

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 HB237
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

REPRESENTATIVE GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

REPRESENTATIVE LISA MARTEN, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 02/07/2025, 8:30 AM, CR 329

Fiscal Implications: The proposed measure appropriates funds to the Department of Health (“Department”) and the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist positions. The Department requests that this measure be considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and requests outlined in the Governor’s executive budget request.

Department Position: The Department supports this measure.

Department Testimony: The Family Health Services Division (FHSD) provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

Offering expectant and new parents family strengthening programs using a peer-to-peer support framework is proven to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect and improve positive parenting outcomes. Reestablishing this program in the Department will help strengthen current community-based peer-to-peer support programs and expand resources focusing on addiction/recovery and child welfare peer-to-peer-supports.

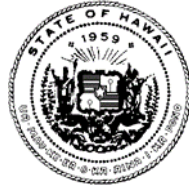
Offered Amendments: None.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

February 5, 2025

Page 1

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 5, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
House Committee on Health

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 237 – RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS.**

Hearing: Friday, February 7, 2025, 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the measure, defers to the Department of Health, and provides comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds for the Family Health Services Division of the Department of Health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children from birth to age five and their families, including the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist positions.

Peer support or peer-to-peer support programs for families with young children increase the exchange of information amongst parents with shared experiences and reduce social isolation. School- and community-based Family Resource Centers may serve as places where peer-to-peer support programs can exist to assist families in their community where

they feel comfortable and amenable to seeking information and assistance. The positive outcomes of well-supported peer-to-peer support programs are that participants feel more confident about their parenting, they have support accessing services, they increase social connections, and their children gain access to care and have fewer unmet needs. These outcomes are protective factors that reduce risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S.BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 237
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

House Committees on Health and
Human Services and Homelessness

February 6th, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. Room Number: 329

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** H.B. 237, Relating To Peer Support Programs and defers to the Department of Health.

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. 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. 237 provides an important opportunity to provide peer support to families with children between the ages of parental-to-five-year.

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

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



Our Mission

Increase Hawai'i's investments in its youngest keiki by collaborating with elected officials and serving as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to Hawai'i's youngest keiki and families.



Steering Committee

City and County of Honolulu

Justina Acevedo-Cross
Greg Auberry
Chiyomi Chow
Kanoë Enos
JoAnn Farnsworth
Jordana Ferreira
Nadia Garcia
Danny Goya
Alex Harris
Sakinah Harrison
Erin Henderson
Monique Ibarra
Shawn Kana'iaupuni
Ryan Kusumoto
Ka'iulani Laehā
Lynelle Marble
Megan McCorriston
Marty Oliphant
Cherilyn Shiinoki
Laurie Tochiki
Sunshine Topping
Kerrie Urosevich
Carol Wear
S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

Maui County

Ka'ina Bonacorsi
Kawika Mattos
Bobbie-Jo Moniz-Tadeo

Kaua'i County

Sarah Blane
Alice Luck

Hawai'i County

Sulma Gandhi
Kahi Moreman
Angela Thomas



Contact Info

700 Bishop Street, Suite 1701
Honolulu, Hawai'i 93813

info@committokeiki.org
CommitToKeiki.org

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: Commit to Keiki

RE: House Bill 237, Relating to Peer Support Programs

Commit to Keiki is a statewide, non-partisan, public-private collaborative to ensure a brighter start for Hawai'i's youngest keiki. Led by a diverse Steering Committee, Commit to Keiki's mission is to increase Hawai'i's investments in its youngest keiki by collaborating with elected officials and serving as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to early childhood.

Commit to Keiki strongly supports passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

As noted in HB237's preamble, a lack of necessary supports for parents and families can—and often will—result in negative outcomes that can include depression, mental health challenges, intimate partner violence, substance abuse and addiction, and child abuse and neglect. Challenges like these can manifest in significant and lasting trauma for children, and Commit to Keiki will continue to advocate for programs and initiatives that provide parents with the critical supports they need to lessen the likelihood of these outcomes occurring.

Peer-to-peer support programs connect parents and/or families with other parents/or families who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. This results in higher rates of trust, program retention and ongoing support. Peer-to-peer support programs provide parents and families with a safe place to be supporter on best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. The overall positive effect this can have for families and children cannot be overstated. And—with 58% of children in Hawai'i already made vulnerable by family violence, substance abuse, divorce, and incarceration—the need for social programs like the one proposed by HB237 should not be underestimated.

From a strictly economic perspective, the benefits of establishing peer-to-peer programs are extremely straightforward. As a society, we understand clearly that early investment in the health and development of our community's youngest people pays dividends over the long run, and conservative estimates have identified the total lifetime economic burden created by child abuse to be roughly \$2.6 billion here in Hawai'i. Investment in programs like the one proposed by this measure represent the likely saving of millions of dollars in future interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of negative childhood experiences.

For these reasons, Commit to Keiki strongly supports HB237.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services
Re: HB 237 Relating to peer support programs
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference
Friday February 7, 2025, 8:30AM

Dear Chair Marten, Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Olds, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Committee Members,

On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in strong support of HB 237, relating to peer support programs. This bill appropriates funds for the Family Health Services Division of the Department of Health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children from birth to age five and their families, including the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist positions.

HB237 makes a smart, long-term investment in our community by funding peer support programs that help parents navigate challenges early on. When parents receive support from others who understand their experiences, it creates a positive ripple effect that benefits our entire community.

Research demonstrates that families participating in structured peer support programs experienced significant improvements in mental health outcomes. For example, caregivers report reduced stress levels and enhanced coping strategies, which in turn leads to better overall family wellbeing.¹

By offering peer-to-peer support, this bill addresses issues like depression, substance abuse, and family violence before they escalate, preventing both emotional trauma for children and their families, as well as reducing the significant economic costs associated with these challenges. Establishing these programs not only provides parents with a trusted network for guidance and resources but also builds a more resilient, healthier community. This proactive approach ensures that our youngest keiki grow up in a safer, more supportive environment.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB 237.**

Sincerely,
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.
Policy Researcher and Advocate

¹ E.g., Repper, J., & Carter, T. (2011). A review of the literature on peer support in mental health services. *Journal of Mental Health*, 20(4), 392–411.



To: Committee on Health

Hearing Date/Time: Friday February 7th, 830 AM

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 237

Dear Chair Takayama, Chair Marten and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) **supports HB 237** which would appropriate funds for the Family Health Services Division of the HDOH to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children under 5 and their families. HHHRC is currently serving on the Peer Support task force and strongly believes that peers provide support that is effective in helping others with similar challenges navigate our systems and thrive.

HHHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

HHHRC fully supports the peer model with over ¾ of staff having lived experience in the area they are now working. This program will support vulnerable families and collect data to show peers are effective and a critical component to Hawaii becoming a trauma-informed state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Executive Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

.



2345 Nuuanu Avenue #15 Honolulu, Hawaii 96817
<https://familyhuihawaii.org>

February 5, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Legislature,

On behalf of Family Hui Hawai'i, I would like to provide our strong support for House Bill 237 that would appropriate funds to the Department of Health Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

In August 2024, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a nationwide advisory describing our nation's families under extreme levels of parental stress, the consequences resulting in increased risk of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect and chronic health diseases, with the recommendation for peer-to-peer support programs as an effective strategy to address it. Peer-to-peer programs connect families through meaningful shared lived experiences which allow families to learn from each other and build a sense of belonging, resulting in strong relationships that become their network of support in times of need. Agencies that provide the framework, coordination of groups, and training for the peer leaders provide the support and evidence informed content that ensures the effectiveness of the programs.

This bill provides support for the continuum of prevention strategies, from broad-based for all families to tertiary intervention for higher needs for families. With a focus on families with children, prenatal to age 5 years, this bill strategically supports families when their children are experiencing their most critical period of brain development when the foundations of executive functions needed for success in school and life are formed. Peer support programs allow the community, families and agencies to come together to play an active role in advocating for their family and their community to become stronger from within.

Family Hui Hawai'i is dedicated to strengthening families and communities, reducing violence against children, and promoting the healthy development of children, socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively, through peer to peer connection, parenting education and links to community services. Family Hui Hawai'i is a first contact provider to families with young children, prenatal to age 5 years serving over 1000 parents and children statewide each year. Our peer parenting support programs provide the opportunity for families to learn and grow together, sharing and helping each other through their parenting journey, discussing child development and age-appropriate effective parenting strategies, access to community resources, parental resilience and the social emotional development of their children. We see the struggles that families face every day and the difficulty they have in accessing support and services.

The investment in the families of our youngest children is a needed and economically strategic use of funds. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Maui Wildfires have exacerbated the mental health

crisis in Hawaii. Research shows that 52% of children in families with financial hardship are facing emotional distress. During these early years, learning and wellness is about the whole child, physically, cognitively, and social-emotionally. Early learning is not just in the classroom and does not begin at age 4 years at PreKindergarten. Learning is everywhere the child is – not only at school, but at home with their family. Families play a critical role in preparing their children to be successful in school and life. They are the constant in the many learning environments that their children will experience as they grow. It is important to have an easy access point for families to receive information about their child's whole growth and development.

Prevention strategies building family resilience, social and concrete supports, parenting and early childhood development knowledge are proven to alter the outcomes of early adversity, reducing overall family stress and increasing wellbeing. Funding to provide peer to peer support programs will provide a critical step in building a strong system for supporting our children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB237. I urge you to move these bills forward.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cherilyn Shiinoki".

Cherilyn Shiinoki
Executive Director

Date: February 5th, 2025

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: Krysanne Rodriguez, Parent Leader & Big Island Resident

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of two nonverbal autistic children writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. Family Hui Hawaii's parent support groups helped me in my parenting journey by bringing my community members together and I was able to talk with other parents. I heard the stress of parenting other parents felt and I realized I'm not alone, feeling the same way. It's easier for my mental health to know there are other parents that know what I'm going through because they've been there too. I was able to heal my thoughts and emotions of my parenting journey. I've gained knowledge within other parents' stories and their parenting styles.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.



Date: February 6, 2025

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Sue Kohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: Hawai'i Association for Infant Mental Health, dba AIMH HI
Re: Strong Support **HB237, Relating to Peer Support Programs**

The first 1,000 days after birth are critical in establishing brain connections, relationship patterns, and laying the foundation for future development. **AIMH HI stands on the vision that "infant mental health is everyone's kuleana"** – and having high quality early care and education is critical for the many babies, toddlers, and preschoolers who are in care while their parents work.

AIMH HI strongly supports the passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs. Relationship based programs and interventions, such as peer support programs, are critical in the development of optimal mental health and well-being of young children. Peer support programs have made incredible advancements in other areas of mental and behavioral health, and the benefits outweigh the cost. This type of care may be viewed as "care matching," where the provider has similar cultural and lived experience as the participant. Care matching leads to higher levels of trust, engagement, and communication – all which indicate higher efficacy of services.

Our association's role in the early childhood space is to "hold the hands of those who hold the hands of babies" – knowing that when the parents around young children are steady, the children can then have steady growth and development.

We urge you to move **House Bill 237** forward to ensure these programs are available to the wider community.

Na'u nō me ka ha'aha'a,

Erin Henderson Lacerdo, LCSW, IECMH-E©
Executive Director, Association for Infant Mental Health in Hawai'i



ALOHA CARE

To: The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair
The Honorable Sue L. Keohokapu-Loy, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Friday, February 7, 2025, 8:30 a.m., Conference Room 329

RE: **HB237 Relating to Peer Support Programs**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of the **HB237**. This measure appropriates funds for the Family Health Services Division of the Department of Health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children from birth to age five and their families, including the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist positions.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare appreciates the whole-person care approach of this measure, acknowledging that children and families, especially those experiencing health and socioeconomic challenges, require a compassionate and holistic approach to care. Peer-to-peer support is an evidence-based practice that has been shown to have numerous positive health outcomes, improving access to care, the overall quality of life, and utilization of services.¹

Peer support specialists can offer the unique perspective built on their lived experience of navigating the same systems and issues as their patients. Peer to peer support offers hope, demonstrates resiliency, and supports the healing that many

¹ [Peer Support: Research and Reports | Mental Health America](#)



cultures and communities have relied upon for ages and continue to utilize. The work is already done in our communities, however much of it is delivered in grassroots, unpaid methods by friends and neighbors.

AlohaCare is proud to have established peer support positions and currently employs two full-time certified peer specialists within the Behavioral Health program. Their support has touched nearly 200 of our members this past year and has resulted in many of those members taking a more active role in their treatment and recovery. The establishment of increased peer-to-peer support programs will serve to recognize the unique skills and experience these individuals bring to the table and will further develop our healthcare and social service workforce.

In 2024 Governor Green signed Executive Order 24-01, declaring that “all Executive State Departments will collectively move towards becoming a trauma informed state by implementing evidence-based services based on the Trauma-Informed Task Force’s framework, to mitigate and respond to secondary traumatic stress and build resilience in children, adults, and communities.”² The Trauma Informed Task Force was established in 2021 by the passage of Act 209, declaring that “adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress is an emerging public health issue for Hawai’i, and that cultural and asset-based approaches may be a resource for our community’s resiliency.”³ Peer support is one of the fundamental principles and action items integrated into the Trauma Informed Task Force’s framework and recommendations.

AlohaCare appreciates the Governor and Legislature for their efforts to create a trauma-informed state. Establishing peer-to-peer support programs through DOH is a prudent next step in this effort. This measure will give our youngest keiki, their families, and most vulnerable populations the necessary support and resources to navigate the various health and socioeconomic challenges that arise for our communities.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of the **HB237**.

² governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2402065.pdf

³ health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2024/03/23_Trauma-Informed-Care-Taskforce-Recommendations-Report.FINAL_.pdf

Date: February 4th, 2025

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair Representative Sue
Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair Members of the House Committee on
Health

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

From: Heidi Allencastre, Parent Advocate & Maui Resident

As a Single Parent of (3) three children and as an individual with lived experience I strongly support the Passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

Raising children can often feel overwhelming and isolating. Peer-to-peer support programs offer parents the opportunity to connect with others, providing a sense of support and reassurance that they are not alone. Building these social connections is especially crucial for parents facing additional challenges, such as economic instability, family violence, or parenting alone. Without these programs, many parents would carry the emotional weight of raising their children without knowing if others are facing the same struggles or triumphs. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, You prioritize the mental health and well-being of parents, which has a direct, positive impact on their children. From personal experience, I can say that when I feel emotionally supported, I can show up better as a parent in my home. Please support our families by supporting this bill.

There have been times in my life when I didn't know how I would make it through the personal challenges I was facing and felt completely alone. But when I found myself in a safe space with other parents going through similar struggles, I felt empowered and filled with a renewed sense of hope. I was able to see that there was more beyond my hardships, and just like those parents, I too would make it through my trials and tribulations. Listening to their stories inspired me, and I felt truly understood. I was able to draw strength from their experiences, using them as a valuable resource to guide me. Peer-to-peer support helped me build resilience and begin my healing process, as it became a cathartic experience for me.

I strongly support HB237

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:53:01 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure. Mahalo!

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:06:49 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Merriam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

I am writing to support this bill because I have personally and professionally seen the valued impact of Peer Support services. Peers helping each other is one of the most effective approaches there is in any service system. Utilizing the skills and talents of people with lived experience is becoming more and more recognized here in Hawaii. In other places on the continent and the world, Peer Support is recognized as a mainstream approach in mental health.

Please support and recognize that we know Peers helping Peers works.

Aloha and Mahalo, Kathleen Merriam

Person with Lived Experience (Peer) & Licensed Clinical Social Worker

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:36:11 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Godwin Higa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Godwin Higa

Trauma-Informed and Restorative Justice Consultant

Member, Trauma-Informed Task Force Committee

[4666 Aldine Drive, San Diego, CA 92115](#)

[February 3, 2025](#)

To the Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill HB237, a peer-to-peer support program that offers a vital lifeline for parents and families navigating similar parenting, mental health, and substance addiction challenges. By connecting individuals with lived experience, these programs foster higher rates of trust, program retention, and ongoing support.

These programs provide a safe space for parents and families to receive guidance on best parenting practices, access necessary screenings and referrals, and connect with critical resources. The positive impact on families and children can not be overstated.

HB237 is essential for ensuring our youths and parents are receiving the best care and attention needed to support all youths in Hawaii.

As a Trauma-Informed and restorative justice consultant, I firmly believe that continuous peer-to-peer support programs are essential in this fast moving issues that Hawaii youths and families are currently experiencing. A positive, trauma-informed environment that supports the well-being of Hawaii youths and families is critical.

HB237 are a critical steps in initiating the healing process and promoting effective communication among all stakeholders for the sake of Hawaii's youth and families suffering from various mental health issue's especially the trauma and toxic stress our youth and families are experiencing daily.

I urge you to pass Bill HB237, which will provide a vital framework for supporting Hawaii's most vulnerable populations.

Mahalo, for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

Godwin Higa

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Kathleen O'Dell, PhD**

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I am a parent to two grown children who I raised largely as a single mom. I wish I had the kind of programs that organizations like Family Hui Hawai'i established and oversees to provide peer-peer support when I was raising my children. Not a day went by that I didn't question my parenting and I often felt the need for advice and assistance but didn't know where to turn. When we feel vulnerable about our capacity and capabilities as parents, we want to be in a safe place to share with others who we feel can relate to what we are going through at the time.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Kathleen O'Dell, PhD

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 12:36:27 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah Kaplan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Leah Kaplan**

Mahalo to the chairs and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent from Kailua of one boy, and one on the way, writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I wanted to submit my testimony of how much in-person parent groups have helped me personally, and why they are critical for maintaining community and mental health in Hawai'i. As a graduate-educated person, I thought I had prepared for parenthood prior to having my first child. However as much as I had prepared, researched, and understood in advance, I was stricken by the magnitude of the change in my life as well as my physical and mental health recovery. Despite having family and friends, I felt completely alone, lost, and scared with the new baby. I was not well after the birth, and it was difficult for me to get out of the house with all the needs of a new baby and my own emotional fears. I joined a new parent support group when baby was very young, where I could be free to come unprepared, unshowered, with a baby who cried, or needed to be breastfed. Not only was this space free of judgement, but it was supportive. The leader talked to parents about real issues we were experiencing at that moment, and hearing talk story from other parents who were going through the same things as I was reduced my anxieties and fears. That class is what enabled me to gain self confidence in going out in public with my new baby, and reduce my anxieties about being a new mother. Then when my baby was a little older i joined a parent Hui, where parents brought babies and talk story. Having that community was also invaluable to my mental health, and also served as a way to introduce my child to the community and gain social skills.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health

and well-being, which directly benefits families in Hawai'i, and in turn benefits the workforce and community of this State. Thank you for your support families of families through this bill.

Mahalo,

Leah Kaplan

Kailua, Oahu

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 1:53:08 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Santiago	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Committee Members of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness,

Mahalo for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

As a mother of a single mother and an active caregiver to my two young granddaughters, ages 3 and 4, I strongly support the establishment of peer-to-peer support programs. In the past, I had the opportunity to participate in a peer-to-peer support group funded by my employer. The connections I made with other caregivers, along with the valuable resources and education I received, made the challenges of grandparenting much more manageable.

This bill will provide essential support for parents, allowing them to learn together, share resources, and build their confidence. By investing in peer-to-peer programs, you are prioritizing the mental health and well-being of parents—ultimately benefiting their children and strengthening families in our community.

I urge you to support HB237 and help ensure families have access to the support they need.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 2:46:48 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelly Tokunaga May	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kākou

I am in strong support of HB237 which will fund more peer support programs. As a Social Worker, I have seen first hand the power of peer support groups for vulnerable families. These programs provide a life line for parents who share similar life experiences. They can see the hope of families who have come through and know they are not alone in parenting. The investment we put into these kinds of programs will have great impacts now and in the future.

Mahalo for you consideration,

Dr Shelly Tokunaga-May

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 2:58:02 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johanna Nielsen	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: Johanna Nielsen

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of 2 boys from Honolulu writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I joined Family Hui Hawaii's peer-to-peer parent support group, Neighborhood Hui (Hui), in 2016. In Hui I met a great group of moms plus their babies. Moms in my Hui group came from all walks of life, from a military wife, to educator, to hairdresser, and restaurant manager. We were so different yet we could find similarities and friendship by being a mom/parent and our babies.

This group gave me the outlet I needed as a first time parent, encouraging me to get out of the house with a baby, and giving me the opportunity to develop friendships with other parents just like me. Becoming a parent was almost like learning a new language in a new country, ultimately having to figure out life from scratch. No one, not even a book, prepared me enough for life with a newborn baby. Yet women give birth and 2-days later parents are expected to go home and know how to handle it all. I certainly didn't!

In Hui we talked about our new life with a baby, the challenges, and joys we were finding. I found that the situations I was going through wasn't just unique to me, but that there are Moms who are also going through similar experiences too. We explored what our challenges looked like, from what our realities were versus the expectations we had, breast/bottle feeding to starting solids, safety and medical issues, developmental milestones, sleepless nights, discipline, and just the ability to even manage brushing our own teeth. Most importantly, we learned from each other by reflecting on who we are as parents, what parenting looks and feels like, and hopes of what it could be like in the future.

In my Hui, I felt validated as I shared - I could talk and others would listen, empathize with me, and truly understand what I was going through. I gained new perspectives, new strategies/tips, and felt a sense of belonging with my Hui Moms, helping me to become a better and more confident parent for my own children. Even though I have a husband, I was and still continue to be, the primary caregiver for my children, carrying the most of the mental load of being a parent. Similarly, the moms in my Hui were also experiencing the same, and Hui gave us the chance to gather, share, connect, learn, and support one another during our children's first year of life.

From Hui, I gained 2 really good friends who I continue to regularly keep in touch with that have supported myself and my children over the past 9 years. In 2023, my husband was unexpectedly diagnosed with a grade 2 astrocytoma (brain cancer). He was rushed into surgery after a small seizure and an MRI discovered his tumor. One of my Hui friends took in my children as I stayed by my husband's side during the entire hospital stay. She has also helped me with child care and transportation to/from school for my children during 2 additional brain surgeries my husband had to go through in 2024.

I have very little assistance from my family for support. Without my Hui friends, I don't know how I would have been able to get through it all - support my husband during his medical surgeries and countless doctor visits, plus take care of my children and their transportation and educational needs, or myself, my peace of mind, and well being. They gave me the support I needed when I needed it the most.

HB237 is so important and provides the needed support parents need to become connected, learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Johanna Nielsen

February 5, 2025

To: Representative Takayama, Chair, and Representative Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health
Representative Marten, Chair, and Representative Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Karen Worthington, Private Citizen

Re: **HB237: Relating to Peer Support Programs**
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 329 and Videoconference, February 7, 2025, 8:30am

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 237, which appropriates funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs. This bill would enable the development of structured support networks where individuals with lived experience can provide guidance and assistance to parents and families navigating similar challenges, particularly in areas of substance use recovery and mental health.

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, including working directly with peer support initiatives. I have worked extensively with Hawai'i state departments and nonprofit organizations that support children and families who exist at the margins of our society.

Please pass HB 237. In my research and in my work with state agencies and nonprofits, I have seen how peer support programs increase parent and child well-being, reduce the risks of child abuse and neglect, and increase the likelihood of positive health activities and outcomes such as abstaining from alcohol and drugs, caring for one's mental and physical health, and engaging in positive parenting practices. Importantly, peer-to-peer helps parents access needed services and resources, reducing stressors which negatively impact parenting.

Expanding and supporting peer support programs is recommended in the DOH ADAD State Plan (See: "ADAD State Plan System of Care Implications Full Volume," Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, December 2022, https://health.hawaii.gov/substance-abuse/files/2022/12/ADAD-State-Plan-System-of-Care-Implications-Full-Volume_print.pdf). The

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

Mālama‘Ohana Working Group also emphasizes this need in their Final Report, especially for mothers struggling with substance use disorder (See: "Final Report," Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group, 2024, <https://www.malamaohana.net/mowg-final-report>).

I urge you to pass HB 237. 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 dark ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Worthington" clearly legible.

Karen Worthington

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 8:46:56 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Celle Galarza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health Representative Lisa Marten, Chair, Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Celle Galarza

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing

I believe HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of two young children and have often utilized peer-peer support over my parenting journey. It has helped me tremendously so I can be in community and have the support I need to parent the best way possible. So, I am writing in support of peer-to-peer support programs. This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer-programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your time.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 9:56:57 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Kelly Collins**

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of a little girl writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. **Family Hui Hawaii was an integral part in my recovery from postpartum depression and anxiety. During Covid times, when it was hard to be in contact with community and being new to the island, they were an invaluable resource that was a lifeline to me. Living out here in Hawaii a lot of things are word of mouth resources are not easily findable. I was so grateful to have stumbled across Family Hui because they were a wealth of what resources were out there as well. It is hard becoming a parent and having peer groups to journey with is crucial for our families. Here in Puna where families experience hardship it's so incredibly important to have organizations like this one.**

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health

and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

This should be a right we all have access to.

Mahalo for your consideration.

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: Kiana Kauwe

RE: Testimony in Support of HB237 – Establishing and Expanding Peer-Support Programs

Aloha Chair(s) and Members of the Committees,

My name is Kiana , and I am a long-time DOE elementary school teacher and early childhood educator. I am currently at home caring for my one-year-old daughter, and through this transition, I have come to understand more deeply the critical role that peer support plays in the well-being of parents and caregivers. **I strongly urge you to support HB237**, which seeks to establish and expand peer-support programs—an investment that will benefit not only parents and caregivers but also, most importantly, our keiki.

Research consistently demonstrates the profound impact that caregiver mental well-being has on child development. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, children thrive when their caregivers have access to social connections, emotional support, and stress-buffering resources (Harvard University, 2015). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also recognizes that parental mental health is a crucial determinant of child outcomes, highlighting that depression, anxiety, and isolation among caregivers can negatively affect children's social-emotional and cognitive development (AAP, 2019). By investing in peer support programs, we are investing in a stronger foundation for our children's future.

On a personal level, I have experienced firsthand the power of peer support programs. Becoming a mother was both joyous and an overwhelming transition. Through connecting with other parents, I found the connection, encouragement, and solidarity I needed. Whether it was a baby yoga class with Family Hui Hawaii or casual conversations, being able to share experiences and listen to others navigating similar challenges made all the difference. It reminded me that I was not alone and supported my mental well-being to be the best parent I could be.

HB237 will ensure that more families across Hawai'i have access to these critical support systems. If you support young children, then you support their families and parents. If you support parents and families, you support this bill that establishes and expands peer support programs.

Mahalo for your time and consideration. **I respectfully urge you to pass HB237 for the well-being of our keiki, families, and communities.**

Mahalo nui loa,
Kiana Kauwe

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:32:49 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Noa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Sara Noa**

Thank you to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent to a bright and energetic 3-year old from Waipahu writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I recently had the pleasure of taking part in a workshop offered by Family Hui. This four-session workshop built up my confidence as a new mom by providing me with activities to help connect with my son which I have continued to use even with the program's conclusion. It also helped me in building relationships with other parents in my community and gave an opportunity for my son, who is not yet in preschool, to interact with other children. Even my mother who attended a session was able to take something away from it which was reconnecting with an old high school classmate, now care provider for her granddaughter.

My participation in this program has compelled me to show my support. This bill provides a much needed service in the community by giving parents a space to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:41:48 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendra Seger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Kendra Seger**

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a single parent of a 3.5 year old little girl writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs.

Family Hui has been an absolute lifeline and an integral part in my personal journey as a survivor of Domestic Violence as single mama for the last 3.5 years! I found Family hui from a personal referral from another mama friend & it changed my life & my daughters life!

I was a brand new first time mother at 40 years old courageous & scared, when I found hui with an infant who was just 3 month old, after leaving her father to domestic violence with a restraining order, a college educated healthcare professional of medium class, not prepared for the now broken -picture perfect life I thought I would have as a new mother that I had waited my whole life to be. I joined the infant group initially then the Lena reading program when she was 6 months old, and a plethora of many other online groups

& parenting groups that I will share below a list of some of the examples of how impactful Family hui has been. Family hui helped me on my journey with diapers, learning tools, parenting advice & tips, social support & Hope! It has shaped the mother that I am & the life learner & reader that my daughter now is. My daughter Loves to read & she is extremely advanced in her language & developmental skills, I strongly attribute that to Family hui and all the education & support I received!! Family hui taught me from the very beginning how impactful reading to our keiki is through Lena program & Hawai'i & our people need Hui parent support groups as a lifeline for generations to come!! Please vote yes!! Our Keiki needs you to take a stand for them & our future here in Hawaii & for our world!!

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Kendra Seger

Examples of some of the Family Hui's groups that supported our Ohana!!

Family Hui 8 week Infant program

8 week Lena Program "Words Matter" 2/23/2022-4/13/2022

*Family Hui Understanding Your Child's Love Language, 03 Jun 2022 9:00 AM

*Family Hui "Redefining fatherhood"

*Family Hui Understanding Your Child's Temperament by Kathy Bentley

*Family Hui "When Self Care Is Not Enough" 8/19/22

*Family Hui "I was a better parent before I had kids" 9/2/22

*Family Hui "Managing Temper tantrums" by Kathy Bentley 9/9/22

*Family Hui "Communication for Cooperation" by Kathy Bentley 9/14/22

*Family Hui “Kindergarten Readiness” by Kathy Bentley 9/28/22

*Family Hui “Strong Connections, Strong Bonds = Strong Moms”

10/7/22

*Family Hui “Parenting tricks and treats” 10/12

*Family Hui “The attitude of gratitude” 11/30

* Family Hui “Parenting Resolutions”

1/11

*Family Hui “Teaching Resilience in Children” by Kathy Bentley 1/18

*Family Hui “Family Evolution” 1/20

*Family Hui “Parenting Through Love Languages” 2/14

*”Strong Women” 3/3/23

* Spring Cleaning Your Relationships 3/24/23

*Natural consequences Kathy Bentley 3/31/23

*Navigating Appropriate Consequences 4/5/23

5/31 Worry and Fear In Childhood: Sharing Your Experiences

6/30 Love is Love; RAISING CHILDREN TO BE DIVERSITY INCLUSIVE AND

EMPATHETIC FOR A MORE UNIFIED

COMMUNITY

8/11 Parental resilience; Nurturing the Seeds to Grow Strong Families

9/8 Chill out parenting: Stop the Glorification of Busy

9/15 managing hard emotions through challenging times -Kathy Bentley

10/24 Managing my keikis Big Feelings!

11/28 Setting rules so kids can behave - Parenting w/ Kathy. Keiki O Ka Aina zoom

12/5 Consequences that work - Parenting w/ Kathy Keiki O Ka Aina

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: Matthew Lorin

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

As Chair of the Board of Family Hui Hawaii, I have seen firsthand the critical role that peer-to-peer support plays in strengthening families, improving child and parental well-being, and preventing crises before they escalate into more costly and damaging outcomes. Parenting is a deeply personal, yet inherently communal, experience. When families have access to peer networks rooted in trust, shared experience, and culturally responsive practice, they are better equipped to navigate the complex challenges of raising children—particularly in the face of adversity.

Peer-to-peer programs are an evidence-based, nationally recognized best practice in the prevention of child maltreatment, the promotion of positive parenting, and the reduction of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These programs have demonstrated success in multiple states, offering cost-effective, community-driven interventions that increase parental resilience, decrease isolation, and connect families to critical resources. Investing in these programs is an investment in prevention—proactively addressing root causes rather than relying on reactive, costly interventions later.

In Hawai'i's unique cultural and social landscape, peer-to-peer models resonate deeply with local values. The concept of *ohana* and *kōkua*—that families and communities thrive when they support one another—aligns naturally with the peer-to-peer approach. These programs build upon our strengths by leveraging community wisdom, fostering intergenerational learning, and creating culturally appropriate spaces for parents to seek guidance and reassurance without stigma. Unlike top-down interventions that may struggle with cultural fit, peer-led models are inherently adaptive and trust-based, making them especially effective in reaching marginalized and underserved families.

Moreover, scalability and sustainability are key strengths of peer-to-peer support. Unlike high-cost service delivery models that require extensive infrastructure, peer-based programs can be replicated across diverse communities with lower overhead costs and greater long-term sustainability. By prioritizing these programs now, the Legislature would be making a fiscally responsible choice—one that saves taxpayer dollars in the long run by reducing the need for crisis intervention, child welfare placements, and other expensive downstream services.

The economic argument for investing in peer-to-peer programs is indisputable. Research consistently shows that every dollar invested in early intervention can yield seven dollars or more in future savings.

Preventing child abuse and neglect alone can save millions in social service costs, medical interventions, law enforcement expenses, and lost productivity due to intergenerational trauma. Moreover, early investment reduces reliance on costly emergency care, special education services, and incarceration—expenses that taxpayers ultimately bear when families do not receive adequate support early on. By appropriating funds now, the Legislature can offset far greater expenses later. The \$860,000 investment proposed in HB237 is modest compared to the estimated \$2.6 billion economic burden of child abuse and neglect in Hawai‘i. Failing to act now would only lead to higher costs in social services, healthcare, and corrections, exacerbating financial pressures on the state budget for years to come.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to fully fund HB237. This bill represents a critical step toward ensuring that all families in Hawai‘i, especially those facing economic and social hardships, have access to the community-driven support they need to thrive while also making the sound financial decision to reduce long-term state expenditures.

Mahalo for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill.

Respectfully,



Matthew Lorin
Chair, Board of Directors
Family Hui Hawaii

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 5:28:48 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linee Reeves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent in strong support of HB237. As a single parent I have spent most of my parenting journey seeking services and supports to help me build a stable foundation and empower me to raise my children. At first, I struggled to navigate systems, access resources, and find emotional and practical support to help guide me. Once I was able to connect with programs, services, and other parents, I didn't feel alone, I didn't feel isolated, I began to find strength in community.

HB237 is not just about providing resources- it's about building strong resilient families. Ensuring that no parent feels like they're on their journey alone. HB237 would support strengthening families, preventing crises, and building healthier communities for future generations.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB237 and help ensure that all parents- have the peer-to-peer support needed to raise their children in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Linee Reeves

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 6:48:06 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sade Kahue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill! We need this!

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 8:21:02 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jasmine Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Jasmine Anderson**

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am not a parent, however, I have helped to raise my younger sisters and teach in a variety of capacities around the state and I writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. As a non-parent I have joined a number of programs from Family Hui Hawaii and have always felt loved and accepted. I tend to be an awkward and shy introvert, but in these groups I feel accepted. I never feel pressured to have to share anything, but I always come away having found some connection and emotional support. These are vital for people to feel from their peers for mental, emotional, and even physical health. They motivate me and help me feel like I can power through my busy day and take care of those who depend on me after receiving the support I need from Family Hui Hawaii. And because I feel supported, my sisters, the keiki I interact with as a teacher, and other loved ones, directly benefit from a healthier me.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sharon M. Tisza, MD, FAPA
438 Hobron Lane, Suite 315
Honolulu, HI 96815
808-371-7594

To:

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair, Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Health

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

From: **Sharon M. Tisza, MD, FAPA**

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of two boys from Makiki, a Board Member of Family Hui Hawaii, and a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. Family Hui Hawaii was vital in my sons' early years and I have referred countless patients and parents to this program.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

This type of funding is vital for essential programs such as Family Hui Hawaii to continue to flourish and reach as many Hawaii keiki as possible.

Mahalo nui for your kind consideration.

/s/ Sharon M. Tisza, MD, FAPA

Sharon M. Tisza, MD, FAPA
Diplomate, American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

February 6, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Legislature,

Mahalo for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a military child, the oldest of five boys, and a senior at Punahou School. I am writing on behalf of my family in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I was born at Tripler Army Medical Center 18 years ago. Everyone that knew my parents at that time will remember that I started crying at three weeks-old and did not stop until I was 3 months-old. As first-time parents, my mom and dad didn't expect or know how to handle a colicky baby. As I was ALWAYS crying- my parents spent many of their early days as parent stressed and tired. They struggled to connect with others.

When I finally did stop crying and my mom could set me down for a few moments, she noticed an advertisement for Baby Hui. Several months later, she joined a Hui with 8 other families. There, my parents finally found connection, a group of people that understood what it was like to have a crying baby. Over the next three years, my father was away training and deployed for over 18 months. During that time, my mom continued to find community and support through Hui. It made a positive difference in her everyday life. Through her well-being, the Hui made a difference in my life, as well.

In the years that followed, I was eventually given a little brother, and then another, and finally- two more. Through each of our military moves, my parents fondly remembered their experience with Baby Hui. Although there were no such programs around them, they had learned the value of peer-to-peer support. They made a point to find it and use it. My mom and dad had been shown a model that gave them the tools to be the best parents they could be, one that continues to benefit our entire family. Today, back on Oahu, my family still gathers with friends from our original Baby Hui. This year, along with the rest of the babies in that group, I will graduate high school.

I may not remember participating in Baby Hui with my parents and I certainly don't remember gracing them with my high pitched screams as a colicky infant. However, I do know I want to parent children in a world that prioritizes the benefits of peer-to-peer support. It is important that the State of Hawaii recognize that peer-to-peer support programs strengthen the social fabric of ALL families. Any investment made in these programs will have a return that lasts far into the future for our entire island community. Again, my family and I strongly support HB237. We hope you will, too.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Baarringer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'S' and 'B'.

Samuel Baarringer

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 8:58:33 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support this measure. Mahalo

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 10:22:17 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniella Ruth Lorincz Vingelen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 2:29:21 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a Peer Support worker and can testify to the need and overall how crucial the Peer-to-peer relationship and Peer Support programs are in connecting parents and/or families with those like myself, who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. Peer Support provides parents and families with a safe place to be supported in best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. Through Peer to peer connections and support, trust is built and we witness a higher program retention rate. I support HB237 and the need for Peer support programs should not be underestimated.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 2:30:59 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a Peer Support worker and can testify to the need and overall how crucial the Peer-to-peer relationship and Peer Support programs are in connecting parents and/or families with those like myself, who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. Peer Support provides parents and families with a safe place to be supported in best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. Through Peer to peer connections and support, trust is built and we witness a higher program retention rate. I support HB237 and the need for Peer support programs should not be underestimated.

Mahalo,

Ashley

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 2:33:53 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Gonda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, Members of the House Committee on Health, Representative Lisa Marten, Chair Representative Ikaika Olds, and Vice Chair Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

I strongly support passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a Peer Support worker and can testify to the need and overall how crucial the Peer-to-peer relationship and Peer Support programs are in connecting parents and/or families with those like myself, who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. Peer Support provides parents and families with a safe place to be supported in best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. Through Peer to peer connections and support, trust is built and we witness a higher program retention rate. I support HB237 and the need for Peer support programs should not be underestimated.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 2:36:06 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amberly Gould	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my **strong support for House Bill 237**, which aims to allocate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division for the establishment and oversight of peer-to-peer support programs.

As a Peer Support worker, I have firsthand experience of the profound impact these programs have on families facing parenting, mental health, and substance addiction challenges. Peer Support creates a vital connection between parents and those who have navigated similar experiences, fostering a safe environment for sharing best practices, obtaining necessary referrals, and accessing essential resources.

The trust built through peer-to-peer connections significantly enhances program retention rates, underscoring the importance of these initiatives. I urge you to recognize the critical need for Peer Support programs and to support the passage of HB 237.

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, Members of the House Committee on Health,

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

I strongly support the passage of House Bill 237, which would allocate funding to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for parents and families.

These programs provide a trusted, community-based support system, connecting families with peers who have navigated similar challenges related to parenting, mental health, and substance use. Research shows that peer support leads to higher trust, better program retention, and stronger long-term outcomes. By offering guidance on best parenting practices, access to screenings, and critical resources, these programs create a safe and supportive environment for families to thrive.

With 58% of children in Hawai'i already impacted by family violence, substance abuse, divorce, or incarceration, the need for proactive, community-driven support systems cannot be overstated. Investing in peer-to-peer programs is not just a moral imperative—it is a financially sound decision. The estimated \$2.6 billion lifetime economic burden of child abuse in Hawai'i underscores the importance of early intervention and prevention. By funding these programs, we can reduce future costs associated with child welfare services, healthcare, and criminal justice interventions.

I urge you to **pass HB 237** to strengthen families, protect children, and invest in a healthier future for our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amanda Mundon

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 2:38:50 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Samson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair, Members of the House Committee on Health

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

I strongly support passage of **House Bill 237**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a Peer Support worker and can testify to the need and overall, how crucial the Peer-to-peer relationship and Peer Support programs are in connecting parents and/or families with those like myself, who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. Peer Support provides parents and families with a safe place to be supported in best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. Through Peer-to-peer connections and support, trust is built and we witness a higher program retention rate. I support HB237 and the need for Peer support programs should not be underestimated.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 2:45:06 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Moanalia Falealili	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support passage of House Bill 237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a Peer Support worker and can testify to the need and overall how crucial the Peer-to-peer relationship and Peer Support programs are in connecting parents and/or families with those like myself, who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. Peer Support provides parents and families with a safe place to be supported in best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. Through Peer to peer connections and support, trust is built and we witness a higher program retention rate. I support HB237 and the need for Peer support programs should not be underestimated.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 3:08:10 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Britney Tavares	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 237, which aims to allocate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division for the establishment and oversight of peer-to-peer support programs.

As a Peer Support worker, I have firsthand experience of the profound impact these programs have on families facing parenting, mental health, and substance addiction challenges. Peer Support creates a vital connection between parents and those who have navigated similar experiences, fostering a safe environment for sharing best practices, obtaining necessary referrals, and accessing essential resources.

The trust built through peer-to-peer connections significantly enhances program retention rates, underscoring the importance of these initiatives. I urge you to recognize the critical need for Peer Support programs and to support the passage of HB 237.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 3:08:48 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Nabarro	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am in support of HB237 regarding peer-to-peer support programs. I am an impacted parent having faced poverty-related disadvantages such as homelessness, food, and financial insecurity. I am a parent who lives in active recovery from long-term addiction to substances. I have navigated Child Welfare with my own children removed from my home and am a survivor of intimate partner violence both psychological and physical. Parenting my children has always been a hard balancing act of providing, surviving, safety and staying clean. I work professionally as a peer support-Parent Partner/Makua Ally. I have seen the benefit and power of peer support and lived experience making a huge difference in supporting families like mine to go beyond surviving but to aim for success in thriving. The community programs available for families are often only used when we are system involved or at risk of system involvement. As a peer support specialist, I address firsthand experience of how hard it is to do anything more than making ends meet due to not having enough time or not seeing how it will help with the survival and concrete needs of my family. As a peer I am trained and endorsed as a IECMH Family advocate where I am able to weave in the information, strategies, and tools to honor all the potential barriers that honestly reflect a parent's true experience. It is hard to understand parents like me, trying to understand-why don't we just leave our abusive partners or how can we even think of using illicit substances or why do we keep having kids. It is often hard to explain how empty it feels to not have an identity we are proud of, or how it feels to not believe in ourselves.

For these reasons, I strongly supports HB237

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 4:33:00 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JoAnn Farnsworth	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair

Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Health

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: JoAnn Farnsworth

RE: House Bill 237, Relating to Peer Support Programs

Mahalo to the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and committee members of the Committee on Health and on Human Services & Homelessness for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. As noted in HB237's preamble, a lack of necessary supports for parents and families can—and often will—result in negative outcomes including depression, mental health challenges, intimate partner violence, substance abuse and addiction, and child abuse and neglect. Challenges like these can manifest in significant and lasting trauma for children.

As someone who is Nationally Endorsed in Infant Mental Health, I have seen the power of the Peer-to-peer support programs connect parents and/or families with other parents/or families who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. This results in higher rates of trust, program retention and ongoing support. Peer-to-peer support

programs provide parents and families with a safe place to be supported on best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. The overall positive effect this can have for families and children cannot be overstated. And—with 58% of children in Hawai‘i already made vulnerable by family violence, substance abuse, divorce, and incarceration—the need for social programs like the one proposed by HB237 should not be underestimated.

Peer to Peer Support Programs are a proven intervention for families in our beleaguered Child Welfare System.

Mahalo for your consideration.

JoAnn Farnsworth, M.S.

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair and Members of the House Committee on Health,

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness.

I strongly support the passage of House Bill 237, which would allocate funding to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for parents and families. I recently retired as Executive Director of EPIC `Ohana, and I am proud of our Makua Allies Program. The Makua Allies Program provides, through a contract with the Department of Health peer support specialist services to women who are pregnant and experiencing substance use disorder.

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.

Many of the recommendations in our report include peer support because it improves engagement, it improves outcomes. During our community listening sessions throughout the state we heard from several women who had experienced perinatal substance use disorder and appreciated the help and support of a peer support specialist. Their stories give us hope. I remember speaking with one woman who had several of her children removed at birth in the hospital. But now she is in treatment, and she is successfully keeping her baby.

The other critical element to a successful program for perinatal substance use disorder is the pairing of services with infant mental health services. This is a two-generation approach working with both mother and baby. In this way programs like these avoid "adverse childhood effects" (ACES) for the baby that can have a lifetime improvement in outcomes.

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.

HB 237 - Relating to Peer Support Groups

Gregg Takayama (HLT Chair), Sue L. Keohokapu - Lee Loy (HLT Vice Chair), Lisa Marten (HSH Chair),

Ikaika Olds (HSH Vice Chair)

Health (HLT) and Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)

Friday, February 7, 2025 at 8:30 am

Conference Room: 329

IN SUPPORT

Good morning Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu, Chair Marten, and Vice Chair Olds and committee members, my name is Shayna and I am a Bachelors of Social Work student at the UH Manoa Thompson School of Social Work. I am testifying in favor of House Bill 237.

I support this bill because peer support groups have shown to be helpful for parents and children learning, sharing resources, and building self confidence. It is also an instant and cost effective safety net. This bill addresses the issue of child abuse and neglect in Hawaii. The bill mentions that there are about 600 cases of child abuse and neglect in Hawaii each year. If peer support groups are an instant safety net as mentioned, this will tremendously help the children and parents that are at risk of being separated from each other. It will also limit the trauma from families being separated. As someone that eventually wants to work in child and family social work, I think it is important for children to stay with their families and educate parents instead of separating families. These support programs will help families with similar issues support one another and lessen the strain on intervention methods.

The Parents Anonymous Organization has helped combat child abuse and neglect through the use of peer support. The national clearing house of foster care prevention programs ranked Parents Anonymous as “promising”, which is the second highest rank on a four-point scale evaluating its evidence based. California’s statewide clearing house also rated the support groups as promising in effectively preventing

child abuse and neglect. Also, more than 4.5 million parents, caregivers, and their children nationwide have participated since going virtual after the pandemic.

In closing, I support this bill and hope that peer-to-peer support programs will continue to help more families and children in the future. Thank you for your time.

Shayna Au

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 8:57:28 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa D. Haile	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a mother that participated in Family Hui's programs several time as a Hui group leader. Peer support group fosters community and connection through some of the most challenging times of parenting and parents need all the support. Peer-to-peer support is crucial for the emotional support and social connection of families at every growth stage. Please vote YES for HB237.

HB-237

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 9:02:40 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/7/2025 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Awai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stand in support HB237. As the coordinator/trainer for the Hawaii Certified Peer Specialists from 2005-9 with DOH AMHD, peers with lived experience can be like adjunct teachers at Chaminade who share the experiences which made my life so much more worthwhile, getting my masters in Criminal Justice instead of thinking I was just a person with a mental health issue by professionals who know little about people of our culture. Mahalo for supporting any programs that will help peers, who know what others their ages have gone through as well whether young or old!