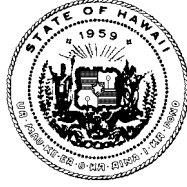


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 4, 2024

To: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2405 – RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS.**

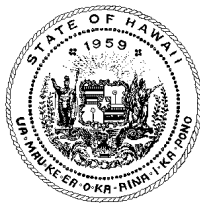
Hearing: February 6, 2024, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol & Video Conference

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) strongly supports this administration measure. DHS defers to the Office of Wellness & Resilience and the Department of Health.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to establish a working group to develop and make recommendations for a framework for peer support specialists in the State.

The Department supports strengthening peer support specialists. DHS's Med-QUEST Division (MQD) recognizes the value of peer support specialists for many people whom the Medicaid program serves, including individuals suffering from mental health or substance use disorders, houselessness, or involvement with the justice systems. Peer support specialists can offer a level of acceptance, validation, and hope by sharing their own lived experiences. Thus, MQD welcomes the opportunity to participate in such a workgroup to make recommendations for a framework to expand and sustain peer support specialists in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
AND REHABILITATION**  
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalua Kalaima  
a Ho'oponopono Ola*  
1177 Alakea Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**TOMMY JOHNSON**  
DIRECTOR

**Melanie Martin**  
Deputy Director  
Administration

**Vacant**  
Deputy Director  
Correctional Institutions

**Sanna Muñoz**  
Deputy Director  
Rehabilitation Services  
and  
Programs

No. \_\_\_\_\_

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2405  
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS.

by  
Tommy Johnson, Director  
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Human Services  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 6, 2024; 9:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & via Videoconference

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports** House Bill (HB) 2405, which proposes to establish a working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists.

DCR supports this measure for the following reasons:

- As the newly redesignated DCR, our focus is to shift from what historically has been a punitive model, to a rehabilitative, restorative, and reentry-focused system. In making this paradigm shift, peer support specialists, especially those with lived experiences, will play an integral role in the delivery of effective mental and behavioral health treatment.
- Research has shown that peer support is effective in reducing, among other things, substance use and depression. Many in our custody could benefit from peer support specialists who have lived through similar social, behavioral, and economic challenges. Creating a safe environment to share similar experiences will help to establish trust in others.

House Bill 2405 Relating to Peer Support Specialists

House Committee on Human Services

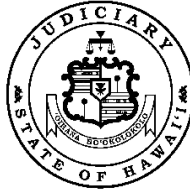
February 5, 2024

Page 2

- Studies have also shown that peer support increases social functioning and social support. For those in our facilities, this type of assistance is key to successful reentry into the community. Such success may empower those released from our custody to become productive members of our community, thereby reducing recidivism.

The establishment of a working group to develop and make recommendations for a standardized framework for peer support specialists is a step in the right direction to serve individuals in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2405.



## *The Judiciary, State of Hawaii*

### **Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2024 Regular Session**

**House Committee on Human Services**  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 9:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

by  
Adriane Abe  
Program Specialist  
Office of the Deputy Chief Court Administrator, First Circuit

### **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

---

**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 2405, Relating to Peer Support Specialists

**Purpose:** Establishes a working group to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists. Appropriates funds for hiring an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the peer support specialist working group in carrying out its duties and compensation for peer support specialists on the working group for time spent on working group meetings and related work and travel expenses.

### **Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary supports House Bill No. 2405 and appreciates the Legislature's recognition of the value Peer Support Specialists provide in the delivery of effective behavioral health services.

The Judiciary supports this bill for the following reasons:

1. This bill provides for a multidisciplinary working group to develop a framework for the inclusion of peer support specialists in the service array for the state.



House Bill No. 2405, Relating to Peer Support Specialists  
House Committee on Human Services  
February 6, 2024  
Page 2

2. This bill provides deliverables for the working group to develop a framework which includes role clarification and definitions for peer support specialists; and the development of a trauma informed model of supervision which will be important to ethically and effectively deliver services with the assistance of peer support specialists.
3. There are examples of jurisdictions across the country where peer support specialists have been successfully incorporated into the service array providing hope, encouragement, and support that a peer with lived experience brings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

**House Committee on Human Services**

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

9:30 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

**In Support of**

**H.B. No. 2405, Relating to Peer Support Specialists**

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato and members of the Committee:

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** H.B. No. 2405, Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022) the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. OWR is focused on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. OWR explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

Peer support specialists are people who have lived experience receiving services from systems of care that assist others experiencing similar situations. Peer support is one of the six guiding principles to a trauma-informed approach; through shared understanding, respect, and mutual empowerment, peer support specialists help people in their healing process. The OWR strongly believes that increasing opportunities for peer support specialists to provide assistance in the healing journey of trauma-survivors is an integral piece of making Hawai'i a trauma-informed state.

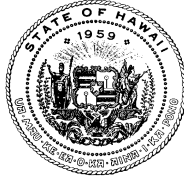
H.B.2405 establishes a working group that will develop a framework for peer support specialists in the State. Department of Health currently administers the Hawai'i Certified Peer Specialist (HCPS) program that supports the recovery of people with mental illness. The goal of the working group is to create a framework that will expand peer support beyond mental health. The bill proposes to do so by convening State departments, community partners, and peers to collectively identify what they need to onboard peer support specialists in their departments, including training and certification. If H.B.2405 passes, the OWR will be honored to assist with the creation of a framework that incorporates the voices of lived experience and expertise, including how the state can support peers support specialists in a trauma-informed, healing centered way.

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

Mahalo

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'



KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.G.A, M.P.H  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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



**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 2405  
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS**

REPRESENTATIVE LISA MARTEN, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Tuesday, 02-06-2024 at 9:30 am, Room 329/VIDEO

1 **Fiscal Implications:** There are no fiscal implications for this measure.

2 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and offers the following  
3 comments.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health, Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD)  
5 provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

6 The Department supports **HB 2405** which proposes the creation of a working group that  
7 will consist of state department decision-makers, community organizations and people  
8 with lived experience to create a statewide framework for standardizing Peer Specialist  
9 roles, ethics, training, and data measurements that clearly demonstrate Peer Specialists  
10 support as an invaluable and proven evidenced-based model of care. In addition, the  
11 Department supports the intention of this bill to identify standards for supervision; to  
12 develop a state inventory of certified Peer Specialists, and a sustainability plan to insure  
13 current and future peer support expansion and opportunities.

14 The AMHD offers two Peer Specialist trainings: Hawaii Certified Peer Specialist and  
15 Hawaii Certified Forensic Peer Specialist training. The trainings are offered to adults with  
16 lived mental health experience. Many also have lived experience with homelessness,

1 forensic involvement, and most have been in long term recovery from substance abuse  
2 issues. There are currently 27 newly certified Hawai'i Certified Peer Specialists, and 17  
3 Forensic Peer Specialists throughout the Islands. AMHD is the only program in Hawai'i  
4 that certifies Adults with Mental Illnesses as Peer Specialists. The Department of Child  
5 and Adolescent Division trains Peer Specialists with lived experience working with  
6 children with mental illnesses. The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division trains Peer  
7 Specialists with lived experience recovering from drug abuse issues. This unique  
8 certification status allows any DOH Peer Specialist hired by any Medicaid qualified  
9 agency to bill for their services. Until recently, the Department was unaware that there  
10 were other Peer Specialist training programs in the community throughout the state.  
11 This workgroup would assist with ending this disconnect and offers only benefits to the  
12 participants and the State. The AMHD would be honored to participate and collaborate  
13 with the listed participants in this measure.

14 The Department recognizes the following key points written in HB2405 that insure its  
15 efficacy:

- 16 • The workgroup will provide an avenue to discuss and adopt supportive methods for  
17 supervision, self-care, and continuing education creating Peer Specialist.
- 18 • Workgroup goals will create Peer Specialist empowerment, prevent professional  
19 fatigue, and encourage employment effectiveness and tenure.
- 20 • Proposes to identify best practices to expand and document peer support  
21 opportunities in all state agencies, not just in the field of mental and behavioral  
22 health.
- 23 • Creates a framework to expand peer support in a collaborative manner, allowing  
24 state departments, community partners and peers to collectively identify what they



1 need to onboard peer support specialists in their departments, including  
2 standardized training and certification.

3 • Stimulates collaboration on how the State can best sustain peer support programs  
4 by collectively identifying funding streams.

5 • Allows compensation of workgroup members with lived experience and limited  
6 income to participate.

7 • Peer support is one of the six guiding principles of trauma-informed care that has  
8 numerous positive behavioral outcomes. (Learn more about the benefits of peer  
9 support specialists: [https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-  
tools/peers.](https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-<br/>10 tools/peers.))

11 **Offered Amendments:** None

12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Date: February 02, 2024

To: House Committee on Human Services  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Finance Committee  
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB2405**, Relating to Peer Support Specialist Working Group

---

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

**ECAS strongly supports passage of HB2405**, which would establish a working group to develop and make recommendations for a framework for peer support specialists in the State.

Early Childhood Action Strategy believes that peer support specialists are the linchpin for parents and caregivers working through parenting challenges and people experiencing mental health and/or substance use challenges. They are the liaison between those who need assistance and those providing services and are the most trusted in the equation. We have seen the evidence in the following two programs:

1. ECAS works closely with EPIC `Ohana's Makua Allies program, designed with the inclusion of peer specialists, to ensure pregnant women experiencing substance use disorder get the help they need AND can keep their babies upon delivery. The program has been enormously successful due to the inclusion of peer specialists, who have the lived expertise to help navigate the experience.
2. ECAS also works closely with Family Hui Hawai'i, another peer-to-peer support program that provides parents and caregivers with parenting support in a safe and supported space. Due to the peer-to-peer support model, retention in the program is high and positive parenting tools are adopted by families, reducing rates of family violence and child abuse and neglect.

The Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration identified peer support as one of the six guiding principles of trauma-informed care and improving behavioral health outcomes. Peer support can play a critical role in preventing family violence, mental health and substance use challenges. Towards this end, we strongly urge you to support **HB2405**.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Date: February 02, 2024

To: House Committee on Human Services  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Finance Committee  
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB2405**, Relating to Peer Support Specialist Working Group

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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

February 3, 2024

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2405 Re Peer Support Specialists

EPIC 'Ohana is a non profit organization serving families and children in the child welfare system, and youth experiencing social and emotional challenges. We employ Parent Partners and Makua Allies. These are birth parents with lived experience in the child welfare system, and/or with perinatal substance use disorder. We also employ Youth Partners who work with the young people served by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division of the Department of Health, with foster youth served by Child Welfare Services, and youth served at the Youth Outreach Center for Homeless youth. What we have learned in the last few years is incredible power of lived experience to engage peers in services, and provide hope in ways that no one else can. The impact is tremendous. We also support the efforts of the Pū'ā Foundation to establish a culturally based certification and training program for peer support specialists in many arenas including justice involved men and women, and parents. And we partnered with the Early Childhood Action Strategy network and the Association for Infant Mental Health, Hawai'i, and Zero to Three Court to find ways to collaborate and integrate the services of peer support specialists into these services.

Peer support is an anchor in the articulated guiding principles of trauma-informed care. (Learn more about the benefits of peer support specialists: <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/peers>.) What we realize is that the tremendous impact of this work needs both champions and support. There are obstacles to the utilization of peer support in state agencies and in contracts with the state. There are nationally articulated standards for peer certification and training, that EPIC follows, but should be discussed across agencies. Employers, including state agencies, must have an understanding of how to effectively work with peer support specialists and integrate them into programs in ways that are trauma informed.

And, community based organizations and state agencies employing peer support specialists need sustainable funding sources. At this time, many of our programs are funded by short one, two, three, or at best six year demonstration or pilot project funding.

This bill proposes to identify best practices to expand peer support opportunities across the continuum of care, creates a framework for the collaborative expansion of peer support, allowing us all to work together to enrich our community with this vital service.

Please pass HB 2405.

Laurie Arial Tochiki, JD, Ph.D

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](mailto:info@hysn.org)

Vonnell Ramos, President  
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President  
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer  
Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive  
Director

### Network Membership

*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  
Hawaii Island Community'  
Health Center*

*Ho`ola Na Pua  
Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i  
Ka Hale Pomaika`i  
Kahi Mohala*

*Kokua Kalih 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 3, 2024

Representative Lisa Marten Chair  
And members of the Committee on Human Services

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2405 RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) supports HB 2405 Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

Peer Support has been shown to be an evidence-based practice for youth and young adults who are homeless, engaged with the juvenile justice system, or have experienced other kinds of trauma.

As the non-profit representative on the Hawaii Trauma-informed Care Task Force, I recognize the value of peer support for adults and families as well.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark  
Executive Director, Hawaii Youth Services Network  
Hawaii Children and Youth Summit Legislative Liaison



National Alliance on Mental Illness Hawaii  
A State Organization of NAMI

TO: The Honorable Lisa Marten  
Chair, House Committee on Human Services  
The Honorable Terez Amato  
Vice Chair, House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Trisha Chaung  
Advocacy Manager, NAMI Hawaii

RE: HB 2405 – RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

HEARING: February 6, 2024 at 9:30 AM

POSITION: **NAMI Hawaii supports HB 2405**

NAMI Hawaii is the state organization for The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Our national organization started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979; today, we are an alliance of 600 local affiliates and 49 state organizations who work within the community to raise awareness and provide support/education to those impacted by mental illness.

NAMI Hawaii has services and volunteers in all counties. Our free education programs and support groups are led by individuals with lived experience (individuals with mental illness and/or family members of individuals with mental illness) and the majority of our staff, board members, and volunteers are individuals with lived experience. We not only understand the worth and positive impact of peer support; it's our subject matter expertise and primary way of serving the people of Hawaii.

The mental health and substance use workforce must be sufficient in supply, diversity, and cultural competency to meet the needs of people with mental illness. By sharing their personal experiences, peer support workers build trust, connection, and understanding, helping current patients to become more hopeful for and engaged in their recovery journey. Considerable research demonstrates that peer support improves patient outcomes, including reducing the need for inpatient and emergency services and the frequency of recurrent psychiatric hospitalizations. Peer support for a patient's support system also has the potential to improve patient outcomes. NAMI's flagship program, the evidence-based NAMI Family-to-Family, is a form of extended peer support for the loved ones of an individual with mental illness, and has demonstrated increases in problem-solving skills, coping skills, and feelings of empowerment, all of which aids in the navigation and utilization of an often labyrinthine mental healthcare system.

**NAMI Hawaii writes in support of HB 2405, with one recommendation.** We recommend that the peer support specialist working group also include two individuals, akin to Section 2a.11.c, who are current or former *unpaid* caregivers to an individual with a current or former history of navigating the mental health system as a child, youth, and/or adult. This complements Section 2a.11.e, and expands on our previous comments about peer support for caregivers, family members, and/or friends of individuals with mental illness. This recommendation serves to strengthen the working group's capacity to address the role of caregiver peer support specialists.

We are grateful that the legislature acknowledges the worth of peer support workers, and for the potential establishment within the Office of Wellness and Resilience of a working group focused on expanding the reach, supply, and impact of peer support. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2405.

To: House Committee on Human Services  
RE: HB2405 in strong support  
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 329  
February 6, 2024; 9:30am

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, 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 House Bill 2405** relating to Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

HB2405 proposes the creation of a working group that will consist of state department decision-makers, community organizations, and people with lived experience to create a statewide framework to expand the role of peer support specialists within our state systems. The bill proposes to identify best practices to expand peer support opportunities in all state agencies, not just in the field of mental and behavioral health.

Peer support is one of the six guiding principles of trauma-informed care that has numerous positive behavioral outcomes. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) cites peer support as effective workers who provide non-clinical, strengths-based support in non-judgmental practices that advance recovery for those in similar situations. This would also create a framework to expand peer support in a collaborative manner, allowing state departments, community partners and peers to identify collectively what they need to onboard peer support specialists in their departments, including training and certification.

Establishing a working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience would elevate the voices of those experts with lived experience in the child welfare system to lend their voices to the state in a trauma informed, healing-centered way. It is time we listen to our community voices. Mahalo for your support on HB2405.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mai Hall, M.Ed.

Children's Health Coordinator

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 7:38:36 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tiffany Ramos-Duh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Tiffany Ramos-Duh and I work as a peer support specialist at EPIC Ohana. My experience as a peer support specialist is so important for the youth we work with because it shows them that they are not alone and it gives them hope that things can and will get better for them. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai'i.



**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 8:16:21 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kacie Lambert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Kacie Lambert and I work as a peer support specialist at EPIC Ohana. My experience as a peer support specialist has shown me how key peer support really is when helping those with trauma heal. We are able to use our lived experience to aid those who may have went through the same or similar things as us and we see them in different ways that others may not be able to. We have something that books and degrees can not teach, which is our experience. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai'i.

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 8:18:18 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Janae Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am Janae Davis and I work as a peer support specialist at EPIC Ohana. My experience as a peer support specialist has brought me so much growth being able to pour into our children, as well as them pouring into me. They are all very bright in their own ways. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai'i.

**LATE**

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 9:33:54 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amanda mundon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a advocate and I work as a community services liaison with EPIC 'Ohana. My primary role aims to promote and uplift the voices of families and lived-experiences. Therefore, I work closely with peer specialists in our organization and I can confirm first hand how effective peer support can be. I **strongly support HB 2405** and encourage the legislature to support peer specialists in Hawai'i.

**LATE**

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 9:38:48 AM  
Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

My name is Britney Tavares and I am birth parent with lived experience and currently work as a Peer Support Specialist at EPIC ‘Ohana. My lived experience entails me navigating through spaces that I thought was not possible. I currently serve others as a Peer Support Specialist and walk alongside of them in hopes of achieving their goals. My experience as a Peer Support Specialist and why this role is so important to me is that I have witnessed people accomplish things that they didn’t even believe that they could do themselves. Their feedback in how I have helped is what pushes me to continue to do what I do. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai‘i.

**LATE**

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 9:53:48 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ashley	Epic Ohana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ashley Viluan and I work as a Peer Support Specialist at EPIC ‘Ohana. I am also certified by the State of Hawai‘i Department of Health as a Peer Specialist Trainer, Certified Peer Specialist, & Forensic Peer Specialist. I navigated multiple systems (Judicial & Child Welfare) and succeeded in accomplishing my goals. I am a firm believer as I am living proof that peer support works. My experience as a Peer Support Specialist continues to bring me joy while I witness the moment others also realize that they can do it as well. I wouldn’t be where I’m at if I didn’t have someone else (my Peer Support) assist me as well. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai‘i.

**LATE**

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 10:21:50 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tianna Webster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Tianna Webster and I work as a peer support specialist at EPIC Ohana. My experience as a peer support specialist (add a sentence about why being a peer support is important). I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai'i.

**LATE**

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 10:36:50 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kayla Samson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Kayla Samson and I work as a peer support specialist at EPIC Ohana. My experience as a peer support specialist has allowed me the privilege to be able to use my own life experiences, challenges and accomplishments, to strengthen passion to be that voice of hope and an agent of positive change. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai'i.



**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 11:12:47 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Takata	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha e Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair, Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Kimmy Takata and I am writing this testimony in strong support of HB2405 - Relating to Peer Support Specialists. I serve as the president of the non-profit organization called Pacific Peer Connection. Our organization focuses on 1) building awareness of, and educating on, peer support and lived experiences; 2) promoting and facilitating training, research, and the development of peer support curriculum; and 3) providing support services to those who identify themselves as peers with lived experiences. In my professional capacity, I hold the position of Forensic Peer Support Coordinator at the Pu‘a Foundation. My experience as a peer support specialist has provided invaluable insights into the transformative impact of peer support on individuals in transition. I am providing this testimony in my personal capacity.

Since 2014, I have been working with the Pu‘a Foundation, working to support women in transition from prison to community. Our approach to Peer Support is rooted in the principles of doing for, doing with, and cheering on those seeking positive change. Since 2019 we have successfully trained over 70 women and men to become peer support specialists, recognizing the profound value of lived experience. Lived experience is a powerful teacher, and as peer support specialists, we possess a unique understanding of the challenges individuals face during their journey to rehabilitation and reintegration. Our ability to empathize, guide, and provide practical assistance is unparalleled, making us a crucial component of the support system for those transitioning from incarceration.

I am a living testament to the success of peer support. Having spent 15 years in prison, the prospect of re-entering society was daunting and uncertain for me. Fortunately, I was connected with the right people upon my release, and their support was instrumental in my successful reintegration into society. I received my associate's degree from Kapiolani Community College in Hawaiian studies. I went on to earn my bachelor's degree from Chaminade University majoring in Environmental science, and minoring in Psychology. Currently, I am pursuing my Masters in Criminal Justice from Chaminade University.



HB2405 recognizes the significant contributions that peer support specialists make in facilitating positive outcomes for individuals transitioning from various life challenges, including incarceration. By officially acknowledging the value of peer support and providing a framework for its implementation, this legislation will further empower individuals like myself to continue making a positive impact on our communities.

I urge you to support and pass HB2405, recognizing the critical role of peer support specialists in guiding individuals through the challenges of reintegration. Together, we can contribute to the creation of a more supportive and inclusive society for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Kimmy Takata

Forensic Peer Coordinator

[kimmy.takata@puafoundation.net](mailto:kimmy.takata@puafoundation.net)

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 12:33:55 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

**LATE**

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tori Ikeda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Tori Ikeda and I work as a peer support specialist at EPIC Ohana. My experience as a peer support specialist (add a sentence about why being a peer support is important). I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support peer support specialists in Hawai'i.

**HB-2405**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 6:01:44 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/6/2024 9:30:00 AM

**LATE**

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erica Wilson	EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. No. 2405 Relating to Peer Support Specialists

My name is Erica Wilson and my current role is serving as a Coordinator to a program that employs Peer Support Specialists. Prior to that, I have worked as a Community Health Worker serving individuals and families statewide who were experiencing circumstances such as homelessness, substance use, perinatal substance use disorder (PSUD), domestic violence, and other social determinants of health. I have also served in previous healthcare administrative and social service roles gaining knowledge ranging from medical billing, working for a health plan (Medicaid MCO), and also on the frontline as a MedQuest Kokua assisting individuals and their families in accessing care.

When I think of the importance of HB 2405, I think of the broader picture. I see this bill not only being desirable, but a necessity to our communities. I have seen firsthand how Peer Support Specialists are able to connect and effectively walk alongside of individuals and streamline the efforts of multiple systems. I have witnessed the Peer Support Specialists in our program work with women experiencing PSUD and connecting them to prenatal care, linking them to resources for food, housing, criminal justice involvement, and assisting in avoidance of (or navigating through) the Child Welfare System. In that single example, multiple government agencies are impacted and multi-system cost avoidance was the result. If this bill is passed, it would be the start to explore ways to sustain this work, scale down duplicate efforts across agencies, and work upstream.

I have personally witnessed lives transformed, lives repurposed into the greater good of the community, families thriving in unity, and hearts healed through the work of Peer Support. I support HB 2405 and encourage the legislature to support Peer Support Specialists in Hawai'i.