



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1383
RELATING TO FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM**

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

January 04, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. Room Number: 329

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** H.B. 1383, which proposes the establishment of a family resilience pilot program. This bill presents an important opportunity to assist families at risk of child welfare involvement by providing them concrete supports, peer supports, connection to cultural programming, parental skill-building and training in protective factors that help to prevent child abuse and neglect.

In the Report submitted to the 2025 Hawai'i State Legislature, the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group addresses the cascading impact of poverty and the need for concrete supports to prevent child welfare service involvement. Throughout the Working Group meetings and in community conversations, youth and families with lived expertise navigating the child welfare system shared that most families who come to the attention of the current system need support services rather than protective intervention.

A core component of H.B. 1383 is the inclusion of trained, trauma-informed peer support navigators with lived experience. These navigators are uniquely positioned to help families connect with community-based services and supports. Peer support programs are particularly valuable because they provide families with access to navigators who understand their struggles firsthand. For children, parents, and caregivers, turning to someone from their own community who has shared similar experiences fosters trust and bridges the gap between families and the services they need, increasing the likelihood that families will follow through on available interventions.

Peer support services have proven to be an effective, evidence-based practice. Since 2007, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has recognized peer support services as a reimbursable practice, and many states have successfully incorporated them into their Medicaid plans. While research on peer supports within the child welfare system is still emerging, early findings are promising and suggest that peer support can improve outcomes for families, reduce stress, and enhance overall family functioning.

H.B. 1383 also emphasizes the critical need for immediate financial assistance and essential

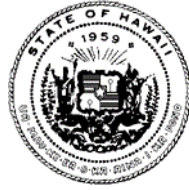
resources such as food, clothing, housing, childcare, and transportation. These provisions are key to stabilizing families in crisis. Addressing basic needs reduces the stressors that often lead to interactions with the child welfare system, enabling parents and caregivers to focus on strengthening their relationships with their children. The program's holistic approach helps families meet both their immediate needs and long-term goals, empowering them to navigate challenges and work toward healthier, more stable futures.

H.B. 1383 provides a meaningful opportunity to focus on prevention, early intervention, and comprehensive support for families. By investing in prevention services with a trauma-informed approach, the bill provides additional unique elements that were specifically requested from the Malama 'Ohana recommendations report (i.e. peer support navigators, concrete financial supports, parental skill building and cultural programming).

We respectfully urge the committee to pass H.B. 1383 and thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
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RYAN I. YAMANE
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KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

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KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
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TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 2, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB1383 – RELATING TO A FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 4, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
Conference 329 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports HB1383, which is similar to administration measure HB1080 from the Office of Wellness & Resilience. DHS offers comments and respectfully requests that any appropriation above the amount in HB1080 (= \$987,150) not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to establish and appropriate funds for a five-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

This measure provides an opportunity to address a protective factor¹ in the prevention of child abuse and neglect by meeting the concrete needs of children and families and reducing the risk of entering the child welfare system. There is clear evidence that unconditional asset transfers, such as the 2021 Child Tax Credits, resulted in a significant

¹ For more on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework, see, <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>.

reduction in reports of child abuse and neglect. Other studies² show that emergency room visits for children went down after families received additional income support.

This pilot program by OWR will be in addition to the diversion services currently provided by the DHS Child Welfare Services Branch, which provide families at risk of child abuse or neglect with supportive services to assist families with skills and knowledge to provide a safe a nurturing environment for children.

DHS CWSB has also implemented Family First Hawaii (FFH), in accordance with the Family First Prevention Act (FFPSA), to broaden the scope of evidenced-based child abuse and neglect prevention services. Rigorous evaluation of the proposed family resilience pilot project may help the intervention on its way to becoming an evidence-based practice recognized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, to be eligible for federal reimbursement under FFPSA.

As Hawaii's cost of living remains high and will likely increase as the impacts of federal tariffs increase the prices of consumer goods, DHS acknowledges that this pilot program is a timely investment to increase support services and resources to build the resiliency of Hawaii's families with children.

DHS will continue to work with OWR in its development and implementation of the pilot program to ensure that public benefits participants receive are not reduced by the pilot programs' benefits or services. DHS will also continue dialogue with OWR regarding opportunities to support peer navigators.

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

² See, Association of Expanded Child Tax Credit Payments With Child Abuse and Neglect Emergency Department Visits, at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9936349/#:~:text=Question,and%20neglect%2Drelated%20ED%20visits>.



HAWAII COALITION
— FOR —
CHILD PROTECTIVE REFORM

Representative Marten and committee members,

The HCCPR supports HB1383 and will provide lived-experience expertise to the program.

February 2, 2025

To: Chair Marten, and members of the Human Services and Homelessness Committee

From: Laurie Arial Tochiki, Co-Chair Mālama 'Ohana Working Group

Re: Testimony in support of HB1383

I strongly support HB 1383 Regarding a Family Resilience Pilot Program, which provides funding and authority to establish a trauma informed pilot program to model and test the kind of community based, trauma informed, effective program that will provide the support families need in order to avoid the costly interventions of the Child Welfare Services branch that include removal, foster care, and sometimes permanent financial support for children in permanent placement. The concept of a pilot program based in the Office of Wellness and Resilience takes the next step in creating the kind of child welfare system our community needs and wants.

In 2023 the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group was established to develop recommendations to establish a child welfare system that is trauma-informed, sustains a community-based partnership, and responds to the needs of children and families in the system and the community. I serve as Co-Chair of the working group. The working group has completed its work and a full copy of the report can be found at www.malamaohana.net, however the working group is still subject to sunshine law until adjournment sine die. To be clear, the working group will not be making further decisions now that the report has been filed. The working group may meet during the session to provide information to the public about its report but will not make further decisions. Therefore, it is not allowed under sunshine law that more than two of us meet to discuss the report, or next steps. Therefore, I am testifying as a concerned citizen and speaking for the content of the report that was approved by the working group.

Our first task as the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group was to establish an approach to our work by cultivating and modeling the kind of listening and concern that we needed for our working group and modeling the type of child welfare system we hope for. From there, we began with the intense work of interviewing individuals, conducting conversations, and holding group discussions in Permitted Interaction Groups, which helped shape our initial understanding. We then conducted eleven community listening sessions throughout the state, gathering stories and ideas from each community we visited. Perhaps the most emphatic hope expressed was for a system that helps families before crises occur. Community members want clear, accessible pathways for families to get help without fear of punishment or child removal. They envision a network of community-based resource centers (Ka Piko) where families can access concrete supports like housing assistance, food, transportation, and childcare. These

centers would offer comprehensive family strengthening programs and universal parent support services that any family could access. Key components of the Ka Piko network would be peer support and assistance with accessing services.

Here is what we heard:

The report emphasizes that accessible, community-based resource centers are crucial to prevent family crises and reduce involvement in Child Welfare Services (CWS). Key points include:

1. **Prevention and Support** – Community resource centers can provide families with early intervention and preventative services to address challenges before they escalate into crises requiring CWS involvement.
2. **Accessibility and Trust** – Families often do not seek help because they fear punishment or CWS involvement. Locally embedded centers staffed by trusted community members can offer a safe, judgment-free space.
3. **Culturally Responsive Services** – Many families feel disconnected from mainstream services. Resource centers grounded in Native Hawaiian values and community traditions can offer culturally relevant support.
4. **Coordination of Services** – These centers could connect families with essential services, such as food, housing assistance, childcare, parenting education, domestic violence support, and substance use treatment.
5. **Strengthening Family Resilience** – By offering consistent and reliable support, resource centers would reduce stressors that contribute to child welfare cases, helping families stay together.

Recommendations for the Family Resilience Pilot Program:

The report suggests developing Ka Piko or Family Resource Centers as part of a transformed family support system. The Family Resilience Pilot Program aligns with these recommendations which include:

1. **Establishing Community-Based Centers**
 - Develop locally operated family resource centers in various communities across Hawai'i.
 - Staff the centers with individuals with lived experience, community leaders, and service providers.
 - Ensure they are accessible, welcoming, and free from stigma.
2. **Providing a Wide Range of Support Services**
 - Offer basic needs assistance, such as food, clothing, and housing support.
 - Provide parenting classes, mental health support, domestic violence resources, and substance abuse treatment referrals.
 - Include legal aid and advocacy services to help families navigate complex systems like CWS, courts, and housing.
3. **Preventing Family Separation**

- Create alternatives to CWS intervention by giving families access to voluntary, supportive services.
 - Offer counseling, conflict resolution, and economic support to help stabilize households.
 - Provide safe spaces where parents can receive help without fear of punitive consequences.
4. Cultural and Community Integration
- Ensure that centers incorporate Native Hawaiian cultural practices, including healing practices like ho‘oponopono.
 - Engage community elders, cultural practitioners, and faith leaders to provide holistic, culturally appropriate support.
5. Ongoing Funding and Sustainability
- Secure state and federal funding to sustain operations.
 - Collaborate with nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations for financial and logistical support.
 - Ensure accountability and oversight to maintain high-quality services.

This pilot program will help implement the recommendations of the Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group in tangible ways, building upon the mandate of a trauma informed state and the innovative and impactful work of the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

The Pilot Program is a preventative, supportive space that keeps families stable, reduces reliance on government agencies, and offers accessible, community-driven solutions to family challenges. By providing immediate assistance and long-term support, these centers would reduce family stressors, minimize child removals, and help families heal and thrive. We recommend that OWR coordinate its efforts with the initiatives already in place for Family Resource Centers, in order to grow that concept while grounding it in community and lived expert voices. Also, we recommend that the Pilot Program explore opportunities to utilize TANF reserves, and other resources that can maximize the impact of these funds and save money in the future.

We are grateful for your support of the families and children in the child welfare system, and your efforts to find ways to improve the system.

To: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Re: HB 1383 Relating to a Family Resilience Pilot Program

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference
Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 9:30 AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in support of HB 1383, relating to family resilience pilot program. This bill establishes and appropriates funds for a five-year family resilience pilot program.

Act 86 (2023) established the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the state's child welfare system. One of the recommendations submitted in Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Report¹ was the need to build family resilience in our communities. H.B. 1383 proposes an important opportunity to address this recommendation.

The Family Resilience Pilot Program aims to reduce risk of child welfare involvement by providing families with resources, skills, and training in protective factors that help prevent child abuse and neglect. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 1383**.

Kind regards,
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.
Policy Researcher and Advocate

¹ See the Mālama 'Ohana working group Final Report and Recommendations (URL: <https://www.malamaohana.net/>).



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1383
RELATING TO A FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM**

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 9:30am, CR 329 or via videoconference

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee

Catholic Charities Hawai'i strongly supports HB 1383, which establishes and appropriates funds for a five-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This initiative is a critical investment in strengthening families across Hawai'i by providing targeted support to address the challenges that threaten family stability and well-being.

As a community-based organization dedicated to serving Hawai'i's most vulnerable individuals and families, Catholic Charities Hawai'i recognizes that economic hardship, trauma, and systemic barriers often place significant stress on families. By implementing a family resilience program, the state can take a proactive approach to reducing these stressors, promoting mental and emotional well-being, and ultimately preventing crises that may lead to family separation, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare system.

This pilot program offers an opportunity to develop and refine evidence-based strategies that strengthen family units, foster positive parenting, and enhance access to critical services. A dedicated investment in family resilience will not only improve outcomes for individual families but also contribute to stronger, healthier communities across the state.

We urge the committee to pass this measure and ensure adequate funding to support its successful implementation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 1383. If you have any questions, please contact (808) 527-4813.



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Lines for Life Youth Line
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Piha Wellness and Healing
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 2, 2025

To: Senator Lisa Marten, Chair
And members of the Committee on Human Services and
Homelessness

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1383 RELATING TO A FAMILY
RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 1183 Relating to a Family Resilience Pilot Program

I serve as a member of the Hawaii Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Over the past 3 years, the task force has developed a plan and strategies that will incorporate trauma-informed approaches to services provided to children, youth, and families.

This Family Resilience Pilot Program will utilize peer navigators, an evidence-informed practice, to help families identify needs and access services. It will provide material assistance to support basic needs. By strengthening families, it will reduce the overload of the Child Welfare System.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director

Date: February 4, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 1383, Relating to a Family Resilience Pilot Program

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 House Bill 1383 which would appropriate funds to establish a five-year family resilience pilot program within the office of wellness and resilience.

The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group (MOWG) was tasked to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the State's child welfare system. The MOWG's report identified a significant shortage of resources that were available and prioritized toward preventing local keiki from being involved with child welfare services.

As currently written, the measure would establish a pilot program that would provide trauma-informed peer support navigators, financial assistance and resources for foods, clothing, hygiene, and more, as well as a trauma-informed parenting intervention program aimed at positively impacting the parent-child relationship.

We feel strongly that a program of this nature will have outsized impact on the local community and move us closer to achieving the foundational goals of the MOWG.

For these reasons, ECAS strongly supports HB1383.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



TO: Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Dana Matsunami, Child Welfare Attorney at the National Center for Youth Law

RE: HB 1383 Relating to a Family Resilience Pilot Program

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

My name is Dana Matsunami, I am an attorney at the National Center for Youth Law. I live and work here in Hawai'i, where I focus on issues relating to foster care in our state. On behalf of the National Center for Youth Law, I am testifying in **support** of HB 1383, which will establish a five-year family resilience pilot program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

Preventative measures that address the root causes of family stress—such as financial hardship, housing instability, and lack of access to healthcare—are far more effective at promoting child safety and wellbeing than reactive interventions that focus on family separation. The Family Resilience Pilot Project will ensure that families in Hawai'i have access to concrete supports they need to thrive, like food and shelter, community-based resource centers staffed by individuals with lived experience, and housing, childcare, and physical and mental health care.

One of the recurring themes throughout the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group community meetings was parents sharing that they knew they needed help – such as food, shelter, childcare, therapy, parenting classes – but faced barriers to accessing support. Indeed, often support was only made available once parents had a child welfare case opened against them – once they and their children had been through the traumatic experience of removal and foster placement. By focusing on building resilience and concrete supports within families and communities, this bill responds to the heartfelt requests families made during the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group for support rather than separation and punishment. Families also shared they were afraid to seek help for fear they would be reported to child welfare services. **With this in mind, we urge the Committee to consider amending the bill to specify that these preventative services will not be subject to mandatory reporting.** Studies have shown that when families fear they will be at risk of child welfare involvement if they seek help, they often choose not to seek the support they need – an outcome at odds with the goals of this pilot program.

HB 1383 represents an essential shift towards a more compassionate, evidence-based and effective system for caring for our families in Hawai'i. By investing in prevention and care, we can ensure that families not only stay together but also thrive.

The National Center for Youth Law urges you to pass this bill out of committee, amending the language to ensure that these services are not subject to mandatory reporting. Mahalo for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Dana Matsunami
Skadden Fellow, National Center for Youth Law



HALE KIPA

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TO: Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Venus Rosete-Medeiros, Hale Kipa

RE: HB 1383 Relating to a Family Resilience Pilot Program

Aloha e Chair Representative Marten, Vice Chair Representative Olds, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1383, which establishes a five-year family resilience pilot program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This innovative program represents a critical shift toward prevention and early intervention that will help strengthen Hawai'i families and reduce the risks of families becoming involved with child welfare services.

My name is Venus Rosete-Medeiros, and I have been working with children, youth and families for over 38 years. Currently, I am serving as the president & CEO of Hale Kipa. I also served as the co-chair of the Mālama 'Ōhana Work Group

Please pass HB 1383. This pilot program will strengthen our support for families in several important ways:

- It creates a comprehensive support system that includes peer support navigators with lived experience, who can effectively bridge the gap between families and needed services while building trust through shared understanding.
- It addresses the critical connection between poverty and child welfare involvement by providing immediate financial assistance and concrete support for basic needs like food, housing, and transportation—supports that can prevent crisis and stabilize families.
- It recognizes, as demonstrated by extensive research, that most families who come to the attention of the child welfare system need support services

rather than protective intervention, and it provides those services in a way that strengthens rather than disrupts families.

- It implements evidence-based practices, including peer support services that have been recognized by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services since 2007 as an effective intervention.
- It responds to new federal requirements under Public Law No: 118-258 (enacted January 4, 2025), which allows states to use Title IV-B family preservation funds for “peer-to-peer mentoring and support programs with demonstrated experience fostering constructive relationships between children and families and mentors with relevant lived experience or interactions with the child welfare system.” (42 USC 629a(a)(1)(G)). Public Law 118-258 also adds a definition of “family support services” which can be provided through Title IV-B funds, providing further support for the pilot program in HB 1383.

The conditions that often lead to child welfare involvement - inadequate food, housing instability, lack of supervision while parents work, or untreated medical conditions - are frequently direct results of economic hardship. This pilot program creates a framework for providing appropriate support rather than unnecessarily involving families in the child welfare system.

The Office of Wellness and Resilience is uniquely positioned to develop and implement this pilot project in partnership with DHS and community-based service providers. If you would like additional information related to my testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at: (808) 870-7735 or venus@halekipa.org.

Me ke aloha nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Venus Rosete-Medeiros". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "V" and "R".

Venus Kau'iokawēkiu Rosete-Medeiros

HB-1383

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 5:43:12 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in Support

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I submit this testimony in strong support of H.B. 1383, which establishes a five-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. As someone who has navigated the child welfare system in multiple roles—as a child, resource caregiver, adoptive parent, and advocate—I have witnessed firsthand the barriers families face in accessing support. I also know the critical importance of proactive, community-based services in preventing unnecessary system involvement.

Act 86 (2023) established the Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group (MOWG) to seek and recommend transformative changes to Hawaii’s child welfare system. The MOWG Report includes a key recommendation: "Prioritize thriving families above all other commitments by ensuring universal family support that provides a stable foundation and opportunities for growth".

H.B. 1383 directly aligns with this urgently needed reform by investing in family resilience and strengthening protective factors that prevent child abuse and neglect.

The Family Resilience Pilot Program Will:

1. Provide trauma-informed peer support navigators—individuals with lived experience who will help families access benefits, family strengthening, and foster cultural connections.
2. Offer financial assistance and resource support for food, housing, parenting, childcare, and transportation—barriers that often push families into crisis.
3. Implement trauma-informed parenting interventions to help parents build stronger relationships with their children, effective parenting skills, and emotional regulation strategies for themselves and their children.

Across the country, similar family resilience and diversion programs have been proven to work, reducing family involvement with the child welfare system by ensuring families receive resources and guidance before reaching crisis points. H.B. 1383 gives Hawaii an opportunity to shift from reactive interventions to proactive, evidence-based solutions that keep families together and thriving.

I urge this committee to pass H.B. 1383. This bill is not just an investment in child welfare—it is an investment in the future of our children, families, and communities.

Mahalo for your time, dedication, and commitment to improving Hawaii’s families,

Melissa Mayo

President, East Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board
Member, Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group

HB-1383

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:32:16 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Godwin Higa	Consultant Trauma-Informed Restorative Justice Consultant	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Godwin Higa
 Trauma-Informed and Restorative Justice Consultant
 Member, Trauma-Informed Task Force Committee
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[\(619\) 851-4119](tel:6198514119)

February 2, [2025](#)

To the Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill HB1383, which proposes the establishes and appropriates funds for a five-year family resilience pilot program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

Please note:

The second highest suicide rate in our nation is ages 10 to 24 years. Elementary school to college age students.

second leading

"Based on the most recent statistics for the United States (U.S.), suicide is the **second leading** cause of death for children, adolescents, and young adults, ages 10-24 years."

The most amazing response from students who attempted suicide was... THE SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS.

Promoting effective techniques and strategies to build resilience will g8ve individuals HOPE.

There are three parts of the brain that are directly damaged by toxic stress or trauma. The three main parts of the brain primarily affected by trauma are the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex.

One of the processes of repairing the brain is effectively training and support to increase resilience in the lives of the victims of trauma or toxic stress.

As a Trauma-Informed and restorative justice consultant, I firmly believe that these programs are essential in creating a positive, trauma-informed environment that supports the well-being of children and families and teaching resilience is a key factor in the healing process.

More importantly, the study of families moving toward resilience after a toxic stress and trauma-related incidences in their lives are crucial in collecting vital data to constantly improve our practices in serving and assisting those who are suffering in their lives.

I can not emphasize more the importance of this program not only to improve our practices but to save lives! This should be of high priority. The impact of improved mental health and cost savings as victims of trauma start healing in their lives. I urge you to pass Bill HB1383 , which will provide a vital framework for supporting Hawaii's most vulnerable populations.

Mahalo, for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

Godwin Higa

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

February 3, 2025

To: Representative Marten, Chair, and Representative Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Karen Worthington, Private Citizen

Re: **HB 1383**: Relating to Family Resilience Pilot Program
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 329 and Videoconference, February 4, 2025, 9:30am

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Representative Marten, Representative Olds, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1383, which establishes a five-year family resilience pilot program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This innovative program represents a critical shift toward prevention and early intervention that will help strengthen Hawai'i families and reduce the risks of families becoming involved with child welfare services.

My name is Karen Worthington, and I am a children's law and policy attorney with a consulting business on Maui, Karen Worthington Consulting. I have worked as a lawyer in and around state systems affecting children and families throughout my 30-year career. I am certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children.

Please pass HB 1383. This pilot program will strengthen our support for families in several important ways:

- It creates a comprehensive support system that includes peer support navigators with lived experience, who can effectively bridge the gap between families and needed services while building trust through shared understanding.
- It addresses the critical connection between poverty and child welfare involvement by providing immediate financial assistance and concrete supports for basic needs like food, housing, and transportation—supports that can prevent crisis and stabilize families.
- It recognizes, as demonstrated by extensive research, that most families who come to the attention of the child welfare system need support services rather than protective intervention, and it provides those services in a way that strengthens rather than disrupts families.
- It implements evidence-based practices, including peer support services that have been recognized by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services since 2007 as an effective intervention.
- It responds to new federal requirements under Public Law No: 118-258 (enacted January 4, 2025), which allows states to use Title IV-B family preservation funds for “peer-to-peer mentoring and support programs with demonstrated experience fostering constructive relationships between children and families and mentors with relevant lived experience or interactions with the child welfare system.” (42 USC 629a(a)(1)(G)). Public Law 118-258 also adds a definition of “family support services” which can be provided through Title IV-B funds, providing further support for the pilot program in HB 1383.

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

The conditions that often lead to child welfare involvement - inadequate food, housing instability, lack of supervision while parents work, or untreated medical conditions - are frequently direct results of economic hardship. This pilot program creates a framework for providing appropriate support rather than unnecessarily involving families in the child welfare system.

The Office of Wellness and Resilience is uniquely positioned to develop and implement this pilot project in partnership with DHS and community-based service providers. If you would like additional information related to my testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at karen@karenworthington.com.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karen Worthington

HB-1383

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:36:06 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry SUPPORT HB1383 to include "families in the program shall NOT be placed in public housing and vulnerable communities."