

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

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

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

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 11, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 244 HD1 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.**

Hearing: March 12, 2025, 1:10 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

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

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with contracted community-based organizations to address the need for social services in the State. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Human Services and Homelessness amended the measure by:

- (1) Inserting language to ensure equitable distribution of allocated funds to the various divisions within the Department of Human Services with contracted community-based organizations;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making a technical, nonsubstantive amendment for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Committee on Human Services and Homelessness also noted in its committee report, suggested appropriation amounts and program IDs.

DHS understands that the true cost of providing contracted services has increased faster than appropriations and contracted amounts. This results in community-based organizations having to fundraise, hire less staff, or reduce the number of people served by the contract.

DHS respectfully requests clarification if the Legislature intends that the appropriation be directed toward a particular program.

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



**Parents And
Children Together**
BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 244 HD1 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, & Members
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Vice-President of Strategy and External Affairs
DATE: March 12, 2025 at 1:10 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) strongly supports HB 244 HD1, which appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with community-based organizations to address the need for social services in the State.

We submit this testimony as a member of the Hawai'i True Cost Coalition – over 50 community-based non-profit organizations fighting to sustain essential social services for our communities. The people of our community are strong, resilient and capable yet challenged by systems of scarcity that are difficult to overcome without targeted support. They must be supported by high-quality organizations that are sustainable, and state funding is an important part of that. State contracts that have not increased over time as operating costs increase make this important work unsustainable. We support increases to these contracts because the need for social services in our state is higher than ever.

Founded by residents of Kuhio Park Terrace in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or tkajimura@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.



March 12, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino
Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole
Sen. Kurt Fevella

Re: HB244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters. HSCADV is a member of the True Cost Coalition.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 25 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of HB244 HD1.

Most of our member programs receive funding from DHS directly through the state or from the federal government in pass-thru grants. For example, at least half of the \$3 million in DHS budget for domestic violence services consists of federal funds. Over one million comes directly from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Family Violence Prevention Services. These funds are being scrutinized by the current Presidential administration.¹

The services funded include:

- **Emergency domestic violence shelters**
- **Domestic violence services for families engaged in the child welfare system**
- **Domestic violence-related legal services**
- **Teen domestic violence prevention**

For years, our programs have barely been making do with their current funding. Contracted amounts have not changed in a decade, and organizations are expected to do more

¹ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25506813-govdoc20250128-263582/#document/p16>

with less. Now, with potential changes in federal funding, lives are at stake. The federal funding freeze will impact life-saving services and endanger survivors' lives and those of their children.

Shelters that provide homes for those fleeing violence will have to consider drastically reducing their services or even closing their doors, which could lead to increased homelessness in a state that is already grappling with an overwhelming homeless population. No less than four thousand lives will be impacted, and much more when we consider those who serve survivors and their children.

This is an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawai'i families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

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Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy SanBuenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Monday, March 12, 2025

Room 225 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

1:10 PM

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 244 HD1 – DHS FUNDING FOR CBOs

Aloha Chair SanBuenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,723 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation as of March 3, 2025. We are always mindful that 938 – 49.5% - of Hawai'i's male prison population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to share our strong support for HB 244 HD1 that appropriates funds for DHS to collaborate with contracted community-based organizations to address the need for social services in Hawai'i.

As a proud member of the True Cost Coalition, Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to **strongly support HB 244 HD1** that appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with community-based organizations to address the need for social services in Hawai'i nei.

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, March 3, 2025

<https://dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2025-03-03-2.pdf>

Community Alliance on Prisons advocates for justice-involved individuals who are exiting incarceration and need a whole host of services from housing, food, healthcare, etc. in order to transition from incarceration to community life.

Hawai'i community-based organizations have nobly filled the pukas in services and for that, we are eternally grateful. These amazing community organizations are doing the work of the government.

We are all deeply concerned about our vulnerable neighbors and communities impacted by incarceration in light of the recent actions taken by the new federal administration.

We implore the committee to fund these organizations so they can continue providing desperately needed services to keep families together, to help those who cannot help themselves, and to repair Hawai'i's torn and tattered safety net.

Mahalo nui for hearing this important bill.



HAWAI'I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

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

Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Network Membership

Access to Independence
Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai'i
Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai'i
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.
Friends of the Children's Justice
Center of Maui
Get Ready Hawai'i
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kaua'i, Inc.
Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
Hawai'i Health & Harm
Reduction Center
Hawaii Island Community'
Health Center
Ho'ola Na Pua
Ho'okele Coalition of Kaua'i
Ka Hale Pomaika'i
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Kaua'i Planning and Action
Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED
Piha Wellness and Healing
Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

March 8, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
And members of the Committee on Health and Human
Services

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 244 HD1 RELATING TO THE , DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations including children, youth, and young adults, need the educational, vocational, family strengthening, and other services provided by CBOs. We all want our children to grow up safe, healthy, and ready to succeed. It takes a network of trauma-informed, culturally relevant, and accessible services to enable our young people to make successful transitions to adulthood.

The most recent ALICE report by Aloha United Way noted that 37% of households said that someone in their family is considering moving out of state. 85% of families said it was simply the high cost of living in Hawai'i, and 73% said it was because of the high cost of housing,

CBOs struggle to attract and retain qualified staff. When contracts and grants do not pay the full cost of providing services, workers leave for higher paying jobs or places with a lower cost of living. It is shameful that wages are so low that a portion of Hawaii's CBO staff receive SNAP and other public assistance benefits. Staff working with homeless persons are concerned about becoming homeless themselves. One outreach worker shared with me, "If my landlord raises my rent, I won't be able to afford my housing." In 2024, The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services stopped admitting clients to its emergency shelter for boys on Maui due to critical staffing shortages.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith F. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "F".

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Re: HB 244 HD 1 Relating to the Department of Human Services

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference
Wednesday March 12, 2025

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Acquino, and Committee Members,

On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in strong support of HB 244 HD 1, relating to department of human services. This bill appropriates funds for the department of human services to collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs) to address the need for social services in the State.

Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawai'i's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawai'i must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD 1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB 244 HD 1.**

Kind regards,
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.

Policy Researcher and Advocate

Hawai'i Children's Action Network, a member of the Hawai'i [True Cost Coalition](#)

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Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

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Maui United Way
Hawaii Island United Way

Wednesday, March 12, 2025; 1:10 p.m.
Conference room 225 & Videoconference

Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1 - Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Child and Family Service (CFS) to express our **strong support** of HB 244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Through the utilization of our core H.O.P.E. values (Humility, Ownership, Perseverance, and Engagement), our programs aim to help Hawaii's most vulnerable populations to strengthen families and foster the healthy development of children. We work directly with individuals and families to break cycles of violence and foster environments where children and families can thrive. Children, individuals experiencing homelessness, survivors of domestic violence, and many other groups rely on the safety nets provided by CFS and other CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed CBOs to the brink.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Child & Family Service supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that may jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on.

This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's communities continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes. It will preserve essential services and investment in the safety, health and future of Hawaii's communities. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

We respectfully urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable populations ensuring they receive the protection and assistance they deserve.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Amanda Pump
President & CEO
Child & Family Service



HAWAI'I HEALTH &
HARM REDUCTION CENTER

677 Ala Moana Blvd, Ste 226
Honolulu, HI 96813

(808) 521-2437

www.hhhrc.org

*"Reducing harm,
promoting health,
creating wellness, and
fighting stigma
in Hawai'i and
the Pacific."*

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 244, HD 1

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, & HHS Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, Policy & Advancement Manager

DATE: March 12, 2025 (1:10 PM)

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) strongly supports HB 244, HD 1, which appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to better collaborate with community-based organizations to address the ongoing need for social services.

HHHRC provides homelessness services in Regions 1 and 6 on O'ahu and is a member of Partners in Care (PIC), a planning, coordinating, and advocacy alliance that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill needs within O'ahu's continuum of care for homeless persons. In alignment with PIC and other non-profit members of the True Cost Coalition, we met with legislators and supported legislative efforts last year to increase baseline funding for work that is outlined in multi-year service contracts.

Recruitment and retention of frontline staff have become increasingly difficult with flatlined salary structures and acute increases in the cost of living in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many employees, including those with valuable lived experience with homelessness, behavioral health issues, and criminal legal system involvement, have taken part-time jobs in the service sector or have departed our agency for full-time service sector employment.

HHHRC's mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai'i and the Pacific. We work with many individuals impacted by poverty, housing instability, and other social determinants of health. Many have behavioral health problems, including those related to substance use and mental health conditions, and have also been deeply impacted by trauma related to histories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



March 12, 2025

RE: Support for HB 244, HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for HB 244, HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services. This bill appropriates funds for the department of human services to collaborate with community-based organizations to address the need for social services in the State.

For over 40 years, Hawai'i Foodbank has provided daily and emergency assistance to those facing food insecurity in Hawai'i. As the state's leading hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank distributes food to families and individuals on O'ahu and in Kaua'i County through direct service programs and through our network of 266 agency partners and pantries. Last year, we served an average of over 150,000 people each month, distributing a total of 21 million pounds of nutritious food, including 5.9 million pounds of fresh produce. Hawai'i Foodbank is also contracted as a SNAP outreach provider through the State.

Based on our experience serving over 150,000 people each month – nearly as many as we were serving during the heights of COVID – we know firsthand how important it is that we continue to address the needs in our community.

We urge you to consider this important measure, which will help community-based organizations continue to provide critical services and care for all of Hawai'i's families.

With aloha,

Amy Miller
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank



To: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Hearing: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 1:10 PM, Conference Room 225

RE: **HB244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **HB244 HD1**. This measure appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with community-based organizations to address the need for social services in the State.

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's commitment to whole-person care and health equity includes addressing the various social determinants of health. We work closely with Hawai'i's safety net of non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) dedicated to supporting individuals and families facing social risks, such as homelessness, domestic violence, and food insecurity among other challenges.

As a safety-net health plan, AlohaCare is very appreciative of the critical services our fellow safety-net CBOs provide for the health and well-being of our community. The financial viability and sustainability of our safety-net partners is imperative to AlohaCare and is why we joined the True Cost Coalition. This measure is in line with the True Cost Coalition's goal which is to ensure government contracts adequately reimburse community-based non-profit providers of essential social services that have created a crucial safety-net for our community.

Many of our CBO partners rely on federal, state, and local grants to attempt to fill the current funding gap created by stagnant state funding and rising operational costs. AlohaCare has witnessed the urgent funding needs of its CBO partners through its *Imua Loa* community giving program, which recently grew into the AlohaCare Foundation, giving \$1 million to providers and CBOs annually in grants, sponsorships, and donations. Even with effective community giving sources such as the AlohaCare Foundation,



Hawai‘i’s CBOs are unable to fill the funding gaps and are in desperate need of steady sources of long-term funding. State appropriations and collaboration with CBOs are especially significant with potential federal budget changes.

Without action, programs and services are at risk of being cut or eliminated, which will harm the most vulnerable in our community. We ask our state government leaders to ensure that funding is allocated to keep our communities healthy and safe. This measure will support CBOs and ensure that the critical services they provide aren’t jeopardized.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB244 HD1.**



KUMUKAHI

HEALTH + WELLNESS

Board of Directors

March 10, 2025

Lee-Ann Heely, M. Ed., DM
President

Re: Support of HB244

Molly O'Quinn
Vice President

Dear Chairs and Members of the committee,

Keith Brown
Treasurer

On behalf of our organization, Kumukahi Health + Wellness, I am writing in strong support of the HB244 Relating to the Department of Human Services. This measure will help enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), especially here in Hawai'i County.

Jennifer Rabideau
Secretary

Elena Cabatu

Emily Malate, LCSW

Luahiwa Namahoe

Martin Rathbun

Nicholas VandenRaadt, RN BSN

Kumukahi Health + Wellness serves the most marginalized populations in the most rural areas of the State, and we have been able to replicate our successes with our Hawai'i Island communities that we have expanded our health equity services across the State. However, the gap between funding levels and demand for services continues to grow for all of our CBOs.

I urge you to pass this critical legislation.

Chief Executive Officer

Sincerely,

Peter Tuiolosega Silva

Peter Tui Silva
CEO

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kumukahiHEALTH.org



HB244 HD1 DHS Funds for Social Services

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Mar 12, 2025: 1:10: Room 225 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB244 HD1:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

There is a significant need for more residential and intensive outpatient services for individuals with co-occurring disorders (mental health and substance use disorders) in Hawaii.

While state funding has been reduced for formal treatment for this population, the state faces unique challenges, including a high cost of living, a shortage of mental health and addiction treatment providers, and a large homeless population—many of whom struggle with co-occurring disorders.

Despite the rising need for more funding, the state recently and significantly reduced funding for residential and outpatient, especially for co-occurring disorder treatment (mental health and substance abuse).

Why More Services Are Needed:

- 1. High Rates of Co-Occurring Disorders**
 - Many individuals experiencing homelessness in Hawaii have both mental health and substance use disorders needing long-term recovery support.
- 2. Limited Availability of Residential Treatment**
 - Funding is needed to sustain these programs because there are only a few dedicated residential programs that offer integrated care for both conditions.
 - Many existing programs focus on either mental health or substance use but not both, leading to gaps in care.
- 3. Barriers to Accessing Care.**
 - Insurance and funding constraints limit the number of available treatment beds.
- 4. Geographic Challenges**

- Services are often concentrated in Honolulu, leaving rural communities and outer islands underserved.

Possible Solutions

1. **Expand state funding for residential treatment beds** with integrated mental health and substance use care.
2. **Increase funding for dual-diagnosis programs, including outpatient as well as residential** through Medicaid, state grants, and federal support.
3. **Develop more community-based step-down housing** to help individuals transition from residential care to independent living.
4. **Improve coordination between mental health, addiction treatment, and housing services** to provide long-term support.

Hawai'i's Medicaid program (Med-QUEST) has received increased funding in recent years, such as a \$25 million expansion for adult dental benefits, but additional investment is needed to strengthen behavioral health services. Efforts are underway to support workforce development and increase the number of providers through partnerships and loan forgiveness programs.

Advocating for more co-occurring disorder residential services in Hawaii is essential for reducing homelessness, improving public health, and breaking the cycle of crisis care. Expanding Medicaid funding for behavioral health services is not just a healthcare issue—it's a social and economic imperative that improves outcomes and reduces long-term public costs.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for further questions.



March 11, 2025

Hawaii's Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senators Troy N. Hashimoto, Jarrett Keohokalole, and Kurt Fevella, Committee Members

RE: HB 244 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES – SUPPORT

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

I am submitting this letter in support of HB 244 on behalf of Easterseals Hawaii. Easterseals Hawaii served 2,025 Hawaii community members with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in 2024. Our purpose is to create a more equitable world where people with I/DD can choose their own path.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) like Easterseals Hawaii are a lifeline for many individuals with I/DD in Hawaii. CBOs have been shown to reduce barriers to care, uplift health outcomes, and to decrease costly inefficiencies by providing upstream solutions.¹ Despite mounting evidence in support of CBOs and rising demand for our services, CBOs struggle to stay afloat due to government contract rates remaining below actual service costs. In fact, CBO contract rates have not increased in over a decade and 40% of CBOs report that they may cease operations if funding challenges persist.² Please help CBOs like Easterseals Hawaii continue to provide essential services for individuals with I/DD in Hawaii by voting in support of HB 244.

Easterseals Hawaii supports HB 244 and respectfully requests your "aye" vote.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Liebert Lewis".

Rachel Liebert Lewis
Director, Public Policy and Advocacy
Easterseals Hawaii
PublicPolicyAndAdvocacy@eshawaii.org

¹ copehealthsolutions.com/cblog/role-of-cbos-to-reduce-health-care-access-barriers-and-enhance-clinical-outcomes/

² <https://hitruelcost.com/resources/2022-survey-results/>

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:41:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Venus K Rosete-Medeiros	Testifying for Hale Kipa, Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB244 - HD1

Community-Based organizations are under extreme distress not knowing the future of its funding with the current administration. The State of Hawaii, Department of Human Services must stand in the gap for those organizations providing needed and essential services for the keiki, youth, vulnerable families, and populations in Hawai'i. Without necessary funding supports, we will not be able to serve our people and communities and that would be tragic.

Mahalo for your support and your commitment to the people of Hawai'i!

Venus

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino & Members of Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, Ways and Means
FROM: Renae Hamilton-Cambeilh, YWCA Kaua'i Executive Director
DATE: March 11, 2025

RE: In Support of HB 244 HD1

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, Ways and Means

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and Members of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness, Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 244 HD1, I'm Renae Hamilton-Cambeilh, the Executive Director of YWCA Kaua'i. On behalf of the YWCA staff and the individuals and families we serve, I am testifying in strong support of HB 244 HD1. The YWCA Kaua'i has been serving our island community for over 104 years, our local work is focused on providing services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. For over 25 years, we have been the sole provider of 24-hour crisis intervention services for victims of DV & SA, we also provide the only Family Violence Shelter on island. Our services save lives and provide long term support for the survivors trying to healing from these traumatic experiences and crimes.

DHS has been the largest funder for these vital services for over 25 years, at the start funding was adequate for a 24 hour facility, however, the funding from DHS has not risen to meet the yearly rising costs of providing 24 hour services. The YWCA has worked hard at providing a "patchwork" of funding to keep services going while also trying to meet the higher demand for services. This "patchwork" approach has not been sustainable and it is more challenging every year to secure needed funding. This has resulted in the following actions:

- Vacant positions at the Family Violence Shelter are not being filled.
- The following positions have been suspended or eliminated; Children's Advocate, Housing Advocate, Case Manager and on-site Shelter Therapist. This results in reduced services for survivors and their children, when survivors don't receive the support needed to navigate their challenging situations, it may lead to returning to an abusive and violent home which perpetuates the cycle of violence once again.
- Inability to keep up with increased wages to retain staff and attract qualified candidates. Staff turnover is high and there is constant extra burden on remaining staff to ensure basic 24-hour services continue.

The economic distress did not occur all at once, it has been building over the years due to stagnant DHS funding and fewer additional options for funding. This threat to service delivery is happening all over the state. In this bill, DHS acknowledges the need for an increase in funding, in 2024, DHS testified that a 20% increase is needed to shore up funding and meet some of the ongoing rising costs. The YWCA Kaua'i is committed to continue serving DV and SA survivors, I support this bill as it is necessary to address the stagnant funding to ensure our state has services in place for the most vulnerable individuals and families. Mahalo for your consideration to support HB 244 HD1.

Respectfully, 
Renae Hamilton-Cambeilh, Executive Director



HIPHI Board

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Hawaiian Research Office

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Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Network

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: March 11, 2025

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Hrg: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 1:10 PM, Conference Room 225

Hawai'i Public Health Institute,¹ **supports HB 244 HD1**, relating to the Department of Human Services, which appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with contracted community-based organizations to address the need for social services in the State.

Nonprofit organizations deliver critical services to our community. Investing in nonprofits provides financial support for organizations that uplift public health, care for our environment, improve learning outcomes for our keiki, and preserve the cultural heritage of our island home.

Funding Disparities

Local nonprofits "serve over 500,000 residents statewide by providing a diverse range of essential services—from food security and housing assistance to domestic violence support and care for seniors."²

Yet, in recent years, increases in funding for nonprofits have not been enough to offset the cost of services. As operational expenses for nonprofits have risen, governments have reduced public support for nonprofits as a percentage of their overall budgets, a trend that has been ongoing since the 1980s.

Building Community Resilience

A 2022 survey conducted by the True Cost Coalition found that 40% of all organizations surveyed felt they may not be able to continue to operate in Hawai'i if government funding challenges are not addressed.³ The survey further found that 86% of nonprofits believe the funding gap between government contracts and the cost of providing services will increase in the coming years and 91% had government contract budgets that fell below the full operating costs required

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² "Hawaii's Quiet Crisis: Nonprofits Sound Alarm on Underfunding Peril" - Institute for Human Services. <https://ihshawaii.org/true-cost>

³ <https://hitruelcost.com/resources/2022-survey-results>



to provide contracted services, forcing 79% of those surveyed to cut administrative costs and 56% to undercut staff salaries.

Long-Term Return on Investment

Investing in nonprofits that provide social services delivers a strong return on investment—not just for those directly benefiting, but for society as a whole. Research on mental health, housing, food accessibility, and public health consistently shows that these programs yield significant economic gains by improving overall well-being, productivity, and stability. In many cases, the returns exceed 5:1.^{4,5,6,7}

These significant benefits present a clear and valuable opportunity to strengthen our society. However, failing to address these needs—or worse, cutting funding for existing services—would not only erase the progress we've made but also lead to far greater costs for our state in the long run.

By providing financial security to nonprofits in our state, the legislature can ensure hungry families have access to nutritious food, survivors of intimate partner violence are afforded legal protection, homeless families are able to obtain stable shelter, low-income kūpuna receive quality medical care, and the public health of our communities is preserved for generations to come. Taking a proactive approach to societal challenges ensures that we are building a foundation for lasting success, both for our people and our communities, now and into the future.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nate Hix".

Nate Hix

Director of Policy and Advocacy

⁴Stelmach R, Kocher EL, Kataria I, Jackson-Morris AM, Saxena S, Nugent R. The global return on investment from preventing and treating adolescent mental disorders and suicide: a modelling study. *BMJ Glob Health*. 2022 Jun <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9240828/>

⁵Jacob V, Chattopadhyay SK, Attipoe-Dorcoo S, Peng Y, Hahn RA, Finnie R, Cobb J, Cuellar AE, Emmons KM, Remington PL. Permanent Supportive Housing With Housing First: Findings From a Community Guide Systematic Economic Review. *Am J Prev Med*. 2022 Mar. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8863642/>

⁶"True Cost of Food: School Meals Case Study". Rockefeller Foundation. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/reports/true-cost-of-food-school-meals-case-study/>

⁷Masters R, Anwar E, Collins B, et al. Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2017; <https://jech.bmj.com/content/71/8/827>

Hawai'i True Cost Coalition

Date: March 12, 2025

Re: Strong Support of HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

Our coalition of organizations for Hawai'i True Cost Coalition are writing in strong support of HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services. This bill appropriates funds for the department of human services to collaborate with community-based organizations to address the need for social services in the State.

The Hawai'i True Cost Coalition is an alliance of over 70 community-based nonprofit organizations serving more than 500,000 residents statewide. Since its establishment in 2020, the coalition has focused on strengthening collaboration between nonprofits and the state to ensure taxpayer funds are allocated equitably and efficiently. By advocating for sustainable funding solutions, the coalition helps safeguard critical services for Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations, including children, kupuna, individuals experiencing homelessness, and survivors of domestic violence. These efforts are essential to ensuring that nonprofit organizations can continue providing the vital care and support on which so many residents rely.

Hawai'i's safety net often goes unnoticed—until it begins to fray. This safety net consists of community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) that provide essential services to tens of thousands of residents every day. These organizations offer shelter for at-risk youth, meals for kupuna, aid for survivors of domestic violence, and countless other supports that touch every corner of the state. Without immediate action, many of these programs could disappear entirely, leaving some of Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents without the critical support they need to thrive.

HB244 HD1 addresses funding gaps for the Department of Human Services (DHS), enabling stronger partnerships with CBOs and sustaining essential services. Increased DHS funding ensures Hawai'i families receive housing assistance, food security, youth support, and care for low-income households. This measure promotes community well-being while strengthening Hawai'i's social safety net for the future. Investing now secures vital support for years to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Adult Friends for Youth | Aloha Harvest | Aloha United Way (AUW) | AlohaCare | Arc of Kona | Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawaii | Blueprint for Change | Catholic Charities Hawaii | Child and Family Service | Community Alliance on Prisons | Domestic Violence Action Center | Easter Seals | Epic `Ohana | Family Promise of Hawai'i | Full Life | Girl Scouts of Hawaii | Going Home Hawaii | Goodwill Hawaii | Hale Kipa | Hale `Opio Kaua'i | Hawai'i International Film Festival | Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO) | Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) | Hawai'i Food Bank | Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) | Hawai'i Meals On Wheels | Hawai'i Public Health Institute | Hawai'i Youth Services Network | Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence | Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies | Hope Services Hawai'i | Imua Family Services | Institute for Human Services (IHS) | Kalamapi'i Play School | Kinai `Eha | Kumukahi Health and Wellness | Lanakila Pacific | Maui AIDS Foundation | Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO) | Maui Family Support Services | Mental Health Kokua | Mediation Center of the Pacific | Mindful Living Group | Nurturing Wahine Fund | Parents and Children Together (PACT) | Partners In Care (PIC) | Partners In Development Foundation (PIDF) | PATCH | Residential Youth Services and Empowerment (RYSE) | Responsive Caregivers of Hawai'i | Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii | Share Your Mana | The Spirit Horse Ranch | U.S. Vets | Women Helping Women | YMCA of Honolulu

1099 Alakea Street, Suite 2530, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 | (808) 447-1840



Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB 244 HD1 which increases funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and ensure the service it depends upon CBOs to administer can be adequately funded.

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, funding levels have not kept pace with rapidly rising operational and staffing costs, and crises like the Maui wildfires have pushed these organizations to the brink.

This bill is a necessary step toward strengthening collaborations with CBOs, which will improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while helping the State to meet its ambitious goals for stability and well-being in our communities

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

Aloha United Way and the True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that is jeopardizing critical services for Hawaii families and must be addressed.

We urge you to pass HB 244 HD1 measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TO: House Committee on Finance
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Date: March 12, 2025

Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of HB 244 HD1** with the goal of securing additional funding for the Department of Human Services to strengthen its collaboration with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). I am Tina Andrade, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, Community-Based Organization that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 77 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a long history of working in the areas of affordable housing, homelessness, and child welfare.

We are a member of the Hawai'i True Cost Coalition, comprised of Community-Based Organization, serving over 500,000 people across the state. Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—including children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those requiring social services—depend significantly on the support provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding and increasing operational costs, particularly in the aftermath of crises such as the Maui wildfires, have brought these organizations to a critical breaking point.

With the continued uncertainty surrounding federal funding for social service programs, Hawaii must act decisively to secure the stability of essential services delivered through the Department of Human Services. Fluctuations in federal resources, including potential funding cuts, could severely affect programs addressing homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill serves as a vital measure to ensure that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations consistently receive the assistance they need, regardless of changes in the federal budget.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 as it tackles a pressing funding shortfall that, if unaddressed, would endanger the essential services relied upon by Hawaii families. We strongly encourage you to pass this measure and make a vital investment in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Tina Andrade, President and CEO of Catholic Charities Hawai'i



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS ■ 1822 Ke'eumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808) 527-4813



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Maui United Way
Hawaii Island United Way

Amanda Pump
President & CEO
Child & Family Service
March 12, 2025

Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Child and Family Service to show our **strong support** of HB 244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Through the utilization of our core H.O.P.E. values (Humility, Ownership, Perseverance, and Engagement), our program aims to help Hawaii's most vulnerable populations to strengthen families and foster the healthy development of children. Children, individuals experiencing homelessness, survivors of domestic violence, and many other groups rely on the safety nets provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that may jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on.

This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's communities continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Amanda Pump
President & CEO
Child & Family Service



"We're all about FAMILY"

Mission: Strengthening Families and Fostering the Healthy Development of Children



Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

EPIC 'Ohana has served communities, families, young adults, and children impacted by the foster care system statewide, for almost thirty years. The need for critical supports has never been more urgent as Child Welfare Services faces an almost 40% vacancy rate and a newly released legislative working group report that highlights the need for sweeping reforms.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawai'i must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawai'i families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents.

Mahalo nui loa for considering this important legislation.

Me Ka Ha'aha'a (With Humility),

Delia Parker Ulima

Executive Director, EPIC 'Ohana

Katy Chen
President/CEO
Goodwill Hawaii
3/12/25

Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, people receiving public assistance such as TANF or SNAP benefits, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have significantly impacted the financial sustainability of these organizations. Goodwill Hawaii, as one of the leading CBOs in Hawaii, has to continuously look for other sources of funding to supplement costs associated with Government contracts, and to support our continuous operations.

Goodwill Hawaii has been providing employment, training, and case management services to Hawaii's vulnerable populations since 1959. The populations we serve include people with disabilities, people who are receiving public assistance such as TANF and SNAP benefits, at risk youths, immigrants, low-income families, dislocated workers, and justice involved individuals. Our mission is to help people with employment barriers to reach their full potential and become self-sufficient. We have been receiving funding from the Department of Human Services for over 20 years to provide essential services to adults and youths. For most of the contracts we have with DHS, the contract amount has not increased for years. Despite the stagnant contract fund, we still have to increase staff wages and pay the increase in cost of other expenses such as rent and supplies. The increase in cost has intensified in recent years after the pandemic. As a result, it is harder and harder to operate the programs effectively without enough funding to cover the true cost of operations. We often need to compensate by not paying our staff a competitive wage, which resulted in difficulty in recruitment and high staff turnover due to staff finding better paying positions with for profit companies. Many of our staff moved on to work for the state because of higher wage and better benefits. An increase in contract price is essential for us to operate the program well and to continue providing quality services to the most vulnerable populations in Hawaii. This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with agencies like Goodwill, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Katy Chen
President/CEO
Goodwill Hawaii



REDUCING HARM,
PROMOTING HEALTH,
CREATING WELLNESS,
AND FIGHTING STIGMA
IN HAWAII AND
THE PACIFIC

Letter of Support

March 12, 2025

RE: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 244 HD1 which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

Hawaii'i Health & Harm Reduction Center'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.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Heather Lusk, LCSW, MSW
Executive Director

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& HARM REDUCTION
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Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center

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AND FIGHTING STIGMA
IN HAWAII AND
THE PACIFIC

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Ho'okele Coalition of Kaua'i
Ka Hale Pomaika'i
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Kaua'i Planning and Action
Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED
Piha Wellness and Healing
Planned Parent
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

March 12, 2025

From: Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director
Hawaii Youth Services Network

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations including children, youth, and young adults, need the educational, vocational, family strengthening, and other services provided by CBOs. We all want our children to grow up safe, healthy, and ready to succeed. It takes a network of trauma-informed, culturally relevant, and accessible services to enable our young people to make successful transitions to adulthood.

The most recent ALICE report by Aloha United Way noted that 37% of households said that someone in their family is considering moving out of state. 85% of families said it was simply the high cost of living in Hawai'i, and 73% said it was because of the high cost of housing,

CBOs struggle to attract and retain qualified staff. When contracts and grants do not pay the full cost of providing services, workers leave for higher paying jobs or places with a lower cost of living. It is shameful that wages are so low that a portion of Hawaii's CBO staff receive SNAP and other public assistance benefits. Staff working with homeless persons are concerned about becoming homeless themselves. One outreach worker shared with me, "If my landlord raises my rent, I won't be able to afford my housing." In 2024, The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services stopped admitting clients to its emergency shelter for boys on Maui due to critical staffing shortages.

March 12, 2025

From: Rona Yagi Fukumoto
President & CEO
Lanakila Pacific

Subject: Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Lanakila Pacific, I am writing in strong support of HB 244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services (DHS) to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). Lanakila Pacific has supported vulnerable members of our community for 85 years, ensuring individuals with disabilities and seniors are able to live independently and thrive. We can't continue to be effective without the support of DHS which needs adequate funding for safety net programs.

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of food—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink. This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs, improving access to public benefits, and promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB 244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Lanakila Pacific Board

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The Institute for Human Services, Inc.
Ending the Cycle of Homelessness

TO: Chair San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Aquino

FROM: Connie Mitchell, Executive Director
IHS, The Institute for Human Services, Inc.

DATE: March 12, 2025

POSITION: IHS supports HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

IHS, The Institute for Human Services, **strong support** of HB 244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink. Last year, we saw homeless service providers having to close their doors and for some organizations having to take out lines of credit to keep up with operational costs. Our strategies at IHS have been to broaden our streams of funding to include fee for service contracts. But even those rates have failed to keep up with the cost of covering clinical case management within our shelters or pre-housing navigation.

For over 46 years, IHS has offered critical support to those experiencing homelessness, from emergency shelter and meals to healthcare, job training, and housing. Such services come at a cost that often cannot be passed onto our clients, so we rely on government contracts supplemented with private donations from individuals, businesses, and foundations.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities. Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

To truly end cycles of homelessness, wraparound, holistic solutions are needed. Thus, IHS operates a comprehensive approach to homelessness, including supportive medical and psychiatric care. Our services are rooted in a mission to equip individuals with the skills and resources to live independently in permanent housing for the long term. Hence, we have begun to tap into Medicaid funding to help fill some of the gaps, allowing us to continue delivering our programs. However, the administrative burden of doing so requires building greater capacity to do so and also funding. Mahalo for your leadership in addressing this critical issue and for this opportunity to testify.



THE MEDIATION CENTER OF THE PACIFIC, INC.
Bringing People Together to Talk, Negotiate and Resolve Conflict Creatively

1301 Young Street, Honolulu, HI 96814 Tel: 521-6767 Fax: 538-1454 Email: mcp@mediatehawaii.org

March 12, 2025

From: Tracey Wiltgen, Executive Director
The Mediation Center of the Pacific, Inc.

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The Mediation Center of the Pacific (MCP), I am writing in **strong support** of HB244 HD1, which seeks to provide critical funding for the Department of Human Services to strengthen partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). This legislation is essential to ensure that Hawaii's most vulnerable residents, including those in rural and underserved communities, have access to timely and quality services that protect the health of our residents.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening partnerships with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

The uncertainty surrounding federal funding exacerbates the challenges faced by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and the Department of Health. Federal spending levels remain unpredictable, and potential reductions or delays in federal support could further strain Hawaii's health system. Without reliable state funding, CBOs may be forced to scale back critical services, leaving vulnerable populations at greater risk. By passing this bill, Hawaii can ensure a stable, local solution to safeguard access to care, regardless of federal budget fluctuations.

The Mediation Center of the Pacific believes this bill addresses the pressing issue of preserving access to care for thousands of community members. Funding this initiative ensures that CBOs can continue to serve those most in need, improving health outcomes statewide, and strengthening communities.

We urge you to pass HB244 HD1 to protect and enhance access to critical healthcare services for all Hawaii residents.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Tracey Wiltgen, Executive Director
The Mediation Center of the Pacific

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March 12, 2025

Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry Aquino
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO), Inc. I am writing in strong support of HB244 HD1, which seeks to provide critical funding for the Department of Human Services to strengthen partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). This legislation is essential to ensure that Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents, including those in rural and underserved communities such as Hāna, and on the islands of Moloka'i and Lāna'i, have access to timely and quality services that protect the health of our residents.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawai'i's growing social service needs. By strengthening partnerships with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, child care, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

The uncertainty surrounding federal funding exacerbates the challenges faced by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and the Department of Health. Federal spending levels remain unpredictable, and potential reductions or delays in federal support could further strain Hawai'i's health system. Without reliable state funding, CBOs may be forced to scale back critical services, leaving vulnerable populations at greater risk. By passing this bill, Hawai'i can ensure a stable, local solution to safeguard access to care, regardless of federal budget fluctuations.

MEO believes this bill addresses the pressing issue of preserving access to care for thousands of community members. Funding this initiative ensures that CBOs can continue to serve those most in need, improving health outcomes statewide, and strengthening communities.

We urge you to pass HB244 HD1 to protect and enhance access to critical health care services for all Hawai'i residents.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Debbie Cabebe

Debbie Cabebe, SHRM-SCP
Chief Executive Officer



March 12, 2025

From: Shawn Kana'iaupuni, President & CEO
Partners in Development Foundation

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

As President and CEO of Partners in Development Foundation (PIDF), I write expressing strong support for HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to strengthen its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). This legislation is essential to ensure the Hawai'i's most vulnerable, including those in rural and underserved communities, have access to timely and quality service that protects the health of our residents.

The challenges facing our community have grown increasingly complex. Rising demand for services, coupled with stagnant government contract funding and soaring operational costs have pushed many CBOs to their limits. This bill represents a crucial step towards addressing these pressing issues and ensuring the continuity of vital services for our people.

By enhancing collaborations with CBOs, this measure will improve access to essential services such as benefits administration, keiki care programs, workforce training, and homelessness support. These services embody the spirit of aloha and mālama that defines our islands, promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

The uncertainty surrounding federal funding for social service programs makes this bill even more critical. We must take proactive steps to safeguard the stability of these essential services. This legislation serves as a necessary protection to ensure that our most vulnerable community members continue to receive the support they need, regardless of changes in federal budgets.

This bill directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unattended, could jeopardize the critical services our Hawai'i families rely on. It represents an investment not just in services, but in the future of our keiki, our kūpuna, and all those who call these islands home.

I humbly urge you to pass HB 244 HD1 and make a lasting investment in the resilience and well-being of Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents. Your support will echo through generations.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and leadership.

Shawn Kana'iaupuni

Shawn Kana'iaupuni, President & CEO
Partners in Development Foundation

Serving Hawai'i's Families, Living Hawaiian Values



Responsive Caregivers of Hawaii
PO Box 75380
Kapolei, Hawaii 96707

A private, non-profit organization

March 12, 2025

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Responsive Caregivers of Hawaii in strong support of HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

The mission of Responsive Caregivers of Hawaii is to increase independence, productivity and integration of persons with developmental disabilities. We serve over 100 adults with intellectual disabilities through day care, transportation and residential services.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare.

This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes. The True Cost Coalition supports HB244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on.

We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Marsh, MA, CFRE
President & CEO



Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii

March 12, 2025

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From: Rachelle Chang
Executive Director
Samaritan Counseling Center Hawai'i

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Samaritan Counseling Center Hawai'i is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides professional, accessible mental health counseling to people with limited resources. We are a safety net for individuals and families who are uninsured or underinsured; who are unable to afford high co-pays and deductibles; or who have health insurance coverage which pays at below market-rates, making it difficult for them to find a counselor.

Through our Client Assistance Fund, we ensure that the people of Hawai'i can receive the mental health care they need to be healthy and whole – and support access to mental health care, especially in rural and underserved communities.

In 2024, Samaritan Counseling Center Hawai'i provided 3,556 mental health counseling sessions, and 2,374 sessions (67%) were subsidized in some way. Sometimes clients were not even aware that they were beneficiaries of the Client Assistance Fund!

Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services such as mental health care — rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawai'i's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, homelessness services, and mental health care, while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

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Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawai'i must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, healthcare, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on.

We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

With aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachelle Chang". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Rachelle Chang
Executive Director



Paige Deponte
Director, Spirit Horse Ranch
3/12/2025

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

At Spirit Horse Ranch, on the island of Maui we are a community based organization we witness daily the profound need for accessible, trauma-informed care in our community, especially for those affected by crises like the Maui wildfires and ongoing mental health challenges the island faces. I am writing in wholehearted support of HB244 HD1, a vital measure to secure funding for the Department of Human Services collaboration with Community-Based Organizations.

This legislation is more than a financial step—it is a lifeline for Hawaii’s rural and underserved populations. Community-Based Organizations like ours truly bridge the gap between institutional services and the heart of our community, offering accessible pathways to mental health support, substance abuse recovery, and developmental care. However, stagnant funding threatens the sustainability of these services, endangering the very residents we are committed to helping.

At Spirit Horse Ranch, we provide equine-assisted services to help individuals heal from trauma, build resilience, and regain hope. Our programs, ranging from youth development to first responder wellness, rely heavily on the support of state and local partnerships. Without reliable funding, the future of our services—and the thousands of lives we touch—hangs in the balance.

The unpredictable nature of federal funding further complicates our ability to plan and deliver essential services. HB244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services offers a dependable solution to ensure continuity of care, giving organizations like ours the stability to meet the increasing demand for trauma recovery and mental health support.

By investing in CBOs, you are investing in the well-being of Hawaii’s residents, creating a ripple effect of healing and health that benefits us all. We strongly urge you to pass HB244 HD1 Relating to the Department of Human Services to safeguard and expand these critical services for our community.

Mahalo for your leadership and dedication to the people of Hawaii.

With gratitude,
Paige Deponte
Director, Spirit Horse Ranch

P.O. Box 208 Kula Hi 96790 Ph 808-280-7070 ~ Info@thespirithorseranch.org
The Spirit Horse Ranch, Inc. is a HI Nonprofit corporation recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (Federal Tax ID: 86-3879237)



March 12, 2025

Testimony in Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO), I am writing in **strong support** of HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

The Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO) is a statewide, sector-wide professional association of nonprofits that works to strengthen and unite the nonprofit sector as a collective force to improve the quality of life in Hawai'i. Since 2006, HANO has been a leading voice for the nonprofit sector, leveraging resources, educating and advocating for policies and practices that promote the professionalism, sustainability, and effectiveness of nonprofits and the communities they serve.

Hawai'i relies on nonprofit and community-based organizations to provide vital social services to its most vulnerable residents. However, the ability of these organizations to deliver these critical services effectively depends on fair funding and strong partnerships between the government and nonprofit providers.

HANO supports this bill as an essential step in addressing Hawai'i's increasing social service needs. By closing the current funding gap in nonprofit contracts, Hawai'i can enhance access to critical services like benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness support, all while strengthening community stability and well-being.

In addition, with the ongoing uncertainty around federal funding for social services, Hawai'i must act quickly to protect the stability of essential programs through the Department of Human Services. Federal funding can be inconsistent, and any reductions could disproportionately affect key services. This bill is crucial for ensuring that Hawai'i's residents continue to receive the services they rely on, regardless of changes in federal programs and funding availability.

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

Mahalo,

Jodi Robinson
Policy Director, HANO



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

March 12, 2025

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Greg Waibel, CEO of the YMCA of Honolulu. We are one of the largest nonprofits in Hawaii and provide services to the Department of Human Services. I am in **strong support** of HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed our organizations to the brink.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, childcare, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, employment support, and child welfare. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Greg Waibel
President & CEO



Lisa Darcy, Founder
Share Your Mana, Maui County
March 12, 2025

Subject: Support for HB244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB244 HD1, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Hawaii's most vulnerable populations—children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those in need of social services—rely heavily on the safety net provided by CBOs. However, stagnant funding levels and rising operational costs, especially following crises like the Maui wildfires, have pushed these organizations to the brink.

This bill is a necessary step toward addressing Hawaii's growing social service needs. By strengthening collaborations with CBOs, we can improve access to benefits, child care, workforce training, and homelessness services while promoting stability and well-being in our communities.

Given the ongoing uncertainty of federal spending on social service programs, Hawaii must take decisive action to ensure the stability of critical services provided through the Department of Human Services. Federal resources often fluctuate, and reductions in funding could disproportionately impact programs supporting homelessness, child welfare, and mental health. This bill is a necessary safeguard to guarantee that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations continue receiving the assistance they need, regardless of federal budget changes.

The True Cost Coalition supports HB244 HD1 because it directly addresses an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical services Hawaii families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Lisa Darcy
Founder, Share Your Mana



Adult Friends for Youth

"Redirecting lives to stop Violence"

LATE

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**Past Chair of the Board*

Testimony on HB244 HD1

Submitted to: Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Debbie Spencer-Chun, President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth (AFY).
In support of HB244 HD1.

Mahalo nui loa for allowing me to testify.

As the President and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth for the past 17 years and working directly with high-risk youth for over 20 years, it comes as no surprise that the needs have gotten greater despite the great work that many Community-Based Organizations deliver to our society.

For many years, CBOs have had to deliver services at the same rate. We often don't get paid the full amount and have to offset our budgets with other funding, making it a balancing act to stay afloat. Some key concerns, according to a 2022 survey conducted by True Cost Coalition of Community-Based Organizations, are

- "79% had to cut administrative costs." (Noting that some private funders are not allowing this cost either.)

Examples:

1. Salaries: It takes people to conduct the services, so salaries are critical. Our staff has to wear dual hats as administrators and direct service roles, which means that we can only charge percentages of their time. In turn, our staff has to submit timesheets/salary worksheets to the government, which means more paperwork for our staff to provide statistics on their daily duties. Do government workers have to do this?
2. Rent: This is not seen as critical. Yet, our staff needs a safe space to write reports, prepare sessions, conduct mediation, conduct group sessions with high-risk youth (especially during violent crisis situations), provide individual and family counseling sessions, and so much more.
3. Insurance: The government has a threshold that we must meet for insurance coverage, but it does not consider the rising costs. (Note: According to TCC, "Insurance expenses rose by 40.8% (adjusted for 2022 dollars)."

There are many more examples, but for the sake of this testimony, I will limit them to these three points.

Bottom line: We are grateful for the government's support. However, I would like us to be recognized as a partnership—the same private/public partnership they build/have with for-profit businesses. Recognize that without many of CBO's crucial services, our great state of Hawaii would be in dire straits.

Mahalo for your time. I appreciate you allowing me to share my mana'o.

Respectfully submitted, Deborah Spencer-Chun

Tatiana Bertolino

Oral Testimony for SW 326 Social Welfare as a Social Institution

Dr. Kevin Thompson

House Bill 244

3/12/25 at 1:10 pm

Aloha, Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and esteemed committee members. My name is Tatiana Bertolino, and I am a Bachelor of Social Work student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today in strong support of House Bill 244, which seeks to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with community-based organizations in addressing the ongoing need for social services in Hawaii.

Many individuals in our state—especially those experiencing homelessness, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and people with mental health or substance use disorders—rely on the services provided by community-based organizations. However, despite the significant need for these services, funding for CBOs has stagnated, and many organizations are struggling to provide the level of care that our communities desperately need.

The reality is that government contract rates for services have not kept pace with the rising cost of providing essential care, particularly as the cost of living in Hawaii continues to climb. As a result, many CBOs, including those providing critical services for individuals with co-occurring disorders, survivors of domestic violence, and individuals experiencing

homelessness, are being forced to reduce services or, in some cases, cease operations entirely.

This not only puts tremendous pressure on these organizations, but it also leaves individuals and families without the support they need to overcome the barriers they face in achieving stability and independence.

The funding increase proposed in HB 244 is essential for ensuring that CBOs can continue to deliver high-quality, effective services to our community members. This bill will help bridge the gap between the demand for services and the capacity of these organizations to meet that demand, ensuring that Hawaii's most vulnerable populations are not left behind.

One area that particularly resonates with me is the need for more residential and outpatient services for individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. Many individuals experiencing homelessness in Hawaii face both of these challenges, yet there is a significant shortage of services that provide integrated care for both conditions. Expanding funding for these programs will provide long-term support for individuals in need, ensuring that they receive the comprehensive care they require to recover and regain stability.

In closing, I strongly support HB 244 and urge the committee to approve this bill. By increasing funding for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with community-based organizations, we can address the immediate service gaps we face but also contribute to a more sustainable, equitable future for our community.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to serving our community.

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 1:59:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

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

Comments:

This is an interesting topic, the state collaborating with other organizations and especially when they mention Maui. Are the social workers that working for the state really caring their share of the load? Or do they have a set number of clients say 60 or 120, but they don't realize that the person doesn't need their constant assistance as in the beginning? And they could pickup other clients when their clients no longer need their services.

In the 1990s-early 2000s, before I worked as a state employee, I helped setup statewide mental health conferences. When the Mental Health Kokua staff didn't realize that such a conference needed to be setup by peers, it was turned over to me to contact everyone within little over a month and provide air transportation for at least 10 people traveling from each island. Due to the short time period, I contacted the clubhouses located in 10 locations of our islands and the Community Mental Health Centers, such as the Maui County who ran the mental health services for 3 islands. Sadly, the head social worker who had been there for decades told me, "I have to talk to the consumers?" I was shocked, wasn't that their job and if at least 10 people could fly in from each county why wouldn't a social worker/case manager want to help those that were improving and showed potential in wanting to learn?

The graduates of the Hawaii Certified Peer Specialists program ran into so much resistance by CMHC staff, in fear that they would take their jobs. There were 2 positions at 8 centers, totaling 16, but only about 10 were filled and the peers chosen had substance abuse issues from my first class training, who had waited on a list for over a year. One CMHC hired a HCPS from their own program but chose the person with multiple personalities, that even I had a hard time talking with once she became stress with the job and did only transportation for 10 people. This was not supposed to be the job duty in recovery. I had to explain to a new Community Director what the HCPS responsibility was for the entire CMHC, to be a role model and she called me weekly for assistance and couldn't understand why this person was hired by the previous director. To make sure the program failed?

On another island, the CMHC staff felt that none of the people they served were qualified to take the HCPS training. Although they were probably the first to get a program from the continent, known to be a home away from home for the rest of their lives.

The staff of the Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) all needed to be retrained as to how to support HCPS, but they were so against the Recovery Model when I was there from 2005-9. I was the first to be let go for budget cuts in 2008, as an exempt employee, after passing the

Federal Mandate in 2006, not just for the Hawaii State Hospital but the community plan created by Dr. Tom Hester!

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:26:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Brown	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB244

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

My name is Tanya Brown, Executive Director of U.S.VETS Wai‘anae, and member of the True Cost Coalition. But I come forward as a mother.

My husband and I have five children, and our daughter once lived homeless on the streets of Honolulu. As a mother, the thought of what she endured alone is unimaginable. It is because of organizations like RYSE, IHS, and U.S.VETS that we have our daughter today.

This is why I do this work, and why I urge you to support HB244. The lives of our most vulnerable—our sons and daughters—depend on it.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 6:43:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pahnelopi mckenzie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of HB244 HD1**, which aims to increase funding for the Department of Human Services to enhance its partnership with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Most of our member programs receive funding from DHS directly through the state or from the federal government in pass-thru grants. For example, at least half of the \$3 million in DHS budget for domestic violence services consists of federal funds. Over one million comes directly from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Family Violence Prevention Services. These funds are being scrutinized by the current Presidential administration.[1]

The services funded include:

- **Emergency domestic violence shelters**
- **Domestic violence services for families engaged in the child welfare system**
- **Domestic violence-related legal service**
- **Teen domestic violence prevention**

For years, our programs have barely been making do with their current funding. Contracted amounts have not changed in a decade, and organizations are expected to do more with less. Now, with potential changes in federal funding, lives are at stake. The federal funding freeze will impact life-saving services and endanger survivors' lives and those of their children.

Shelters that provide homes for those fleeing violence will have to consider drastically reducing their services or even closing their doors, which could lead to increased homelessness in a state that is already grappling with an overwhelming homeless population. No less than four thousand lives will be impacted, and much more when we consider those who serve survivors and their children.

This is an urgent funding gap that, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the critical life-saving services Hawai'i families depend on. We urge you to pass this measure and invest in the future of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter, Pahnelopī McKenzie

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:57:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laurie Arial Tochiki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill. The community based organizations working with DHS provide essential services filling the gaps where DHS is unable to fulfill their responsibilities. Without these contracts the safety net does not exist. Thank you. Laurie

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

March 10, 2025

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair, and Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Karen Worthington, Private Citizen

Re: **HB 244 HD1**: Relating to the Department of Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 225 and Videoconference, March 12, 2025, 1:10pm

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator San Buenaventura, Senator Aquino, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **HB 244 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs) to address critical social service needs in our state. This legislation represents an important step toward strengthening Hawaii's social safety net and ensuring sustainable support for our most vulnerable populations.

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 and 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 244 HD1 with an effective date of July 1, 2025 and full appropriations as requested. A 2022 survey of Hawaii Community-Based Organizations revealed that 91% reported government contracts do not cover full operating costs, with 79% having to cut administrative costs to maintain services. This situation is unsustainable and threatens the stability of our social service infrastructure.

CBOs are essential partners in delivering critical services on behalf of the Department of Human Services. They provide vital support for child welfare services, homelessness prevention, workforce development, and family strengthening programs. However, stagnant funding levels combined with rising operational costs have created an increasingly precarious situation for these organizations.

The uncertainty surrounding federal funding for social services makes this legislation particularly timely. By ensuring adequate state support for CBOs, we can maintain crucial services regardless of federal budget fluctuations. This proactive approach will help protect Hawaii's most vulnerable residents from potential disruptions in federal funding streams. If you would like additional information related to my testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at karen@karenworthington.com.

Best regards,



Karen Worthington

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 7:33:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marilyn Yamamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of this bill.

LATE

Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of HB244 H.D. 1

SUBJECT: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.

Aloha, Chairs and Members of the Committees,

My name is Chelsea, and I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Hawai‘i, currently completing my practicum in the Medical ICU and Trauma units at The Queen’s Medical Center. I have also worked directly with young adults experiencing houselessness at RYSE (Residential Youth Services & Empowerment), where I saw firsthand the impact of trauma, substance use disorders, and untreated mental illness on Hawai‘i’s most vulnerable youth. Many individuals repeatedly cycle through emergency services, the criminal justice system, shelters, and the streets because there are not enough resources available to support these individuals.

I strongly support HB244, which seeks to provide increased funding for the Department of Human Services (DHS) to collaborate with contracted community-based organizations to address the growing demand for social services in Hawai‘i.

As someone who has worked closely with vulnerable populations, including individuals experiencing homelessness, those in need of mental health support, and families facing systemic barriers to care, I have seen firsthand how community-based organizations serve as the backbone of social services in our state. These organizations are critical in delivering essential services to our most vulnerable populations.

Hawai‘i’s nonprofits have stepped up to provide the services our communities desperately need, services the state can’t offer. These organizations are doing the work the state relies on, making sure our most vulnerable neighbors get the support they need. They shouldn’t be shortchanged because they’re driven by passion and commitment rather than profit. They deserve the funding to keep doing this critical work. HB244 is a necessary step toward strengthening Hawaii’s social service continuum, helping to minimize life-impacting service disruptions and ensuring our neighbors with the highest need receive the resources and services they deserve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB244 H.D. 1

Chelsea Huntington
Master of Social Work Student, University of Hawaii- Manoa
Email: Chelseataylr@gmail.com | Phone: 317-408-3857

**LATE**

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
The Honorable Senator Joy A. Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Senator Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

FROM: Micah A. Kāne, CEO & President

RE: Testimony in Support for HB 244 HD1, Relating to the Department of Human Services

DATE: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 1:10pm

PLACE: Conference Room 225

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) supports HB 244 HD1, which increases funding for the Department of Human Services to contract with organizations that provide vital services to the community. Human support services are a priority under HCF's CHANGE Framework within the Community Centered Economy and Health and Wellness sectors.

HB 244 HD 1 is crucial for ensuring that our most vulnerable populations, including individuals experiencing homelessness, children, and those in need of mental health and social services, receive the care they need. HCF grantees across the CHANGE framework see firsthand the tremendous challenges faced by those who rely on social services. Their work often requires partnering with DHS to deliver essential services.

However, the current funding levels for these services have not kept pace with the growing demand or the rising operational costs, including increases in insurance premiums. Given the uncertainty around federal funding, service providers are likely to see even greater budget shortfalls. The consequences of not funding the true costs of these services will be direct and immediate. Services will be cut, and jobs will be lost. On the other hand, increased funding will sustain the community and extend DHS' reach and impact.

HCF supports HB 244 HD 1 and encourages its passage.

LATE

HB-244-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:04:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/12/2025 1:10:00 PM

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

Comments:

These "safety net" programs do not encourage people to meet their full potential, instead they become **DEPENDENT** on programs like this!! This is **NOT AN ENTITLE** benefit, and this programs goes back to several generations!

For this reasons, I **OPPOSE** HB100/SB123