

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**Testimony COMMENTING on SCR124**  
**URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN**  
**SERVICES TO WORK WITH THE YMCA OF HONOLULU TO SUPPORT THE**  
**MENTAL WELLNESS OF THE STATE'S YOUTH.**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALO, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: 03-22-22

Room Number: Via Videoconference

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (DOH) appreciates the intent of this measure  
2 and offers the following comments.

3 **Department Testimony:** The purpose of this measure is to urge the DOH and the Department  
4 of Human Services (DHS) to work with the YMCA of Honolulu to support the mental wellness  
5 of the State's youth. Currently, DOH through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division  
6 (CAMHD) works with community partners, to support the mental health needs of children and  
7 families across the state. Additionally, DOH is currently chairing the Act 209 Trauma Informed  
8 Care Task Force, and is working with community partners, state agencies, and the public to  
9 improve mental health care for youth in the state. This Task Force consists of 11 members, both  
10 public and private agencies, including DHS, and has multiple deliverables to specifically solicit  
11 broad community input to develop approaches and responses to more effectively work with  
12 trauma survivors through a trauma-informed framework.

1 While we appreciate the intent of this bill to improve supports for youth in the community,  
2 CAMHD wishes to continue with its broad statewide public and private agency collaboration  
3 efforts. County specific agencies including YMCA of Honolulu, are welcome to sit in the  
4 Trauma-Informed Care Task Force meetings, as these meetings are open to the public and time is  
5 allotted for public comment.

6 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

March 22, 2022

TO: Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura  
Members of the Human Services Committee

Chair Jarrett Keohokalole  
Members of the Health Committee

FR: Greg Waibel  
President and CEO  
YMCA of Honolulu

RE: SCR124 Urging the Department of Health and Department of Human Services to Work with the YMCA of Honolulu to Support the Mental Wellness of the State's Youth. -

**SUPPORT**

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In a recent study conducted as part of the Global Burden of Disease<sup>1</sup>, mental health experts from across the country expressed a very high level of concern that we are in a second pandemic of mental health problems with not enough resources and approaches to help people. The voice of people who are seeking help include feelings of being stuck, empty, uncertain, anxious, overwhelmed, burned out, stressed, isolated, done, and depressed. The surveyed mental health professionals think the state and federal government must provide more resources.

Additionally, according to a recent article by Civil Beat<sup>2</sup>, "depression and anxiety have doubled during the pandemic... while negative emotions and behaviors, such as impulsivity and irritability associated with ADHD, have moderately increased. In early 2021, emergency room visits for suicide attempts shot up 51% for adolescent girls and 4% for adolescent boys compared to the same time period in early 2019."

The need is NOW and if it continues unaddressed, will cause permanent damage to our kids' mental health.

Currently, medically diagnosed patients can receive care through Medicare/Medicaid/insurance and schools are limited in the supports they can offer, especially while trying to regain

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)02143-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)02143-7/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/12/anxiety-and-depression-youth-mental-health-got-worse-during-the-pandemic/>

academic ground that was lost to the pandemic. The need is so great and the current resources gap leaves a void for so many youth who need help with their mental wellness. The mental health crisis is not one that can be solved by one organization and one strategy alone. Just as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted many aspects of our community, the solution to this crisis will also need to be multifaceted, collaborative, and innovative.

A 2021 Advisory from the United States Surgeon General<sup>3</sup> noted the increased need for mental health services for youth to combat the negative effects of COVID-19. Of particular note was the need to ensure that “every child has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care.” As a community-based organization that provides a variety of services to thousands of kids on the island of Oahu, we are well positioned to meet youth “where they are” in ways that are comfortable and are relevant to the unique cultural identities of those who will be served. We will approach this work with trained professionals and evidence-based practices to support the mental wellness support that our youth need.

The YMCA has a track record of success in working with youth and can offer a community-based approach, providing programs to help youth at various points in their mental wellness pathway. Our program design starts with a comprehensive mental health screening and depending on the results of this screening different program offerings would be offered. These offerings include life skill groups/activities that would focus on self-care, vision mapping, support to help them build protective factors and minimize/eliminate risk factors as well as connecting them to other resources they might need and ultimately referring them to mental health professionals if they need higher levels of service.

For decades we have been providing supportive services to thousands of youths who have been dealing with substance abuse as well as kids in every situation in our community. We understand assessment and treatment models, and we will be partnering with licensed clinicians to guide our approach.

To implement a comprehensive mental wellness program to combat the rising tide of the mental health crisis we are asking the State to provide \$2.5M per year. This amount would allow us to deliver programming across Oahu. The YMCA will plan to reach and screen 1,400 youth per year and if it is determined that the YMCA program is a good fit, will ultimately serve 1,000 youth.

Specifically, funding would be used to implement two different programmatic approaches:

Service #1: For those who are in the prevention or maintenance phase and indicating a level of acceptable mental wellness we would provide unlimited access to physical wellness memberships, life skills workshops and activities to help build resilience.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>

Service #2: For those that have been assessed to have been affected or injured we would provide a 12-week group/individual level of program to help and practice skill development including weeklong experiences at camp as well as access to physical wellness memberships, life skills workshops and activities to build resilience. The 12-week program has a step down and then a follow-up after discharge.

We are grateful for your consideration as we all work together to ensure the mental wellness of Hawaii's youth.

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR124**  
**Senate Committee on Human Services & Senate Committee on Health**

To: Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair; Sen. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair; & Senate Committee on Human Services Member; Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair; Sen. Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair & Senate Committee on Health Members.

From: Chelsie Arume

Dear Chair Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Sen. Les Ihara, Jr., Senate Committee on Human Services Members, Chair Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair Sen. Rosalyn H. Baker, and Senate Committee on Health Members,

My name is Chelsie Arume and I am in **strong support of SCR124**, urging the Department of Health and Department of Human Services to work with the YMCA of Honolulu to support the mental wellness of the state's youth.

Although I am no longer considered as youth, I did grow up in the state of Hawaii and lived here throughout my youth years. When I was young, I struggled with my own mental wellness and had many friends who struggled with depression and anxiety. When I was in high school, there was an instance in which one of my close friends told me he wanted to attempt suicide. I did report this to my school's counselor; however, they were not much help in the matter. As a young high schooler, I was very lost in this situation and did not know where to turn. I wish that there was a program or a place that I could have turned to or taken my friend to for help and support. The YMCA could potentially provide help in similar situations for present and future youth.

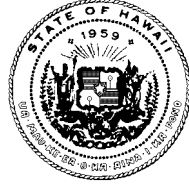
Additionally, the pandemic has drastically increased mental health issues among the youth population. Social isolation that arose from the pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues that were already present prior to the pandemic, so much that the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory on the youth mental health crisis exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of mental health services. More services need to be accessible for youth who are struggling or know of those who are struggling.

For this reason, **I am in strong support for the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services to work with the YMCA of Honolulu to support mental wellness of the state's youth.** Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to support SCR124.

Sincerely,

Chelsie Arume

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

**LATE**

March 21, 2022

TO: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Committee on Health

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

**SUBJECT: SCR124 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO WORK WITH THE YMCA OF HONOLULU TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL WELLNESS OF THE STATE'S YOUTH.**

**HEARING:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022, 3:20 pm  
Via Videoconference, State Capitol Conference Room 225

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

**PURPOSE:** SCR 124 asks the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services to work with the YMCA of Honolulu to support mental wellness of the state's youth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the mental well-being of people of all ages in our state. However, none more than our youth and children. DHS is grateful for the dedicated work and vital role the many community providers play in the lives of all of Hawaii's families. We remain committed to working with all community partners to support the mental wellness of the State's youth and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**SCR-124**

Submitted on: 3/21/2022 4:55:34 PM

Testimony for HTH on 3/22/2022 3:20:00 PM



<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Aimee Grace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Aimee Malia Grace, MD, MPH, FAAP, and I am writing in my individual capacity. By background, I am a health policy pediatrician and I direct strategic health initiatives and federal relations for the University of Hawai'i System. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the YMCA Camp Erdman.

I STRONGLY SUPPORT this resolution. I truly appreciate the legislature's recognition of the importance both of the mental health crisis facing our youth, particularly in light of COVID, but also the tremendous benefits that working with the Y provides. There is tremendous untapped potential to more fully synergize the partnerships between the Y and the DOH and DHS to address youth mental health.

I strongly urge the legislature to support this resolution.

Mahalo,

Dr. Aimee Grace