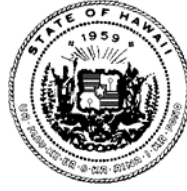


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

February 13, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [SB 295 SD1](#) – RELATING TO THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

Hearing: February 15, 2023, 10:30 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference, State Capitol
No oral testimony

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

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. Allows the Office of Wellness and Resilience to contract with an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the Malama Ohana Working Group in carrying out its duties. Requires the Malama Ohana Working Group to report to the Legislature prior to the Regular Session of 2025 and be dissolved upon the adjournment thereof.

Appropriates funds. Effective 12/31/2050. (SD1)

The Senate Committee on Health & Human Services 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.

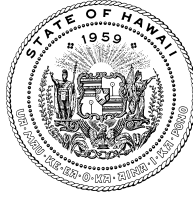
DHS supports the Legislature's and community's efforts to strengthen the child welfare system of care. The system of care involves community advocates, service providers, national and local subject matter experts, DHS, DOH, the Department of Education, the Judiciary, and law enforcement. DHS also works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

DHS is a member of the Trauma-Informed Task Force 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, including one at Waiawa Correctional Center, that will serve as a community based one-stop for families to seek services and assistance. As a result, 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

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
10:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 221 & Videoconference
In Strong Support of
S.B. No. 295 SD1, Relating to Child Welfare Services

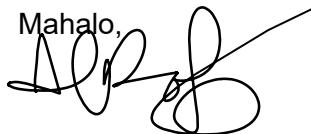
Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and members of the Committee:

The Office of the Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office is in **STRONG SUPPORT** of S.B. No. 295 SD1, Relating to Child Welfare Services.

Established through Act 291, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022, OWR will address barriers and build wellness and resilience through trauma-informed, strengths-based strategies and support agencies in their trauma-informed care reform efforts and move toward a collaborative, shared purpose of collective system reform.

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 our system partners and community-based organizations. As the Executive Director of the OWR, weaving the principles of trauma-informed care to guide all aspects of this office, including the involvement of community voice and creating opportunities to collaborate, will be essential in creating a trauma-informed state. I support the purpose of this bill and respectfully request appropriations for the working group to carry out its duties.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of this measure.

Mahalo,


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

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2023 1:02:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Golojuch Jr	Testifying for Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

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 HD 1.

We do request the inclusion of representative for the LGBTQIA+ community

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



HAWAII STATE
**COALITION AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

February 15, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz

Sen. Donna Mercado Kim

Vice Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran

Sen. Chris Lee

Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino

Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki

Sen. Lynn DeCoite

Sen. Maile S.L. Shimabukuro

Sen. Lorraine R. Inouye

Sen. Glenn Wakai

Sen. Dru Mamo Kanuha

Sen. Kurt Fevella

Sen. Michelle N. Kidani

Re: SB295 SD1 Relating to Child Welfare Service

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

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 SD1**. 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.



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

We believe in the promise of the Malama 'Ohana working group and strongly support this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director



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

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

February 11, 2023

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
And members of the Committee on Ways and Means

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 295 RELATING TO THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Hawaii Youth Services Network, a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 295 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 will support and enhance the initiative.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
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: Senator Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: SB295 SD1, relating to the Child Welfare Services
10:30 a.m., Feb. 15, 2023

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran 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 SD1, 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 SD1.

Mahalo,

Ke'ōpū Reelitz
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy



February 13, 2023

Re: SB 295

Aloha Senators,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and provide comments on **Senate Bill 295**, 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 have worked in child abuse prevention both in California and Hawai'i and 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@convergecr.com if I can be of further assistance.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Deb Marois, Principal/Founder
Converge Consulting, Research & Training



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

To: Senate Ways and Means Committee
From: Laurie Arial Tochiki, Executive Director
Re: Support for SB 295
Date: February 13, 2023

I am Laurie Arial Tochiki and I am the Executive Director of EPIC 'Ohana. 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 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



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PHONE: (808) 838-7752 TOLL FREE: (866) 636-1644 FAX: (808) 838-1653

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-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2023 3:44:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Delia Ulima	Testifying for EPIC Ohana, Inc.-HI HOPES Initiative	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Delia Ulima and I am the HI HOPES Initiative Manager at EPIC 'Ohana. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 295. I oversee the work of foster care advocacy boards, the HI HOPES boards on O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i and East and West Hawai'i. Their voices of lived experience have influenced policy and practice, touching hearts and minds with their stories, wisdom and committed youth-adult community partnerships. Malama 'Ohana seeks to do just this-listen and learn from those who are most impacted by the child welfare system. Hearts and minds will be touched and policy and practice changed, with the right support and collaboration, for the better. We must do this together-it takes us all, working together for a better future for our families and keiki. Mahalo nui loa.

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2023 3:47:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Darragh	Testifying for EPIC Ohana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Tiffany Darragh, I am 28 years old and I am a former foster youth from Maui. I support SB295 because I feel it is important for all youth and families involved in the foster care system to have the support they need. It is so crucial that the voices of the young people are heard and listened to. When I was in care, I didn't feel like I could really talk to anyone, not even the therapist I was mandated to talk to weekly. I didn't feel like anyone was actually there for me because it seemed like everyone was always in a rush when they way me. No one ever asked me what I wanted or how I felt about where I was, and I think it is important to know how youth feel about where they are. You won't know until you ask. I also feel that it is extremely important to keep the relationships between the youth and families as close as possible and make sure parents voices and cultures are uplifted and respected as well. 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.

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2023 9:13:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heidi Allencastre	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, My name is Heidi Allencastre and I am a birth parent with lived experience navigating the child welfare system. I had a tough time navigating the system on my own and though I was trying to do what I could that I felt was in the best interest of my keiki it was hard to get the attention and time of my worker so that I could understand the process and what I needed to do so that my children and I could be reunited. Though my daughters and I are together and thriving due to all of the interventions and work that I did as a parent and that we did as an ‘Ohana I know that there is still some deep feeling of trauma that my children experienced from being displaced. I am now in my senior year of my Bachelors in Social Work degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and plan to move on to my Masters. I have a passion to help other women struggling to be parents while experiencing environmental and social risk factors. It is important for individuals to feel supported while doing the hard work needed to make impactful changes for themselves and their keiki and I do think that due to staff shortages, it is not always possible for social workers and other Child Welfare Staff to give their attention and support to these parents and children. When I was in the system I would sometimes have to wait 2 to 3 weeks in order to have my allowed 3-hour-a-week visitation with my toddler and infant due to not having any staff to supervise the visit. These types of disservices do not help the ‘Ohana especially when a bonded mother and infant are struggling with separation. This bill will help to hear from others like me who have experienced " the things in the system that are not working so well" to make changes that could improve the lives of so many children and families.

In Hawai‘i, we are a collective culture which means that it is not about the individual but about the entire community. What is good for everyone? We must work together so that we make the changes needed to help our local families become pono so that they may thrive.

In closing, I strongly encourage this committee to support the passage of SB295.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2023 4:28:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Guerrero	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.

Mahalo

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2023 9:51:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erica Yamauchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members:

I am writing in strong support of this bill to create a working group that brings together child welfare service staff and community-serving organizations with parents and caregivers, children, resource caregivers, and family members with lived experience in the child welfare system.

There is a saying that was originally coined in the disability movement that is now also frequently used in the peer partner movement: "Nothing about us, without us."

I strongly support any and all collaboration of service providers with the families they serve to improve the outcomes for children in Hawai'i's child welfare system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Erica Yamauchi, Kaimukī/Wilhelmina Rise

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 2:32:34 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
A. Mente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please consider passage of this needed legislation. Mahalo.

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 3:19:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kysha Rae	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kysha Rae Pacheco-Paglinawan, and I wholeheartedly support Senate Bill 295. As a former foster youth, I am confident that we can improve outcomes for keiki and future foster youth while also transforming the Child Welfare System to its full potential! The foster system on the islands does not have as much funding- but when this bill passes, it will open so many doors of opportunity and provide beneficial and appropriate funds to children, teens, and young adults in the system!

TO: Senate, Committee on Ways and Means

HEARING: Wednesday, February 15, 2023
10:30 AM
Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of SB 295 SD1 - 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 and am currently the Board Advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative ("Initiative") Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i. The Initiative's 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 (also known as "aging out") work towards achieving successful outcomes as adults.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 295 SD1 and its intent to establish the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group 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 SD1.

With my sincerest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharla-Ann Fujimoto', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 5:01:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aponi Boyer	Testifying for HI Hopes Leadership Board	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha , I was Born and Raised on the Island of Maui , reside in Kahului.My name is Aponi Boyer. I spend a total of 5 and a half years in the foster care system. I am part of the HI Hopes Initiative which is the HI Hopes Youth Leadership board and I am the Board President on the Maui Board. I support this bill is so the community can provide a voice in how to make things better for foster children and families. Youth voice is so important. Youth in care sometimes don't have the chance to speak up for themselves. I know my time in care , I knew that if I did not speak up for myself, no one else will do it for me. Youth Voice is so valid and important. Youth in care should know that they are important and their voice is important as well. Mahalo!

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 5:07:12 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kholby Akuna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha my name is kholby akuna i am 24 years old and i am the vice president of the maui hi hopes board. i strongly support this bill because yes we all need a safe a freindly environment while having relationships with your family but always making sure you have a safe environment. thank you for your time

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 5:18:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kacie Lambert	Testifying for HI Hopes	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB295. This would be very helpful for kids in care and a huge break in barriers.

February 13th, 2023

RE: SB 295

Aloha Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 295 and the establishment of the Malama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. My name is Taliesin Sumner-Longboy, I have been a direct service provider for over 5 years on Hawai'i island and will be graduating from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Thompson School of Social Work in May 2023. In my work with organizations such as Catholic Charities Hawai'i and PARENTS, Inc. I've had the opportunity to witness first hand the need to explore and utilize culturally sensitive, community-based approaches to address disparities and shortcomings within Hawai'i's Child Welfare System.

The development and implementation of community-based support for children and parents in the Child Welfare System has historically been treated inconsequential and neglected in Family Service Plans despite the positive outcomes associated with community-based support such as reduced recidivism and higher rates of family reunification. Furthermore, research by Godinet, Arnsberger, & Garlock (2011) necessitates funding to explore and address the disparities and shortcomings of Hawai'i's Child Welfare Services, specifically for Native Hawaiian children who are overrepresented in the system.

The Malama 'Ohana Working Group is further supported by the success of EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.'s Nā Kama a Hāloa network that was established in 2018 which resulted in cultural training programs, an increase in children being placed with siblings, and an increase of parent involvement in their child's care alongside Resource Caregivers. The Malama 'Ohana Working Group would be a crucial step in assessing and addressing Child Welfare System concerns in order to better serve the vulnerable families of Hawai'i. I implore you to support this bill and its passage in this legislative session.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Taliesin Longboy', written in a cursive style.

Taliesin Sumner-Longboy

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 8:08:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samantha U'u	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Malama 'Ohana Working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience from birth parents, youth, resource caregivers, and family members. By listening to the experiences of others in the community, The Malama 'Ohana Working group can come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions. As a former foster youth with lived experience, I know how important one's voice and story make an impact. It is through my story that I was able to find solutions to my problems in a broken system because someone actually listened and believed that there could be changes done to improve our community. It is through this effort that I write to you now in support and pass SB295 SD1.

Mahalo and thank you for your time.

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 11:05:07 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SB295**.

I support the establishment of the Mālama ‘Ohana working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to facilitate transformative changes in the child welfare system. Please support this bill for the following reasons:

1. I am concerned that the **NEEDS** of families and keiki in child welfare are not being met. The child welfare system is complex and stretched. As a result, our CWS staff is often pulled in many directions, especially on the neighbor islands. In addition, services and resources extend beyond the capacity of CWS to address domestic violence, substance use, mental health, poverty and houselessness.
2. **COLLABORATION** is important. The problems that our keiki and families are facing in the system require a concerted effort by us all. This burden cannot be born by the state agency alone. The power of community collaboration brings forth outside of the box thinking and the ability to focus on needs rather than system constraints and capacity.
3. The voices of **LIVED EXPERIENCE** birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members are a vital component in this process. They are our why. Their insight to the needs this bill seeks to address are immeasurable. The collaboration of service providers with those they serve is key to improving outcomes for families and transforming the child welfare system.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of collaboration and community support for CWS. Community support and innovation has improved the outcome for keiki and families. We can be the positive change that our families need by doing this good work together.

Mahalo!

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 9:13:07 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keola Pagud	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senate Chair Dela Cruz and the Senate Committee on Ways and Means Committee members,

My name is Keola Pagud and I strongly support SB 295 SD1 in order to establish the Malama 'Ohana Working Group. As a foster youth alumus and a human services professional, I have been involved in advocacy and direct service for over a decade. The challenges facing Child Welfare Services (CWS) are complex but are able to be understood by engaging the fuller child welfare community. I've seen the positive impacts of youth-adult partnerships in ensuring safety and assisting youth toward becoming healthy and connected youth. I have been able to witness the support of parents who have experienced CWS who want to share about the honest strengths and challenges of their experience. I kindly ask you to consider passing SB 295 SD1 in order to strengthen our diverse community.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Keola Pagud, MSW

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 10:21:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

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.

My name is Sasha Autele, I am writing as an individual and I am a Parent Partner with Epic Ohana Inc. I **strongly support Senate Bill 295** because I am a single mother of three who has had her children placed in foster care and have successfully navigated the child welfare system. Currently working as a parent partner with EPIC Ohana Inc alongside of Liliokulani Trust I have witnessed the positive impact of lived-experience in discussions of collaborating and developing programs or systems that support families in Child Welfare.

Again, I am submitting this testimony in **strong supports of Malama Ohana and Bill 295.**

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 10:25:31 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kailene Nihipali Sanchez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Kailene Nihipali Sanchez and I have been a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network, and I am writing as an individual, as a Family Wrap Hawai`i Facilitator with EPIC `Ohana Inc., and former CWS Social Worker, and as a Child-Specific Resource Caregiver (RCG) and Adoptive Parent.

I support the establishment of the Mālama `Ohana working group as outlined in SB 295. In my work at EPIC `Ohana, I have been able to work alongside parent peer supports who have changed the ways I view my work done in past and the way I currently work with families and providers to ensure they are set-up for not only the present, but for future long-term success as a whole. And of course becoming a Child-Specific RCG in 2020 to my grand-niece definitely opened my eyes to how much more we need to do for each other as a team and as a family, making sure each member is cared for, heard, validated, and consulted for the true betterment of the children and their future families, as we all know how much generational trauma can affect not only our families, but our communities as well, and we are now in a position to do something to change this.

When we look at the Hawaiian perspective in things, everything has lie, everything is relational and we all need each other in order to work in functional way as a family and community. Western ways of doing and seeing things do not always work when our families are still trying to find their place in this world, learning that the ways they did things before may not be the best ways, but still trying to be true to themselves and find what does work for them, and not just because someone else says so.

The Mālama `Ohana Working Group will engage and uplift the voices of those with lived experience (birth parents, youth, RCGs and family members); bringing a much needed awareness and understanding to others in the community. The Mālama `Ohana Working Group is nothing like we have seen or had before, and something that we really need in order to heal the hurt system and families we have and truly push forward to find solutions that put the family's true needs at the center of the discussions; not behind the scenes where we know those types of decision makings never have the full buy-in all involved. Having these discussions and buy-in

allows for real plans and forward movement to occur because no one is left out of the conversation and all sides are heard for brainstorming to occur for best results.

With a strong desire to do best by our families and communities, including my own family, I ask for you to be a part of this incredible movement. Please support HB 295 and the establishment of the Mālama `Ohana Working Group.

LATE

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 11:16:18 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Nabarro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the SB 295 bill.

I am Kimberly Nabarro and 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. 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 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 Child Welfare Services staff to formulate solutions. **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 Child Welfare System.**

LATE

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 4:27:06 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vivian Kim Seu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Vivian Kim Seu and I am a Parent Partner with EPIC ‘Ohana. I **strongly support SB 295** and the Malama ‘Ohana working group because it will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members. This will allow us to both listen to the experiences of others in the community and come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions. I have lived experience as a birth parent who navigated the child welfare system. I also have lived experience a kinship caregiver who navigated the child welfare system on behalf of my grandchild. It’s working groups like this that will allow us to strengthen relationships and collaborate with one another for the betterment of the keiki in Hawaii.

LATE

SB-295-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 4:45:55 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/15/2023 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Mundon	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 Malama ‘Ohana to bring the voices of those with lived experience, and the community together to find solutions to these urgent problems.

I strongly support SB 295 SD1 and the Malama ‘Ohana working group because it will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members. This will allow us to both listen to the experiences of others in the community and come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions. I also have lived experience a kinship caregiver who navigated the child welfare system on behalf of my siblings whom of which I eventually obtained full legal guardianship of. It’s working groups like Malama ‘Ohana that will allow us to strengthen relationships and collaborate with one another for the betterment of the keiki in Hawaii.