabilities of children and adults are further supported when embedded within efforts that collectively work towards lowering the burden of stress on families.

EOEL is a member of the trauma informed care taskforce, established through Act 209, SLH 2021. As such, we support this bill and look forward to working with other workforce members to promote wellness and resiliency for Hawaii's youngest children and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org  
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro  
Executive Director

March 21, 2022

Committee On Consumer Protection & Commerce

Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

**HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports SB2482 SD1 HD1**, which establishes a temporary office of wellness and resilience within the office of the governor; authorizes the office of wellness and resilience to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the trauma-informed care task force; and appropriates funds.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

This important bill would bring much-needed coherence and leadership to a critical cross-sector issue that impacts Hawaii at many levels: trauma. An Office of Wellness and Resilience is more needed than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic has been directly or indirectly devastating to many of our community members. Kids have lost parents and grandparents, have faced stressors due to financial hardship at home, and have become deeply disengaged from their schools, peers, and teachers. Of course, children faced abuse and trauma even before the pandemic, and these cycles can be incredibly difficult to break.

Trauma is an immense, complex challenge, requiring holistic strategies that draw upon trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches. An Office of Wellness and Resilience would help to break down silos and increase cross-sector collaboration and alignment, including between government, non-profit organizations, philanthropic funders, faith groups, and the broader business sector. While there is tremendous work happening at

the community level, this Office of Wellness and Resilience would connect the dots between these place-based innovations, policy barriers and opportunities, and help braid funding streams.

This work can't wait, and nothing less than the health and sustainability of our Hawaii community depends on it.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro  
Founding Executive Director  
HawaiiKidsCAN



# Kamehameha Schools®

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Date: March 21, 2022

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Conference Room 329

## TESTIMONY

By Kau‘i Burgess

Director of Community & Government Relations

RE: **SB 2482, SD1, HD1 - Relating to Wellness**

E ka Luna Ho‘omalua Johanson, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalua Kitagawa, a me nā Lālā o ke Kōmike, aloha!

Kamehameha Schools **SUPPORTS SB 2482, SD1, HD1**, which establishes a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor to address related issues and implement solutions, including those identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force.

**Hānai i ke keiki, ola ka lāhui** – When the child is nurtured, the people thrive. Kamehameha Schools believes that when we all focus on the well-being of our keiki, everyone will thrive.

Unfortunately, many Native Hawaiian keiki are disproportionately at risk to suffer from social, cultural, ‘āina and historical trauma. Trauma-informed care aims to transform sources of distress into anchors of resilience as a key strategy to better life outcomes.

As a member of the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force, we believe that Native Hawaiian culture-based approaches will serve as prudent and sensible solutions, along with other recommendations of the Task Force, and will positively influence the support and development of all vulnerable youth, resulting in greater educational, social, health and overall life outcomes.

We further believe that the establishment of a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience, as soon as possible, is critical in ensuring that recommendations from the Trauma Informed Care Task Force, including Native Hawaiian-culture based solutions, are top of mind and implemented to ensure our keiki are given the best chance of moving from trauma to resilience with the urgency it deserves.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to **pass this measure**.

Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is an organization striving to advance a thriving Lāhui where all Native Hawaiians are successful, grounded in traditional values, and leading in the local and global communities. We believe that community success is individual success, Hawaiian culture-based education leads to academic success and local leadership drives global leadership.

**SB-2482-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2022 1:20:00 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/21/2022 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Justina Acevedo-Cross	Hawaii Community Foundation	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I stand by the written testimony submitted by Hawaii Community Foundation President & CEO, Micah Kane. If the committee chairs offer the opportunity, I will provide oral testimony on behalf of Hawaii Community Foundation at the hearing. Mahalo.



## HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**TO:** COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE  
Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

**FROM:** Micah A. Kāne, Chief Executive Officer & President – Hawai'i Community Foundation

**RE:** Testimony in Support of SB 2482 HD1, Relating to Wellness  
Monday, March 21, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) strongly supports Senate Bill 2482 HD1 (SB2482 HD1). SB 2482 will help create a dynamic, coordinated effort across public agencies and community organizations to address early adversity, trauma and toxic stress—from keiki to kupuna. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has added stress to Hawai'i's families. Nonprofit social service, health, and early childhood providers have been shouldering much of the burden to support families. Now is the opportunity to step up support and increase collaboration to ensure that all families have access to the support they need. The proposed Office of Wellness and Resilience is an important part of supporting families with better access to preventative supports and needed services across the state.

HCF supports offered amendments for SB 2482 by the State of Hawaii Department of Health in its testimony to the HHH Committee: *"The Department of Health respectfully requests, the 20 following amendments to assure the Executive Director possesses the necessary qualifications to 21 lead this office (the department is willing to assist the committee in determining qualifications 22 SB2482 SD1 Page 3 of 4 for the job), and recommends a staffing structure as follows: 1.0 FTE for an Executive Director 1 position, 1.0 FTE for an administrative assistant position, four FTE positions to serve as liaisons 2 to departments to fulfil the objectives and purpose of this office, and two .50 FTE graduate 3 research assistants to support this office. Additionally, Department of Health requests the office 4 be permanently housed in a state department by FY24 and requests the 6-1.0FTE and 2-.50FTE 5 positions be funded by available ARPA funds until the transition in FY24."*

*"§27- Office of wellness and resilience; 7 established. (a) There is established within the office 8 of the governor, on a temporary basis and for special 9 purposes, the office of wellness and resilience. 10 (b) The office shall be headed by an executive 11 director, [~~who shall be appointed by the governor without 12 regard to chapter 76, and who shall serve at the pleasure 13 of the governor~~] through a competitive process.*

At the Hawaii Community Foundation, our CHANGE Framework focuses on six sectors of the community. The "H" sector is Health and Wellness, and HCF's [Promising Minds](#) Initiative focused on keiki ages 0-5 and their families. The outcomes of SB2482 strongly align with this initiative work and brings needed focus and resources for preventative mental health efforts in our community.

In 2019, HCF launched Promising Minds, a three-year initiative dedicated to improving early childhood behavioral health in Hawai'i by investing in the future of our keiki, especially those at-risk of trauma, abuse and neglect, or dealing with their aftereffects. Promising Minds helps to strengthen early

relationships and healthy development to set the foundations for long-term benefits to individual children, parents and caregivers. Over the last three years Promising Minds has worked with over 100 early childhood providers and nearly 50 health care professionals/clinicians. The collective work has identified some key learnings:

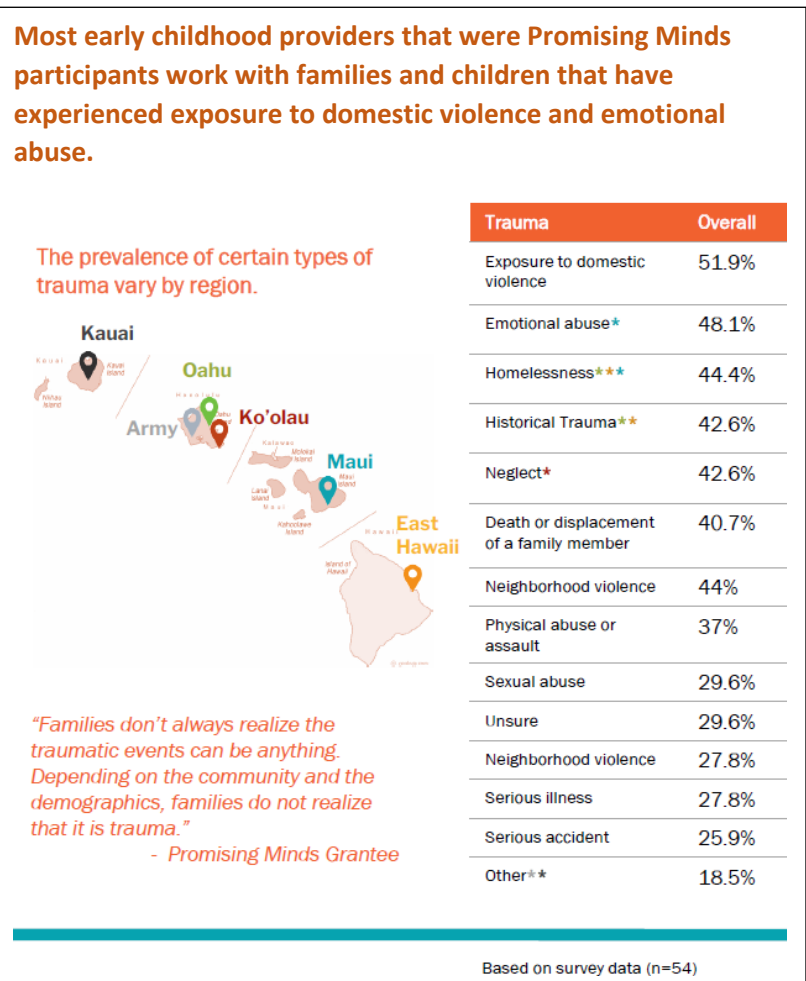
- Practitioners from a variety of early childhood settings (child care, home visiting, early intervention, early Head Start) recognized the need for more practitioners within the system that are trained or specialize in trauma-informed care.
- Practitioners shared that an increase in trained, trauma-informed care professionals would ensure that children and families do not get lost when navigating systems.

*“We need more trauma-informed care resources like people who are specialized in that so when you have a really severe case you have somewhere to go.” – Hawai’i early childhood provider*

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, early childhood mental health was already a silent crisis— one in six U.S. children ages 2 to 8 years-old (17.4%) had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.<sup>1</sup> Research has concluded the direct relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negative life outcomes for children ranging from chronic disease, drug abuse, depression, involvement with the juvenile justice system, family violence, and early death. Children with higher ACE scores are more likely to be disengaged from school.

We believe this bill is a way to address the urgent needs caused by trauma and toxic stress that increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill creates a way to strengthen the supports available to families, and make smart system improvements. It is accelerant for the change we are trying to make around health and wellbeing in Hawai’i.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB2482 HD1.



<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control, Children’s Mental Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>



# Support SB 2482 to foster a healthy, stable community



SB2482 is a transformative bill that would establish an **Office of Wellness and Resilience**. This new coordinating entity will unify public agencies and community organizations, leveraging resources and expertise to address early adversity, trauma, and toxic stress for whomever needs it—from keiki to kūpuna. It is a major step in building an inclusive mental health system.

In December 2021, US Surgeon General Murthy issued a call to action to address the mental health challenges—intensified by the pandemic—confronting youth nationally. Research shows 52% of children in families with financial hardship are facing emotional distress. SB2482 can help address this growing crisis in Hawai‘i.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has added stress to Hawai‘i’s families, nonprofit social service, health, and early childhood providers have shouldered much of the burden to assist them. This segmented scenario can make the path to securing help complicated for already struggling families.

It is time to increase collaboration to ensure all families have access to the support they need. The Office of Wellness and Resilience would support the missions of the many existing programs and the families they serve in an organized, strategic manner.

## Why we need SB 2482:

- Since the pandemic started, State of Hawai‘i Early Intervention Services has seen a dramatic decline in infant and toddler social and emotional development.
- Children under age six have a similar rate of mental illness as older children and youth.
- 75% of adults with serious mental illness are parents.
- Hawai‘i has the nation’s largest percentage (41%) of self-reported suicide thoughts among people who took an online depression screening during the pandemic.
- Half of providers work with families and children that have experienced exposure to domestic violence and emotional abuse.
- In early childhood settings—child care, home visiting, early intervention, early Head Start—there is a shortage of practitioners trained or specializing in trauma-informed care.
- Practitioners believe an increase in trained, trauma-informed care professionals would ensure that children and families do not get lost when navigating systems.

## What SB 2482 will do:

- Focus on solutions identified by the Department of Health’s Trauma-Informed Care Task Force, created by the Legislature in 2021 to make recommendations on trauma-informed care.
- Encourage major departments working with families and individuals within the state to become trauma informed.
- Create a dynamic, coordinated effort across public agencies and community organizations to address early adversity, trauma, and toxic stress.
- Facilitate training of practitioners such as therapists and other mental health professionals.
- Increase capability to respond to early intervention needs on all islands.
- Open up funding opportunities for which Hawai‘i currently does not qualify by fostering collaboration between state, city, and community agencies.

## Why focus on trauma?

Trauma is any event or series of events that is experienced or witnessed by an individual and has long-lasting social, physical, spiritual, or psychological effects. Research shows that experiences in the first few years of life build changes into the biology of the human body that, in turn, influence a person’s lifelong physical, mental, and spiritual health. Traumatic childhood experiences such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; untreated mental illness; incarceration of a household member; domestic violence; and separation or divorce involving household members can have a profound effect on a child’s developing brain and body. Trauma is pervasive and if not treated properly, can lead to incalculable human costs and enormous economic costs. Lifelong impacts include increased risks for poor physical and mental health and alcoholism and drug abuse, as well as increased state spending across multiple programs, linked to lifetime costs of approximately \$200,000 per child. The good news is that trauma can be addressed through individual, family, and community healing, and that in turn contributes to overall health and wellness.



Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Representative Aaron Johanson, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice-Chair  
March 21, 2022

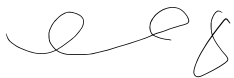
Aloha committee members,  
SB2482, Relating to Wellness is an important bill relating to trauma-informed care. It will create an office that will carry on the suggested work of the ACT 209 TIC Task Force that will improve the lives of many who have suffered from trauma and stress before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in the State of Hawai'i.

Aloha, my name is Danny Goya, I work in the field of trauma-informed care throughout the state along the state. I am submitting this testimony to express my very strong support for SB2482 as I have seen first-hand how adverse childhood experiences have negatively impacted the children and families I work with throughout the State of Hawai'i. I have seen first-hand how COVID-19 has led to so much trauma in our community. I've worked with rural and remote schools and have seen the toll it has taken on students, teachers, staff and parents.

Through the Partners in Development Foundation, I created the Ka Pa'alana Homeless Preschool. The first nationally accredited preschool that serviced "houseless" families along the Wai'anae Coast. My goal was to disrupt poverty and the "pipeline to prison." I felt that early education and providing social service supports for families was a practical strategy. I also created the Ke Kama Pono Safe House, an alternative to youth incarceration. We managed to reverse the recidivism rate by employing cultural practices, strengths-based mentoring, and an aggressive credit recovery program. All of these programs that I mentioned are considered, "Protective Factors" that can mitigate the effects of trauma and prevent future ACEs for our keiki and community. This bill can put the structure in place to meet that can ensure that we disrupt and address poverty and negative social determinants of health.

Research has indicated that an adult who has experienced 4 or more ACEs has an increased risk in preventable health diseases, greater chances at falling behind or dropping out of school, higher chance of using drugs and early death. The key to solving toxic stress and adverse experiences is a COMPREHENSIVE approach and trauma-informed strategies that build wellness and resilience. Our current strategy is often a "silo" approach to solutions. Each state department has different and specific charges, funding and strategies, that may or may not work in cooperation with other agencies, non-profits and community providers. SB2482, will allow various departments to work alongside each other and in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors.

Mahalo for your time and consideration and please support SB2482.



Daniel Goya

**SB-2482-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 2:08:58 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/21/2022 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

THE PEOPLE HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THSES PAY FOR PLAY JOBS!!!

Get ride of the Crooks or all of you will pay come November!!

**SB-2482-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 2:17:47 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/21/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aimee Chung, MSW, LSW	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 21, 2022

Committee On Consumer Protection & Commerce

Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

I am a teacher and community member and I am in adamant **support** of SB2482 SD1 HD1.

This important bill would bring much-needed coherence and leadership to a critical cross-sector issue that impacts Hawai‘i at many levels: trauma. An Office of Wellness and Resilience is more needed than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the numerous issues faced by our communities and families. We have lost parents and grandparents, have faced stressors due to financial hardships at home, and have become deeply disengaged from colleagues, peers, and teachers. Of course, children and adult survivors of intimate partner violence have faced abuse and trauma even before the pandemic, and have continued to in strikingly greater numbers.

***“All of the diagnoses that you deal with - depression, anxiety, ADHD, bipolar illness, post traumatic stress disorder, even psychosis, are significantly rooted in trauma.”*** — Gabor Maté

Trauma is an immense, complex challenge, requiring holistic strategies that draw upon trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches. An Office of Wellness and Resilience would help to break down silos and increase cross-sector collaboration and alignment, including between government, non-profit organizations, philanthropic funders, faith groups, and the broader business sector. While there is tremendous work happening at the community level, this Office of Wellness and Resilience would connect the dots between these place-based innovations, policy barriers and opportunities, and help braid funding streams.

***“Emotional competence is what we need to develop if we are to protect ourselves from the hidden stresses that create a risk to health, and it is what we need to regain if we are to heal. We need to foster emotional competence in our children, as the best preventive medicine.”*** — Gabor Maté, When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress

Our people are in urgent need of systemic change - that is integrative, holistic, and grounded in trauma informed-care. This work can't wait, and nothing less than the health and sustainability of our Hawai'i community and each and every one of our citizens depends on it.

Mahalo,  
Aimee Chung, MSW, LSW

Licensed Social Worker

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Faculty

SB 2482 SD1 HD1: RELATING TO WELLNESS

Re: Hearing on March 21, 2022

Chairs: Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Representative Ryan I. Yamane, and Representative Sylvia Luke, Co-Chairs, and Distinguished Committee Members:

My name is Amy Harvey. I am an MSW student at Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health and a concerned citizen who cares about the well-being of Hawai'i families. I am writing today in **support of SB 2482 SD1 HD1** and ask that you appropriate funds to establish the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This bill would help build an inclusive mental health system within Hawai'i by unifying public agencies and community organizations to leverage resources and expertise to address early adversity, trauma, and toxic stress.

Childhood and family trauma, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, has placed tremendous stress on Hawai'i families. A Hawai'i Community Foundation report shows troubling statistics:

- State of Hawai'i Early Intervention Services reports a dramatic decline in infant and toddler social and emotional development.
- Hawai'i has the nation's most significant percentage (41%) of self-reported suicide thoughts among people who took an online depression screening during the pandemic.
- Half of providers work with families and children that have experienced exposure to domestic violence and emotional abuse.
- 75% of adults with serious mental illness are parents.
- Children under age six have a similar rate of mental illness as older children and youth.

My background in behavioral mental health has allowed me to witness firsthand the growing demand for mental health care in Hawai'i. I believe that it is vital to provide trauma-informed care to ensure that children and families get the help they need.

I urge you to consider **supporting SB 2482 SD1 HD1** to fund the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Harvey  
Ewa Beach, HI

**SB-2482-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2022 9:03:45 AM

Testimony for CPC on 3/21/2022 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amalia L. Pangelinan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 21, 2022

Committee On Consumer Protection & Commerce

Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

I am a student from the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa and I am proud to support SB2482 SD1 HD1.

This important bill would bring much-needed coherence and leadership to a critical cross-sector issue that impacts Hawai‘i at many levels: trauma. An Office of Wellness and Resilience is more needed than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic has been directly or indirectly devastating to many of our community members. Kids have lost parents and grandparents, have faced stressors due to financial hardship at home, and have become deeply disengaged from their schools, peers, and teachers. Of course, children faced abuse and trauma even before the pandemic, and these cycles can be incredibly difficult to break.

Trauma is an immense, complex challenge, requiring holistic strategies that draw upon trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches. An Office of Wellness and Resilience would help to break down silos and increase cross-sector collaboration and alignment, including between government, non-profit organizations, philanthropic funders, faith groups, and the broader business sector. While there is tremendous work happening at the community level, this Office of Wellness and Resilience would connect the dots between these place-based innovations, policy barriers and opportunities, and help braid funding streams.

This work can’t wait, and nothing less than the health and sustainability of our Hawai‘i community depends on it.

Mahalo,

Amalia L. Pangelinan

**Committee On Consumer Protection & Commerce**

To: Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Support for SB 2482 SD1 HD1, Relating to Wellness

March 21, 2022, 2:00 PM in House conference room 329 Via Videoconference.

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jahanavi, and I am testifying as an individual. I am currently a BSW student from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health and in support of SB 2482 SD1 HD1.

This bill would bring much-needed coherence and leadership to a critical cross-sector issue that impacts Hawai‘i at many levels: trauma. An Office of Wellness and Resilience is needed to address trauma brought by the COVID- 19 pandemic, like the loss of parents and grandparents, financial hardships at home, and loss of in-person connections from their schools, peers, and teachers. Children faced abuse and trauma even before the pandemic, and these cycles can be complicated to break. Trauma is complex, and to reduce or defeat it needs holistic strategies that use trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches and cultural practices.

I have learned of trauma through personal experiences and my education. I understand how helpful this support can be for children and their families, and I wish it were more readily available. At the same time, trauma cannot be pushed back on to children with the expectation they will “get over it” with time. Unfortunately, overcoming trauma is not that simple. Establishing this office would allow for services to help children have early interventions for the trauma they have faced to reduce the risk of health conditions and other challenges into adulthood.

This office would aim to address the struggles and promote wellness and resilience for the future generations of Hawai‘i. Along with the diversity of our state, it would give them the cultural support needed through cultural practices to reconnect to themselves. It would not only positively impact their lives but the larger community in the long run. I hope you will consider passing this bill. Thank you for your time!

~Jahanavi P.

House District 27





**LATE**

**TO:** Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Health

**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

**DATE/LOCATION:** March 21, 2022; 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 329/Video Conference

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2482 SD 1 HD 1 - RELATING TO WELLNESS**

**We support SB 2482 which establishes a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor, authorizes the Office to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force, and appropriates moneys.**

Trauma and toxic stress, especially in children, derails healthy development. It can weaken the architecture of the developing brain and has long-term consequences on learning, behavior and physical and cognitive development. The landscape of our communities has also changed, exacerbated by the stressors of the global pandemic, to negatively impact the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society who often experience greater levels of trauma and toxic stress. The increased financial instability, housing instability, food instability, health instability, increased crime and substance abuse, and strained social, emotional and mental well-being directly impacts the levels of stress being experienced by children and families. These impacts have long-lasting and multi-generational consequences and impacts our ability to create healthy and thriving communities. Supporting children and families strengthens the fabric of our entire community. The Office of Wellness and Resilience will help create a dynamic, coordinated effort across public agencies and community organizations to address early adversity, trauma and toxic stress—from keiki to kupuna.

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii's not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to under-resourced families. Assisting more than 17,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 20 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community strengthening programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of SB 2482**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.



## Children's Action Network Speaks!

Building a unified voice for Hawaii's children

*Hawaii Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: Representative Johanson, Chair  
Representative Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

**LATE**

Re: **SB 2482 SD1 HD1-relating to wellness**  
2:00 PM, March 21, 2022

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and committee members,

**On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network Speaks!, we are writing to support in support SB 2482 SD1 HD1, relating to wellness.**

The importance and value of trauma-informed care is recognized at both the national and state level. Over 26 states have passed legislation to address childhood trauma, child adversity, toxic stress or adverse childhood experiences<sup>1</sup>. Understanding adverse childhood experiences and trauma effect a person and how they in turn effect the community and state can help inform changes needed to create a more responsive, cost-effective system.

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. SDOH are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has showcased the resilience of the State's communities, but it also shows gaps in how social services and health care needs are addressed for different communities.

Cultural practices that provide asset-based approaches involving the stabilizing influence of an unrelated adult can provide a child with the resilience needed to mitigate a high number of adverse childhood experiences.

An established Office of Wellness will be ready to implement the recommendations of the statewide Trauma Informed Care Taskforce. For these reasons, **HCAN Speaks! respectfully requests the Committee to support this measure.**

Thank you,

Kathleen Algire  
Director Early Learning and Healthy Policy

<sup>1</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/reducing-the-effects-of-adverse-childhood-experiences.aspx>  
850 Richards Street, Suite 201 • Honolulu, HI 96813 • 808-531-5502 [www.hawaii-can.org](http://www.hawaii-can.org) • [info@hawaii-can.org](mailto:info@hawaii-can.org)

**To:** Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

**LATE**

**From:** Robert G. Peters, Chair  
Early Learning Board

**Subject:** **Measure:** SB 2482, SD1, HD1 Relating to Wellness  
**Hearing Date:** Monday, March 21, 2022  
**Time:** 2:00 P.M.  
**Location:** Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

**Description:** Establishes a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor. Authorizes the office of wellness and resilience to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Appropriates funds. Sunsets on an unspecified date. Effective 7/1/2060 (HD1)

**Early Learning Board Position: Support the Intent**

Aloha. I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony about SB 2482, SD1, HD1 on behalf of the ELB.

Through Act 202, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017, ELB transitioned from an advisory to a governing board for the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and is charged with formulating statewide policy relating to early learning. The ELB is composed of 17 representatives from across the early childhood field, in both the public and private sectors.

Research has concluded that there is a direct relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negative life outcomes for children ranging from chronic disease, drug abuse, depression, involvement with the juvenile justice system, family violence, and early death. Additionally, children with higher ACE scores are more likely to be disengaged from school. Poor mental health affects entire families; if it is addressed, it will reduce overall family stress and increase wellbeing. An Office of Wellness and Resilience would help coordinate social services and allow for more resources to flow into Hawaii for needed resources and especially support our children who have experienced adversity.

In 2018, the ELB and the EOEL (Executive Office on Early Learning) completed a multi-stakeholder planning process resulting in the production of the Hawaii Early Childhood State Plan, 2019 – 2024, which was signed by the Governor and affected State Department Heads. The Plan posits that children's health and their families' wellbeing are foundational for optimal child development and learning. The creation of an Office of Wellness and Resilience would enhance the opportunity to build that foundation for Hawaii's children. Our recent experience of the impact of the Pandemic on young children and families reinforced the need for offering trauma-informed care services in our communities, something an Office of Wellness and Resilience could provide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer supportive testimony of SB 2482, SD1, HD1.

**LATE**

**SB-2482-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2022 8:57:26 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/21/2022 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maya Maxym	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB2482 HD 1, relating to wellness. One of the most important things we can do to remedy the mental health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic is to help to buffer against trauma and toxic stress for our families--everyone from babies through kupuna. A great starting point would be better coordinated trauma-informed social services. An Office of Wellness and Resilience would help with that coordination and allow for more resources to flow into Hawai'i for needed services. When supportive environments serve Hawaii's people, especially our children, who have experienced early adversity, they are better set up to turn those stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

Research has concluded the direct relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negative life outcomes for children ranging from chronic disease, drug abuse, depression, involvement with the juvenile justice system, family violence, and early death. Additionally, children with higher ACE scores are more likely to be disengaged from school. Poor mental health affects entire families; if it is addressed, it will reduce overall family stress and increase wellbeing.

I believe Hawai'i can ensure all services for children and families offer a place where those who have experienced early adversity are set-up to become resilient adults. We do not fully know the extent that isolation and persistent stress will have on the brain architecture of young children

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony. If SB2482 passes, it will be a great step towards supporting our families and creating more resources for positive mental health. I urge you to move this bill onward.

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE  
Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

**LATE**

DATE: March 21, 2022 2:00 P.M. – Conf. Rm: 329 - VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

### **Testimony in Support of SB2482 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO WELLNESS**

The National Association of Social Workers – Hawai'i (NASW- HI) supports SB2482 SD1 HD1, which would establish a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor that would work to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force.

SB2482SD1 HD1 represents an important means of putting into impactful practice the hard work, professional insights, and recommendations from experts in the areas of brain development, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and toxic stress at every life stage. These concerns are especially acute as we continue our response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We believe the timing is critical, as the stress, trauma, and ACEs recently experienced by our youth must be addressed immediately – to avoid preventable adverse outcomes that are due to affect an entire generation.

In demonstrating the need for action, NASW- Hawaii finds the following statistics remarkable:

- Since the pandemic started, State of Hawai'i Early Intervention Services has seen a dramatic decline in infant and toddler social and emotional development
- Children under age six have a similar rate of mental illness as older children and youth
- 75% of adults with serious mental illness are parents
- Hawaii has the largest percentage (41%) of self-reported suicide thoughts among people who took an online depression screening during the pandemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support.

Sincerely,

 , MSW, LCSW

Sonja Bigalke-Bannan, MSW, LCSW

Executive Director,

National Association of Social Workers- Hawai'i Chapter



Date: March 21, 2022

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
And members of the Committee

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: **Support for SB2482**, Relating to Wellness

---

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector partnership designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners are working to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

**ECAS supports passage of SB2482** which would establish an Office of Wellness and Resilience in order to coordinate a statewide response to the mental health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide a strong buffer against the trauma and toxic stress experienced by our families.

A half century of careful research shows that there is a direct relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negative outcomes later in life, including chronic disease, drug abuse, depression, involvement with the justice system, and family violence. We do not yet know the degree to which pandemic-related isolation and persistent stress will affect the brain architecture of our young keiki. We already know that many children in families facing financial hardship are exhibiting signs of emotional distress.

**There is urgent need to take action.** The prevalence of childhood and family trauma and stress in Hawaii has reached crisis levels:

- Since the start of the pandemic, Hawai'i Department of Health Early Intervention Services report a dramatic decline in infant and toddler social and emotional development
- 75% of adults with serious mental illness are parents
- 41% of Hawaii residents reported having suicidal thoughts on a recent online depression screening

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

**To:** COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE  
Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

**LATE**

**From:** Mari Uehara, M.D.  
Developmental-behavioral pediatrics  
Kapiolani Medical Center Women and Children  
Clinical assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics, JABSOM

**Subject measure:** SB 2482 RELATING TO WELLNESS

**Hearing date:** Monday, March 21, 2022

**Time:** 2:00 pm

**Place:** video conference  
Conference Room 329  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**Position:** support

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony as a developmental-behavioral pediatrician. I strongly support SB2482, relating to wellness.

I am a pediatrician by discipline who is specialized in children's development and learning. I work with children who have developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, and learning disabilities, as well as with their families.

Some children who are referred to me were born healthy without medical problems. Medical problems, of course, can show up later in their lives. However, there are other children who sustained significant trauma in their short lives physically and/or psychologically. After their lives are saved in critical care units, we as adults need to gain their trust back.

These children may be placed in foster homes that is often not permanent. Caregivers and teachers in childcare and preschools may be the constant in their lives. Or children may find hope in interacting with other children in nurturing environment to gain strength to carry on their lives. Current COVID-19 pandemic also add another layer of challenge in caring for these children who experienced trauma.

I have witnessed increased behavioral challenges in children at home and in group setting such as daycare, preschool/school over the course of COVID-19. Some children were asked to leave multiple times from preschools, some children needed to add services in schools, and others were hospitalized in psychiatric unit. Their parents and caregivers have been already under a lot of stress due to living cost and work situation during the pandemic. They receive notice that their children cannot return to preschool due to their behaviors. The preschool teachers were probably also under similar stress which makes it more difficult in addressing the challenging behaviors of

children. Adults around the developing children should be able to have enough knowledge and skills to respond, not react, to children who need support. It is not fair to label children having disorder when difficulties were not understood and addressed appropriately due to the lack of skills and patience in adults.

Research has concluded the direct relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and negative life outcomes. The more people who interact with children have knowledge and skills to address needs of children who experienced trauma, the more children have chances to grow resilient who then be able to support others as they grow up.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide my testimony. I urge you to move this bill onward.

Mari Uehara, M.D.  
Developmental-behavioral pediatrics