

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

April 3, 2023

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [SB 295 SD2 HD1](#) – RELATING TO THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

Hearing: April 4, 2023, 3:00 pm  
Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, provides comments, defers to the Office of Wellness & Resilience regarding necessary resources, and requests an amendment exempting the Malama Ohana Working Group from provisions of Part I, Chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to facilitate the work of the working group.

**PURPOSE:** This bill establishes within the Office of Wellness and Resilience the Malama Ohana working group to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the State's existing child welfare system and allow the office to contract with an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the working group. Requires the Malama Ohana working group to report to the legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 12/31/2050. (HD1)

The SD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Inserting a blank appropriation amount;
  - (2) Inserting an effective date of December 31, 2050, to encourage further discussion;
- and

- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

The SD2 further amended the measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that the executive director of EPIC Ohana, Inc. or the executive director's designee and the chief executive officer of Hale Kipa, Inc., or the chief executive director's designee, shall be invited to participate in the working group and serve as co-chairs of the working group; and
- (2) Making technical nonsubstantive amendments for purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The HD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Amending the composition and membership of the Malama Ohana Working Group; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

DHS appreciates the Legislature's and community's efforts to strengthen the child welfare system of care. The system of care involves community advocates, service providers, national and local subject matter experts, DHS, DOH, the Department of Education, the Judiciary, and law enforcement. DHS also works with those we serve; those with lived experience; former foster youth, birth parents, relatives, and resource caregivers.

DHS is a Trauma-Informed Task Force member and actively participates in EPIC 'Ohana Inc.'s Nā Kama a Hāloa network. Alongside community partners, DHS has partnered with community stakeholders to drive this initiative. DHS supports the network and community partner's preference to establish the Malama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

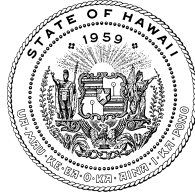
Importantly, given such a large membership and the existing relationships between members, to facilitate the work of the Malama 'Ohana Working Group, DHS respectfully requests an amendment exempting the working group from Part I of Chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Also, through our 'Ohana Nui multigenerational framework to end poverty, DHS is working to improve access to community services and our online capabilities. For example, DHS is working to establish a network of family resource centers as authorized by Act 129,

Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, including one at Waiawa Correctional Center as authorized by Act 125, Session Laws of Hawaii, that will serve as a community based one-stop for families to seek services and assistance. Studies have shown that communities with family resource centers have lower rates of child abuse and neglect reports.

We look forward to continuing to innovate with the Office of Wellness & Resilience and the Malama 'Ohana Working Group to address the root causes of child abuse and neglect.

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



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 3:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Videoconference  
**In Support of**  
**S.B. No. 295, SD2, HD1 – Relating to the Child Welfare Services**

Aloha, Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Wellness and Resilience in the Governor's Office is in **SUPPORT** of S.B. No. 295, SD2, HD1, Relating to the Child Welfare Services.

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) is tasked with addressing and implementing trauma-informed care within our state systems, across the lifespan – from keiki to kūpuna. With this charge, partnerships and community collaborations will be essential to build effective models that support wellness and resilience.

The establishment of a working group in the OWR to develop recommendations specifically for the child welfare system will help build a collaborative approach with system partners and community-based organizations who are dedicated to assisting families with lived experience in the system.

The OWR supports the purpose of this bill and appreciates the request for appropriations to provide necessary support for the working group to carry out its duties.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo nui loa,

Tia L. R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA  
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience  
Office of the Governor



## HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

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

Vonnell Ramos, President  
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President  
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer  
Jefferson Gourley, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive  
Director

### Network Membership

*Bay Clinic*  
*Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i*  
*Big Island Substance Abuse*  
*Council*  
*Bobby Benson Center*  
*Child and Family Service*  
*Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i*  
*Collins Consulting, LLC*  
*Domestic Violence Action Center*  
*EPIC `Ohana, Inc.*  
*Family Programs Hawai`i*  
*Family Support Hawai`i*  
*Friends of the Children's Justice*  
*Center of Maui*  
*Get Ready Hawai`i*  
*Hale Kipa, Inc.*  
*Hale `Opio Kaua`i, Inc.*  
*Hawai`i Children's Action*  
*Network*  
*Hawai`i Health & Harm*  
*Reduction Center*  
*Ho`ola Na Pua*  
*Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i*  
*Ka Hale Pomaika`i*  
*Kahi Mohala*  
*Kokua Kalihi Valley*  
*Kaua`i Planning and Action*  
*Alliance*  
*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*  
*PHOCUSED*  
*PFLAG – Kona, Big Island*  
*Planned Parenthood of the*  
*Great Northwest, Hawaii*  
*Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana*  
*Residential Youth Services*  
*& Empowerment (RYSE)*  
*Salvation Army Family*  
*Intervention Services*  
*Sex Abuse Treatment Center*  
*Susannah Wesley Community*  
*Center*  
*The Catalyst Group*

March 10, 2023

To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Finance

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 295 SD 2 HD 1 RELATING TO THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Hawaii Youth Services Network, a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 295 SD 2 HD 1 Relating to the Child Welfare Services.

Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children and youth are consistently overrepresented in the Child Welfare System. Malama Ohana is a collaborative effort to identify the issues and needs of these children and families and develop culturally appropriate approaches to reduce overrepresentation.

Providing staffing support through the Office of Wellness and Resilience and including representatives of key stakeholder groups will support and enhance the initiative.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2023 2:05:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Golojuch Jr	Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

The Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i; Hawai‘i’s oldest and largest policy and political LGBTQIA+ focused organization fully supports SB 295 SD 2 HD 1.

We hope you all will support this important piece of legislation.

Mahalo nui loa,

Michael Golojuch, Jr.  
Chair and SCC Representative  
Stonewall Caucus for the DPH



Honorable Chair Representative Yamashita, Vice Chair Representative Kitagawa and Finance Committee Members;

Aloha, my name is Venus Rosete-Medeiros, originally from Maui and I have been a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network from the very beginning in 2018 while with Kamehameha Schools. I am writing as an individual, and as the new President & CEO of Hale Kipa, an organization that has served Hawai'i's youth and young adults for 53 years. I completely support the establishment of the Mālama 'Ohana working group.

I am concerned about the families and children in child welfare. Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness. The problems that our children and families face need all of us to work together. We cannot rely on the state government alone. As a member of Nā Kama a Hāloa Network I have witnessed the power of this kind of community collaboration. I served on the Kauhale committee that was able to produce cultural humility and cultural awareness trainings and presentations for CWS workers. We also developed cultural trainings for resource caregivers to help them understand the importance of supporting cultural connections and connecting children under their care to culturally relevant activities and opportunities.

Mālama 'Ohana Working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members both listen to the experiences of others in the community and come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions. Having the Mālama 'Ohana workgroup would be able to engage stakeholders, partners, and those with lived experiences from across the State. In order to improve the CWS system, we must make every effort to provide convenient gathering sessions to ensure all voice have a chance to be heard.

The child welfare system is extremely complex and our CWS staff is often pulled in many directions. We have experienced how helpful and innovative community collaboration can be to improving outcomes for children and families. I would also like to request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group.

Hale Kipa is committed to continue the work within Nā Kama A Hāloa, Kauhale, and the Mālama 'Ohana Committee. Please vote in support of HB . This workgroup will only help our State to refine, correct and enhance the services in partnership with our State Department of Child Welfare Services.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Venus Rosete-Medeiros". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Venus Kau'io Kawēkiu Rosete-Medeiros  
President & CEO



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 295 SD2 HD1:  
RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

TO: House Committee on Finance

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: Tuesday 4/04/2023 at 9:00 AM; CR 308 & via videoconference

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members, Committee on Finance

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 295 SD2 HD1**, which establishes the Malama Ohana Working Group under the Office of Wellness and Resilience. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of providing services for the child welfare system.

The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system, need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i supports this bill to establish and provide funding for the Malama Ohana Working Group. We urge your support for this bill and ask for your assistance in its passing during this legislative session.

Please contact our Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Shellie Niles if you have any questions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822  
Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Shellie Niles Phone (808) 527-4813







## TESTIMONY

By: Nā Kama a Hāloa Network

Thank you for the opportunity to express our **STRONG SUPPORT for Malama 'Ohana**. We are members of the **Nā Kama a Hāloa network**. Nā Kama a Hāloa is a network of more than 30 community serving organizations and individuals with lived experiences that work collaboratively to improve the lives of native Hawaiian children and families in the child welfare system. The network convenes to address and improve the child welfare system by embedding Native Hawaiian approaches and practices in the daily work of those impacting the lives of keiki Hawai'i.

The **Mālama `Ohana Working Group** was formed and prototyped by the Nā Kama a Hāloa network. Our network asks the legislature to hear the voices of the community to protect the children in and out of the child welfare system. Representation in the working group supports collaboration between service providers with those they serve to lift up the voices of those with lived experience in the child welfare system. We believe that the **Mālama 'Ohana Working Group** is an important commitment and investment to provide necessary lived experience and community recommendations to improve the child welfare system.

We have experienced how helpful and innovative **community collaboration** can be to improving outcomes for children and families. Since 2018, members of the Nā Kama a Hāloa network have worked with leaders from Child Welfare Services (CWS) to implement several projects that shift certain practices of the child welfare system so that it can approach trauma in families in ways that work better for all families and keiki. These collaborative projects include the following samples of our work:

1. Developed training for new hires to CWS and resource caregivers.
2. Advocated for keeping siblings together.
3. Worked on projects that help resource caregivers and birth parents communicate better so that the children are less traumatized.
4. Formed a small cadre of parents, known as Parent Partners, with lived experience in the child welfare system that have successfully navigated the system. Parent Partners walk alongside parents to speak about their experiences and help parents navigate the system to improve outcomes for their keiki.

We believe that Native Hawaiian culture-based approaches are prudent and sensible solutions to support the development of all vulnerable youth in Hawai'i, resulting in greater educational, social, health and overall life success.

Thank you for considering our comment and for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

Catholic Charities

EPIC 'Ohana

Hale Kipa

Kamehameha Schools

Keith Kuboyama, Family Programs Hawai'i

Shawn Kana'iaupuni, Partners in Development Foundation

Jamee Miller, 'Ekolu Mea Nui

Barbie-Lei Burgess, Hale Na'au Pono's Wai'anae Neighborhood Place

Deb Marois, Converge Consulting

Maddy Day LLC & Associates

Karen Worthington, Worthington Consulting

Kristina Shibata, EPIC 'Ohana

Kamaile Miyasato, EPIC 'Ohana

Kailene Nihipali Sanchez, Resource Caregiver

Kayla Samson, Parent with lived experience

Kholby Akuna, Former Foster Youth

Jaque Kelley-Ueoka, Service Provider

Vivian Kim Seu, Parent with lived experience

April Lum, Resource Caregiver

Ashley Viluan, Parent with lived experience

Lise Vaughan-Sekona, EPIC 'Ohana

Britney Tavares, Parent with lived experience

Chassidy Shinno, EPIC 'Ohana

Deanna Gonda, Resource Caregiver

Kimberly Nabarro, Parent with lived experience

Amanda Mundon, Resource Caregiver

Diane Keliikoa, EPIC 'Ohana

Sasha Autele, Parent with lived experience

Stephanie Hamano, Service Provider

Jeanne Hamilton, Nā Kama a Hāloa Manager

Aponi Boyer, Former Foster Youth

Samantha U'u, Former Foster Youth

Kristen Bachiller, Parent with lived experience

Kamaile Miyasato, EPIC 'Ohana

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 10:18:18 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Britney Tavares	EPIC Ohana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*As a Birth Parent with lived experience navigating the Child Welfare System and in support of SB 295 SD2 HD1, I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group. The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system. Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.*

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 10:36:01 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tammy A Aiwohi	Hale Naau Pono-Waianae Neighborhood Place	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha my name is Tammy Aiwohi I am concerned about the families and children in child welfare. Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. These vital services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness. We need Mālama ‘Ohana to bring the voices of those with lived experience, and the community together to find solutions to these urgent problems.

April 3, 2023

**To the Honorable House Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair and the House Finance Committee,**

Family Programs Hawaii has been an active participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network for many years. I am writing in support of SB 295 on behalf of Family Programs Hawaii, a partner organization in the Network

We support the establishment of the Mālama ‘Ohana working group. We are concerned about the families and children in child welfare. While CWS is doing a lot to help these families, services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness.

We also know that we can only find solutions through community collaborations like the Mālama ‘Ohana working group. We have experienced how helpful and innovative community based collaboration can be to improving outcomes for children and families. We need Mālama ‘Ohana to bring the voices of those with lived experience, CWS staff and the community together to find solutions to these urgent problems. This effort will require broad community support and input.

As a member of Nā Kama a Hāloa Network, I have witnessed the power of this kind of community collaboration. SB 295 proposes to create a working group (Mālama ‘Ohana) through the state Office of Wellness and Resilience; to hold listening/talk story sessions throughout the state and bring community partners together to improve and help transform the child welfare system.

We believe in the merits of SB 295 and ask that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the efforts of this work group. We would also like to ask that the work group begin meeting upon the signing of the bill.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter. Mahalo for all the good work you are doing in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

*Keith A. Kuboyama*

Keith Kuboyama, LCSW  
President and CEO



*We help kids*





HAWAI'I STATE  
**COALITION AGAINST  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

April 4, 2023

Members of the House Committee on Finance:

Chair Kyle T. Yamashita

Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa

Rep. Micah P.K. Aiu

Rep. Cory M. Chun

Rep. Elle Cochran

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa

Rep. Darius K. Kila

Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi

Rep. Rachele F. Lamosao

Rep. Dee Morikawa

Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto

Rep. Mahina Poepoe

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi

Rep. David Alcos III

Rep. Gene Ward

Re: SB295 SD2 HD1 Relating to Child Welfare Service

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 28 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of SB295 SD2 HD1**. The child welfare system in Hawai'i affects many community partners and system participants who are concerned about child welfare and advocate for victims of domestic violence. Collaboration between these partners and the Department of Human Services is imperative to successfully addressing the shortcomings of the child welfare system.

This working group will allow the legislature and the State to hear the voices of the community as they share the urgent need to transform the child welfare system through collaboration, transparency, accountability, and reconciliation. This group would bring together invested partners as well as gather the voices of lived experiences that have been impacted by the child welfare system here in Hawai'i. Since much of this work will include hearing from the community and understanding the lived experiences of those impacted by child abuse and neglect and the child welfare system, we believe the organization tasked with bringing the working group to fruition must be steadfast in carrying it out with trauma-informed practices with the appropriate staffing to do it justice.

We believe in the promise of the Malama 'Ohana working group and support this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director



*Hawai'i 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 Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

Re: SB295 SD2 HD1, relating to the Child Welfare Services  
3:00 p.m., Apr. 4, 2023

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the committee:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to **testify in STRONG SUPPORT of Senate Bill 295 SD2 HD1, relating to the Child Welfare Services.**

**HCAN Speaks! strongly supports the creation of the Mālama 'Ohana working group.** We believe that this working group will allow the legislature and the State to hear the voices of the community as they share the urgent need to transform the child welfare system through collaboration, transparency, accountability and reconciliation. This group would bring together invested partners as well as gather the voices of lived experiences that have been impacted by the child welfare system here in Hawai'i.

Since this work will include hearing from community and understanding the lived experiences of those impacted by child abuse and neglect and the child welfare system, we believe the agency tasked with bringing the working group to fruition must be steadfast in carrying it out with trauma-informed practices with the appropriate staffing to do it justice. We agree that the Office of Wellness and Resilience is best suited to make this working group a reality.

Additionally, **we appreciate that the working group has strong representation from Native Hawaiian organizations and child- and youth-serving organizations with strong Native Hawaiian leadership.** We think it is integral for inclusion and representation of Native Hawaiian youth and families who are overrepresented in the child welfare system.

**Please support SB295 SD2 HD1.**

Mahalo,

Ke'ōpū Reelitz  
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy



1130 N. NIMITZ HWY, SUITE C-210, HONOLULU, HI 96817  
PHONE: (808) 838-7752 TOLL FREE: (866) 636-1644 FAX: (808) 838-1653

To: House Finance Committee Members  
From: Laurie Arial Tochiki, Executive Director  
Re: Support for SB 295  
Date: April 3, 2023

I am Laurie Arial Tochiki and I am the Executive Director of EPIC 'Ohana. I write to express my strong support and commitment to the Malama Ohana Working Group established by SB 295 as amended. We respectfully ask that an effective date upon signing be established, so that the work can begin quickly. And we ask for an appropriate of \$250,000 for each year of the working group, to be allocated to the Governor's Office on Wellness and Resilience. The working group will begin immediately to establish a collaborative and collective impact design for the working group. Funding is needed for administrative assistance, facilitation, and for report writing. In addition we are proposing the utilization of convenings to air the stories and the ideas that come from listening sessions that will be conducted throughout the state.

EPIC 'Ohana is the backbone organization for Nā Kama a Hāloa. I have been working in the child welfare system for 40 years. First as an attorney representing parents and children in child welfare cases, then as an employee of the Judiciary where I helped to establish programs relating to families and children, including Kids First. In 1996 I was blessed to serve as one of the founders of 'Ohana Conferencing. The system is much more than the Child Welfare Services offices within the Department of Human Services. The system includes all of the organizations that serve the families and children, it includes the Department of Health and the Department of Education, and it includes our communities and those with lived experience in the system. The Mālama 'Ohana proposal will bring together those directly impacted by the child welfare system in a collective impact process that is desperately needed.

Since 2018, Nā Kama a Hāloa, a network of more than 30 organizations and individuals with lived experiences has worked collaboratively to improve the lives of native Hawaiian children and families in the child welfare system. We started with a conversation about the intersection between child welfare and caring for native Hawaiian children who are over represented in the child welfare system. Leaders from child welfare services, Lili'uokalani Trust, Kamehameha Schools, Casey Family Programs and Annie E. Casey Foundation met and affirmed their shared kuleana for the wellbeing of these children. Since then, our network has implemented several





1130 N. NIMITZ HWY, SUITE C-210, HONOLULU, HI 96817  
PHONE: (808) 838-7752 TOLL FREE: (866) 636-1644 FAX: (808) 838-1653

projects to try to shift aspects of the child welfare system so that it can work better. We have developed a training for new hires to CWS and resource caregivers. We have advocated for keeping siblings together, and we have worked on projects to help resource caregivers and birth parents communicate better so that the children are less traumatized. An especially powerful project was to form a small cadre of parents who have lived experience in the child welfare system and have successfully navigated the system. They share experiences of substance use disorder, they are all survivors of domestic violence, and some were formerly incarcerated. Now they walk alongside other parents in the system, and they speak about their experiences to help improve child welfare.

Our network asks the legislature to hear the voices of the community for the urgent need for all of us to work collaboratively to protect the children in and out of the child welfare system. And we as a community must also do more than protect, we also need to care for the wellbeing of the children involved in the system.

We ask that the legislature make a commitment to not only listen to the voices of the families and children, but also enable the joint collective problem solving that this crisis needs. Yes, some of the voices are angry. The conversations will be difficult and must be skillfully facilitated. We collectively grieve for the pain that so many children, parents, foster parents and 'ohana feel not only for the poverty, domestic violence, mental health concerns and substance use disorder issues that make our children vulnerable, but also for the workers in the child welfare system that we believe is in crisis. The only solution is to collaborate.

In January, our HI HOPES leadership boards, made up of current and former foster youth who advocate, educate and collaborate for their brothers and sisters in care, met in Kohala, Hawai'i to strengthen their voices and their leadership for the coming year. A 22 year old young man who aged out of the foster care system said that foster care is like being a broken object, placed on a shelf and forgotten. He shared that he burned his way through seven foster homes before he finally received treatment for trauma. Today he is a solid young man and a leader.

These are the voices we will bring to the table in Mālama 'Ohana. The system is complicated and solutions are not simple. But there is wisdom and genius in these voices, and we ask the legislature to listen. We are deeply committed to this project.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 1:32:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Jacobs	EPIC `Ohana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha - I am writing in strong support of SB 295. Additionally, I respectfully request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group. Thank you very much.

Sincerely - Lisa Jacobs

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i

Date: April 4, 2023  
Committee: House Finance  
Hearing Time: 3:00 PM  
Location: State Capitol  
Re: Support for SB 295, SD2, HD1, Relating to Child Welfare Services

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the Committee:

We are writing in support of SB 295, SD2, HD1, relating to child welfare services. This bill establishes within the Office of Wellness and Resilience the Malama Ohana working group to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the State's existing child welfare system and allow the office to contract with an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the working group. It requires the Malama Ohana working group to report to the legislature.

We represent organizations that serve “opportunity youth,” children and young adults under the age of 25 who are disconnected from school and work. Life circumstances, such as low family income, parental absence, neglect, or abuse, can disrupt a youth’s ability to fully take advantage of these opportunities. Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented among opportunity youth. According to a recent point-in-time count, over half of all homeless individuals identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, although this group only represents roughly 20 percent of the state’s entire population. Of the houseless population counted, 732 are children. This bill has the potential to greatly benefit opportunity youth and, therefore, we support it.

The Opportunity Youth Action Hawaii Hui is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth homelessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally-informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 295, SD2, HD1.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/4/2023 2:19:07 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jamee Miller	'EkoLu Mea Nui	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Dr. Jamee Miller and i have been a participating member in the Na Kama a Haloa Network. I am the Co-Founder and President of 'EkoLu Mea Nui, a non-profit organization committed to the transformation of the criminal justice system through Native Hawaiian methods, practices and values. I support the establishment of Malaya 'Ohana working group. The problems that our children and families face need all of us to work together, government and private entities together. We know that we cannot only rely on government alone. As a member of Na Kama a Haloa, I have experienced the power of the collective to influence change and true collaboration for the betterment of our Hawaii.

Thank you for allowing me to support this bill. I hope you will too.

With aloha,

Jamee M Miller, EdD., LSW

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2023 8:25:58 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2023 9:32:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lise Vaughan Sekona	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**House Committee on Finance**

Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 3pm

**IN STRONG SUPPORT OF**

**S.B. No. 295 SD2 HD1 (HSCR1428)**

Establishing the Mālama `Ohana Working Group

---

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

My Name is Lise Vaughan-Sekona. As a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa network, I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** SB295 and the establishment of the Mālama `Ohana working group in the Governor’s Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR).

The Mālama `Ohana Working Group was formed and prototyped by the Nā Kama a Hāloa network. Nā Kama a Hāloa is a network of more than 30 community serving organizations and individuals with lived experiences that work collaboratively to improve the lives of native Hawaiian children and families in the child welfare system. Representation in the working group supports collaboration between CWS and service providers they serve to uplift the voices of those with lived experience in the child welfare system.

Those with **lived experience** include: youth, birth parents, resource caregivers, and family members. The voice of those with lived experience brings not only first-hand experience of the system but also an authentic understanding of systemic impacts on keiki and families. The voices of those with lived experience is an essential component to the strength of working group.

The establishment of a working group in the **OWR** strengthens the collaborative approach with system partners and community-based organizations to address barriers and build trauma-informed strategies that support agencies trauma-informed care reform efforts and move toward a collaborative and collective system reform.

As the legislature is tasked with selecting certain members to the working group, I ask that thought be given to the candidates experience in the child welfare system. I would also request that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the efforts of this work group, and that consideration be given to the additional costs of the expansion of the working group membership in funds allocation. Lastly, I ask that the work of the working group begin upon signing of the bill.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and the opportunity to provide testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of this measure.

Mahalo,

Lise Vaughan-Sekona

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2023 11:39:51 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jordan Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this critical measure to support our child welfare system.



**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 2:17:12 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jackie Hong	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

As a retired social worker of over 40 yrs who has worked with many CW cases and recently experienced one in my own family, this bill is way overdue. How many children and families need to suffer from the bad decisions of CPS workers and administrators? How many children need to die? How can we sleep at night knowing there are dead and severely abused children out there? Administrators hide behind their legal curtains of privacy to protect worker's bad decisions and inadequate actions. I myself and my family have suffered such consequences. Child Welfare needs to be reviewed by a deep audit with no political influences. Only outside experts who care. Funds need to be appropriate for this. Each tragic case needs to be audited.

Former workers who know the system need to be contacted. Listen to those who have experienced the good bad and ugly. The recent case of baby Ariel stands as an example of woeful monitoring and tragic decisions.

Pass this bill as u have no other option other than continuing to experience the death and tragedy of innocent children.

Their blood is on your hands.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 8:10:05 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristina Shibata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*In support of SB 295 SD2 HD1, I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group. The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system. Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.*

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 8:11:13 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jeanne Hamilton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*In support of SB 295 SD2 HD1. Please make this bill effective upon passage and signature and provide funding for its work. I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. We need to work together to improve the child welfare system for our children and families. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system. Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.*

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 8:40:18 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kamaile Miyasato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kamaile Miyasato and I have been an active participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network. I am writing as an individual, and an employee of EPIC 'Ohana.

I strongly support SB 295 SD2 HD1, the establishment of a Mālama 'Ohana Working Group. The intent is to bring everyone (child welfare service members, community servicing organizations, kupuna, parents, children, resource caregivers, our communities, and family members with lived experience in the child welfare system) together to have courageous conversations with skilled neutral facilitators to bring solutions and action to support one another and our families. WE cannot do this work alone! WE no longer can work in silos! WE need to come together, align with a vision and take action. But WE need the financial support to appropriately move this work forward. I strongly support this transformative collaboration to improve the wellbeing of our 'ohana, community and state. This movement will truly transform us and generations after us.

I humbly ask that this working group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support Mālama 'Ohana Working Group. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to share my testimony.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.

Kamaile Miyasato

**April 3, 2023**

**Chair and Members,**

**We write in strong support of SB 295, SD2, HD 1.**

**As grandparents, we have seen the abject failures of the State of Hawaii Child Welfare system in protecting our vulnerable twin grandchildren, Aloha and Kai'ea.**

**Our beautiful, sensitive daughter, Paula Hong, and mother to Aloha and Kai'ea, killed herself after years of abuse from her partner (and father of her twins). Rather than protect the twins, Oahu Child Welfare returned the twins to the abusive father after a mere 60 days, in 2021.**

**On February 2, 2023, after 2 years of living in terror as 11 year olds, the twins ran away from the father. The twins wrote for their forensic interview on February 6, 2023, how the dad had been beating both of them, threatening to kill them, many times did not have money for food for them, used drugs, and was about to be homeless with them.**

**Oahu Child Welfare failures to properly analyze the case in 2021; refusal to address family and friends letters and concerns; and demonstrated unprofessional bias which resulted in our grandchildren living in horrific circumstances for 2 years.**

**Malama Ohana proposes to address these systemic failures. Child Welfare must be fixed before more vulnerable children's lives are lost or further damaged. We strongly support this bill and also request that the bill go into effect immediately with funding.**

**We have lived and cried over our daughter and grandchildren. We plead for your immediate support of this bill and funding to ensure it's success.**

**Thank you.**

**Christopher G. Hong, Jr  
Peggy S. Hong**

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 8:43:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amanda Mundon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**In strong support of SB 295 SD2 HD1**, I support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group. The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system. Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 8:51:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Schatzi Cope	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of SB 295. I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system, need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system. It takes a village to raise a child, and the village is made up of the entire community 'ohana. We will be all be working together to help the children touched by CWS to thrive and living in prosperity. Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.



**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 8:55:43 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Karen L Worthington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Finance Hearing on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 3:00pm

Support for SB295 SD2 HD1, related to child welfare services and establishing the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

I write to share my strong support for establishing the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Because of the urgent need for this work in Hawai'i, I ask that you require the work group to begin its work as soon as the bill is signed. I also urge you to appropriate funds to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group.

The working group brings together child welfare service members and community servicing organizations with parents, children, resource caregivers and family members with lived experience in the child welfare system. As a consultant and Children's Policy Lawyer who has worked on improving child welfare systems in several states and at the national level, I believe this approach of establishing the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group is a unique, powerful, and effective way to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the Hawai'i child welfare system. I strongly support the collaboration of service providers with those they serve to improve the outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration of this request. Please contact me at karen@karenworthington.com if I can be of further assistance.

Best regards,

Karen Worthington, JD, Certified Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS)

66 Puakea Place

Kula, Hawai'i 96790

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 9:06:05 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimberly Nabarro	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am Kimberly Nabarro and I am in support of SB 295 SD2 HD1. I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group.

I have been a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network. I am writing as an individual, and I am a Parent Partner at EPIC Ohana.

I support the establishment of the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I am a Native Hawaiian mother, I have had Child Welfare involvement with all 6 of my children with my first involvement in 2003. I want to be able to share my experience, my challenges and solutions that I wish were available to me while I was navigating the system. The voices of those with lived experience is so important to help transform the system and may be the missing piece to address the continual increase of Native Hawaiian families in the CWS.

I am concerned about the families and children in child welfare. Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness.

We need Malama 'Ohana to bring the voices of those with lived experience, and the community together to find solutions to these urgent problems.

The Malama 'Ohana Working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members both listen to the experiences of others in the community and come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 9:06:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deanna Gonda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*In support of SB 295 SD2 HD1, I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group. The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system.*

*Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration,*

*Deanna Gonda*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB294, SB2, HD1 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES - Child Welfare System; Child Welfare Services; Office of Wellness and Resilience; Malama Ohana Working Group; Report; Appropriation (\$)**

Date: April 4, 2023; Time: 3:00 p.m.; Where: Conference Room 308  
State Capitol; 415 South Beretania Street

SUBMITTED BY: Pū‘ā Foundation - Nā Kama a Hāloa Network

---

Aloha e Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair and Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair, and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to express our **STRONG SUPPORT for SB 294, SB2, HD1**. We are members of the **Nā Kama a Hāloa network**. Nā Kama a Hāloa is a network of more than 30 community serving organizations and individuals with lived experiences that work collaboratively to improve the lives of native Hawaiian children and families in the child welfare system. The network convenes to address and improve the child welfare system by embedding Native Hawaiian approaches and practices in the daily work of those impacting the lives of keiki Hawai‘i.

The **Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group** was formed and prototyped by the Nā Kama a Hāloa network. Our network asks the legislature to hear the voices of the community to protect the children in and out of the child welfare system. Representation in the working group supports collaboration between service providers with those they serve to lift up the voices of those with lived experience in the child welfare system. We believe that the **Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group** is an important commitment and investment to provide necessary lived experience and community recommendations to improve the child welfare system.

This measure moves forward the steps necessary for the formation of the working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Providing for community collaboration is key to actualizing improved outcomes for children and families, please support the financial request bill.

Thank you for considering our comment and for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

Toni Bissen, Pū‘ā Foundation  
2331 Seaview Ave.; Hon., HI 96822  
Ofc Ph: 808-945-3570

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 10:39:56 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan M Chandler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Representatives of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Susan Chandler and I am an emeritus U.H. professor. I STRONGLY support SB 295, SD2, HD1 which will convene Malama Ohana, a working group, designed to improve programs and services for children and families in the child welfare system. This collaborative effort will include many voices from a cross-sector of the community, including those with lived experiences in the system, service providers, and advocates. Like the Blue Print for Change that was convened by the Legislature over three decades ago and successfully brought significant improvements to the child welfare system, it is time again to bring people together and work towards making necessary reforms. Please fund this bill so the work can begin. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 11:01:16 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Samantha U'u	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am concerned about the families and children in child welfare. Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness. We need Mālama 'Ohana to bring the voices of those with lived experience, and the community together to find solutions to these urgent problems.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 11:46:50 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sarah Fairchild	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm in support of this bill as a former State of Hawaii Child Welfare Services social worker.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 11:51:30 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kailene Nihipali Sanchez	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kailene Nihipali Sanchez and I am a participant with the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network, writing as an individual with professional and personal experiences as a former CWS Case Manager, current EPIC `Ohana Inc. Family Wrap Hawaii Facilitator, and former Child-Specific Resource Caregiver (RCG) / current Adoptive Parent. I support the establishment of the Mālama `Ohana working group as the problems that we all face in working with our families and children within the CWS system, and community, need all of our collective and collaborative input in order to truly come up with the best plans moving forward to ensure not only our families received the best, but our workers and teams are given the best as well.

Although I came into my RCG position for my grand-niece (now daughter) with professional understandings and information, this was a new space for my family on a personal level and there were so many questions, clarification, and other things my husband and children needed that only I was aware of because of my positions; which could have taken a different route for us if I did not already have this information. I look at things my husband lacked understanding and support in with case direction, services, resources, etc., that a working group like this could help with in gathering the needed information to assist other RCGs, families, and teams for future best efforts and work with all CWS families/participants; as well as things I needed more support around since I was the family and not provider in this situation. Very, very different!

When we put our personal agendas second and start to talk to communities, workers, families, and all who play parts in CWS cases first, we then are able to truly hear the needs of all involved and are able to use the informed decision-making process to move forward TOGETHER and not separate. Our kupuna thrived on relationships and knew that in order for things to work well within their Kauhale / Ahupua`a (community), they needed each other. They knew they needed to pull from the `ike (knowledge) that each individual member had in order to form the full plan around them for true best interest of the family and community as a whole. This is what a striving community looks like and this is what our CWS community can become if we work together in learning from our observations, conversations, Wins and loses; always to ensure our families and providers are treated as members of the team, sitting at the table together to plan the next steps moving forward.

Mahalo nui for your consideration of the passing of SB 295 to allow for this working group to be established immediately, upon signing of the Bill, under the Office of Wellness and Resilience with the financial backing needed in order to reach ALL of Hawai`i. This is a Statewide need



that needs to start as soon as possible order for future CWS families and providers to work positively together as teams and not silos; ending a long history of us versus them and starting a TOGETHERNESS approach.

Kailene Nihipali Sanchez

TO: Committee on Finance

HEARING: Tuesday, April 3, 2023  
3:00 PM  
Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of SB 295 SD2 HD1 - Relating to Child Welfare Services

My name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto. I am a resource caregiver in West Hawai'i whose role is to help care for children in the foster care system. I have also been working with foster youth through several non-profit organizations for the last 14 years. I have been the Board Advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative ("Initiative") Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i for the last ten years, whose mission is to educate, advocate, and collaborate with community partners on behalf of youth in foster care and to help those transitioning from foster care work towards achieving successful outcomes as adults.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 295 SD2 HD1 and its intent to establish the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. The goal of the workgroup is to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the State's existing Child Welfare System (CWS) within the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Foster youth are amongst the nation's most vulnerable population. They come into the system by no fault of their own, and they are often left without the much-needed support resources needed as they navigate the system from removal to exiting foster care. This leads them to face poorer outcomes as adults such as homelessness, incarceration, pregnant or parenting at early ages, and overdependence on the public welfare system. Many of these negative outcomes could be avoided if adequate support and resources are provided to foster youth and their parents while their CWS case is still open.

Foster youth, birth parents, resource caregivers, service providers, and the State Social Workers are expected to work together to help the family achieve reunification. However, the enormous difficulty of reaching and engaging the CWS Social Worker paired with high staff turnover / low staffing in CWS offices, inadequate Administrative support, and minimal funding provided to all Child Welfare Services offices statewide makes it nearly impossible to help families achieve reunification within the one year time period they are required to by federal law. This leads to many foster youth being adopted out of care, placed under legal guardianship, or age out of the system at age 18.

Throughout my time working with youth in foster care, I have seen horrific amounts of injustice and harm done to these extremely vulnerable youth. Many of the foster youth I have worked with over the years have shared their frustrations with me because they have no idea what is going on with their case because they've barely seen or heard from their

social worker since removal. Many of these youth have had to fend for themselves to get the things they need, or they just settle to “go without,” which is something that no young person should have to experience. Other youth have been horribly mistreated in their resource homes, and when the youth was calling and trying to reach out for help, the only thing they could do was leave a voicemail on an already overloaded answering machine. Birth parents and resource caregivers have very similar experiences of not having any engagement with the social worker, which causes progress to slow down and increases the frustration of all. The point of this is not to place blame on the social workers, but it is to make one thing very clear: foster youth need more support.

As a professional that works with current and former foster youth and as a resource caregiver of several foster children, the Mālama 'Ohana work group will uplift the voices of those with lived experiences (i.e., foster youth and their parents) to help identify the most pressing issues and concerns that plague those that are involved with the System. This work group will also increase the much-needed communication and collaboration between everyone involved to come up with actionable solutions that could help save lives.

We must do better for the keiki (children) of our 'āina (land). My hope is that the success of this project will inspire the citizens of State of Hawai'i to fight for this much needed change in our State's Child Welfare System. In closing, I strongly encourage this committee to support the passage of SB295 SD2 HD1.

With my sincerest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharla-Ann Fujimoto". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 1:10:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Abby Simmons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and esteemed Committee Members,

I am testifying in support of this bill.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Abby Simmons

Honolulu

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 1:29:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jeriann Ekela Kaniaupio-Crozier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am J. Ekela Kaniaupio-Crozier and I have been a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network. I am writing as an individual, and I am the Hawaiian Culture Based Education Coordinator at Hālau ‘o Kapikohānaiāmālama (Summer & Community Education Programs), Kamehameha Schools Maui. I support the establishment of the Mālama ‘Ohana working group. The problems that our children and families face need all of us to work together. We cannot rely on the state government alone. As a member of Nā Kama a Hāloa Network, I have witnessed the power of this kind of community collaboration.

I am concerned about the families and children in child welfare. Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty, and houselessness. We need Mālama ‘Ohana to bring the voices of those with lived experience, and the community together to find solutions to these urgent problems.

The Mālama ‘Ohana Working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members both listen to the experiences of others in the community and come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions. (a sentence about your lived experience, if applicable)

The child welfare system is extremely complex and our CWS staff is often pulled in many directions. We have experienced how helpful and innovative community-based collaboration can be in improving outcomes for children and families. Mālama ‘Ohana will bring together community-based organizations, CWS, and those with lived experience to work together for our children and families.

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 1:38:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deb Marois	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and provide comments on SB295, relating to Child Welfare Services. I am writing as an individual and community development consultant who specializes in cross-sector collaboration in the health and human services sector. I joined EPIC 'Ohana Inc.'s Nā Kama a Hāloa network in 2021 to participate in improving outcomes for native Hawaiian children in the child welfare system.

I strongly support the establishment of the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the Hawai'i child welfare system. The perspective of people with lived experience are essential for collaborative problem-solving, as is participation from across the spectrum of community based organizations and formal institutions involved in child welfare. Please contact me at [deb@convergecert.com](mailto:deb@convergecert.com) if I can be of further assistance.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Deb Marois, Makawao

**SB-295-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2023 2:53:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/4/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sasha Autele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*In support of SB 295 SD2 HD1, I strongly support this bill and the Mālama 'Ohana working group. I request that the work group begin upon signing of the bill, and that funds be appropriated to the Office of Wellness and Resilience to support the work group. The problems that our children and families face in the child welfare system need all of us to work together. The working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. The working group brings together service providers with those they serve to work collaboratively to protect children within the child welfare system. Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.*