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**Testimony of the Office of the Public Defender,  
State of Hawai'i to the Senate Committee on Judiciary**

February 7, 2025

**S.B. 544: RELATING TO SENTENCING OF MINOR DEFENDANTS.**

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender **strongly supports S.B. 544:**

We believe that the preamble of the bill clearly states principles that are generally accepted in the legal, scientific, and psychological communities on the topic of juvenile development. Juveniles are psychologically and developmentally different from adults and these differences should be recognized by the legal system. Juveniles should not be equated with adults in our criminal justice system. Juveniles are extremely vulnerable to negative environments and are easily influenced by crime-producing influences such as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse by family members, other adults, and older juveniles. Juveniles are less capable than adults to consider the long-term impact of their actions, control their emotions and impulses, or evaluate risks and reward. Juveniles do not have control over their living situations and may experience traumas related to family homelessness, abandonment, exposure to adult drug abuse, and the realities of living in poverty that create environments susceptible to gang involvement or exposure to adult criminal behaviors.

Through the formation of a family court, Hawaii has recognized that children must be treated differently from adults in our justice system. Nevertheless, juveniles, through the waiver of jurisdiction process, are still able to be tried by the adult criminal justice system and receive the harshest penalties under our state laws. S.B. 544 seeks to reform this situation and make our laws compliant under United States Supreme Court decisions which have outlawed the imposition of such penalties on juvenile offenders. The Office of the Public Defender is in full support of the proposed sentencing factors in this measure, and we submit that this bill will create a fairer and more just system for the determination of an appropriate sentence for any juvenile waived into the adult system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO SENATE BILL 544**  
RELATING TO SENTENCING OF MINOR DEFENDANTS

Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 7, 2025

9:25AM

Room 016

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Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony **SUPPORT** of SB 544 which requires courts to consider certain factors when sentencing a person convicted as an adult for an offense that the person committed when the person was a minor. This measure additionally allows courts to reduce a mandatory minimum period of incarceration or depart from a mandatory sentencing enhancement if the court determines that the reduction or departure is warranted given certain factors. **This measure may help mitigate the long-lasting traumas inflicted upon youth, including a disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians, who are exposed to our criminal justice system.**

**Native Hawaiian youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system, which may contribute significantly to Native Hawaiians' disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system as a whole.** In 2010, OHA produced a comprehensive report detailing the overrepresentation and disparate treatment of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system. This report found that Native Hawaiian youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system and are also the most frequently arrested ethnic group in all offense categories.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, the Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force (NHJTF) was tasked by the Legislature to address the issues raised in OHA's 2010 report; in its report, the NHJTF further acknowledged that "an individual's contact with the criminal justice system . . . often begins at youth."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, mandatory minimum sentences for minors fail to recognize the extenuating circumstances that often lead youth to offend and may significantly limit their

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<sup>1</sup> THE OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, THE DISPARATE TREATMENT OF NATIVE HAWAIIANS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM 10 (2010), available at [http://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ir\\_final\\_web\\_rev.pdf](http://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ir_final_web_rev.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> THE OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, NATIVE HAWAIIAN JUSTICE TASK FORCE REPORT 23 N. 28 (2012), available at [http://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2012NHJTF\\_REPORT\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2012NHJTF_REPORT_FINAL_0.pdf).

otherwise high potential for rehabilitation and reform. Other jurisdictions have even found mandatory minimum sentences for minors to violate “standards of decency and fairness,” and have ruled them unconstitutional as applied to youth.<sup>3</sup> By failing to allow for flexible penalties that can take young offenders’ diminished executive decision-making capacity and unique circumstances into account, mandatory minimum sentences may contribute directly to Native Hawaiians’ representation in the juvenile justice system and increase their risk of involvement in the criminal justice system later in life.

This measure represents an opportunity to reduce the harmful and unnecessary effects of mandatory minimum sentences on our youth. Requiring greater discretion when sentencing youth as adults will ensure the mitigating circumstances surrounding the charged offense are considered, and that tailored sentences are issued that can take advantage of, rather than foreclose, their high rehabilitation potential, and thereby reduce the unjust and unnecessary impacts of mandatory sentencing on offenders who are minors.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges this committee to **PASS SB 544**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>3</sup> See *State v. Houston-Sconiers*, 188 Wn.2d 1, 391 P.3d 409 (2017) (holding trial courts are “vested with full discretion to depart from the sentencing guidelines and any otherwise mandatory sentence enhancements.”); *State v. Andre Jerome Lyle Jr.* No. 11-1339 (2014).



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## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 544 BEFORE THE HAWAII SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

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Dear Chairman Rhoads and Members of the Hawaii Senate Judiciary Committee:

Human Rights for Kids respectfully submits this testimony for the official record to express our full support for SB 544 and to urge the committee to pass this important measure. We are grateful to Senator Gabbard for his leadership in introducing this bill and appreciate the Hawaii Legislature's willingness to address this important human rights issue concerning the sentencing of Hawaii's children.

Human Rights for Kids is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the human rights of children. We use an integrated, multi-faceted approach which consists of research & public education, coalition building & grassroots mobilization, and policy advocacy & strategic litigation to advance critical human rights on behalf of children in the United States. A central focus of our work is advocating in state legislatures and courts for comprehensive justice reform for children consistent with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also work to inform the way the nation understands Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) from a human rights perspective, to better educate the public and policymaker's understanding of the relationship between early childhood trauma and negative life outcomes.

Human Rights for Kids supports SB 544 because, if it is signed into law, it will end the shameful practice of using adult mandatory minimum sentences on children and allow judges to craft more age-appropriate and trauma-informed sentences for youth tried as adults.

### **Children Sentenced as Adults**

In the late 1980's and early 1990's states began passing laws to make it easier to transfer children into the adult criminal justice system which exposed them to harsh mandatory minimum sentences and mandatory sentencing enhancements. By the year 2000, a child as young as 10 years old could be tried as an adult for certain offenses. And by 2010, an estimated 139,000 children were housed in adult prisons and jails across the United States.

Policymakers were driven by the now-debunked "Super-Predator Theory" which stated that a new generation of child predators were coming of age who were more violent and less

remorseful than ever before. These children, the authors said, were “Godless, jobless, and fatherless” monsters and urged states to respond by treating them as adults and thereby exposing them to overly punitive mandatory minimum sentences.

An estimated 53,000 children are tried in the adult criminal justice system every year in the United States. These children can face severe punishment that is not age-appropriate and is disproportionate given their young age and lessened culpability relative to that of adults. Through our research HRFK estimates that there are more than 32,000 people in U.S. prisons for crimes committed as children. This represents more than 3% of the entire U.S. prison population.

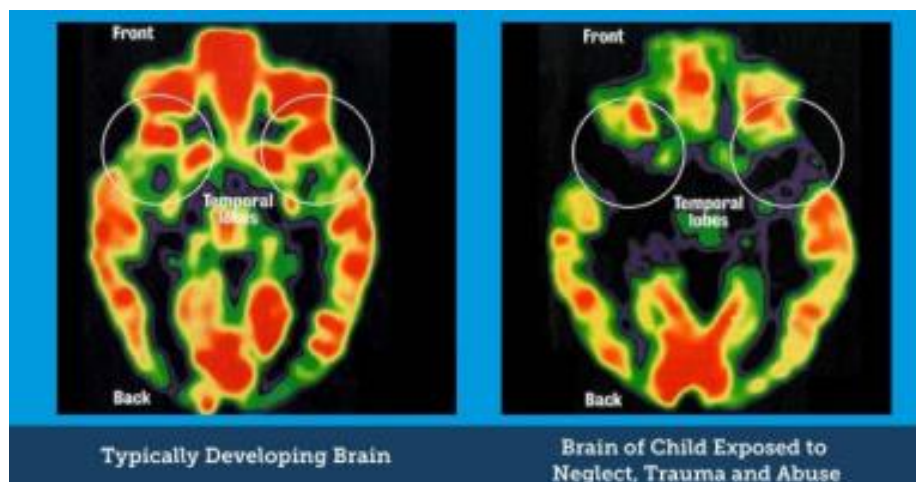
The confluence of the relaxation of juvenile transfer laws and increase in mandatory minimum sentences has been the driving force behind the tens of thousands of people who have been incarcerated since childhood.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**

In the vast majority of cases, children who come into conflict with the law are contending with early childhood trauma and unmitigated adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including physical and emotional neglect; physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; parental separation, domestic violence, household substance abuse, mental illness, and incarceration.

Research by Human Rights for Kids has shown that nationally more than 70% of children tried as adults experienced both physical and emotional abuse prior to their offense. Another 45% experienced sexual abuse. Almost every child tried as an adult came from broken homes where witnessing domestic violence (53%), substance abuse (75%), and mental illness (54%) were normalized.

This type of trauma often leads to early-onset PTSD and subsequently impacts children’s brain development, particularly the prefrontal cortex. This means that kids traumatized by violence in their homes and communities have impaired brain development that influences their behavior and decision making.

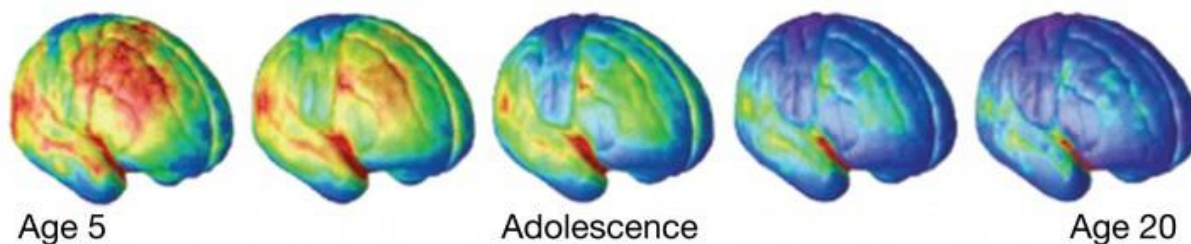


The image above depicts the impact of trauma on the developing brain of young children.

### Juvenile Brain & Behavioral Development Science

Even in the absence of trauma studies have shown that children’s brains are not fully developed. The pre-frontal cortex, which is responsible for temporal organization of behavior, speech, and reasoning continues to develop into early adulthood. As a result, children rely on a more primitive part of the brain known as the amygdala when making decisions. The amygdala is responsible for immediate reactions including fear and aggressive behavior. This makes children less capable than adults to regulate their emotions, control their impulses, evaluate risk and reward, and engage in long-term planning. This is also what makes children more vulnerable, more susceptible to peer pressure, and being heavily influenced by their surrounding environment.

### Dynamic mapping of human cortical development



Source: "Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood," Nitin Gogtay et al., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, May 25, 2004; California Institute of Technology.

Children’s underdeveloped brains and proclivity for irrational decision-making is why society does not allow children to vote, enter into contracts, work in certain industries, get married, join the military, or use alcohol or tobacco products. These policies recognize that children are impulsive, immature, and lack solid decision-making abilities until they’ve reach adulthood. It’s worth noting that these traits are exacerbated for children exposed to trauma.

### Racial Disparities

Black children are disproportionately represented in the adult criminal justice system, comprising 60% of all children confined in adult prisons. In addition, roughly 83% of children prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system are racial minorities. Black children represent 87% of drug cases, 48% of property cases, and 63% of the public order offense cases where children are tried in the adult criminal justice system.

### The U.S. Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has emphasized through its cases in *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), *Graham v. Florida* (2010), *Miller v. Alabama* (2012), and *Montgomery v. Louisiana* (2016) that **“the distinctive attributes of youth diminish the penological justifications for imposing the harshest sentences on juvenile offenders, even when they commit terrible crimes.”** (Emphasis Added).

The Court has also found that, “only a relatively small proportion of adolescents” who engage in illegal activity “develop entrenched patterns of problem behavior,” and “developments in psychology and brain science continue to show fundamental differences between juvenile and adult minds,” including “parts of the brain involved in behavior control.”

### **International Human Rights Law**

In 1989 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which sets forth minimum standards for the treatment of children who come into conflict with the law. For the purposes of this legislation, Articles 10 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states:

“Juvenile offenders shall be segregated from adults and be accorded treatment appropriate to their age and legal status . . . the procedure shall be such as will take account of their age and the desirability of promoting their rehabilitation.”

Article 37 of the CRC adds that:

“Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age.”

The need to treat children differently from adults is at the core of these human rights protections. This cannot be accomplished, however, if the same standards used to hold adults accountable are used on children. To protect children’s human rights Hawaii must join Washington, Iowa, Nevada, Virginia, Montana, Maryland, and D.C. in allowing judges greater discretion when sentencing children who have been convicted in adult court.

Nelson Mandela once said, *“There is no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”* Children can and do commit serious crimes. While they must be held responsible, our response must not be focused on retribution. Instead, it must be measured and assure age-appropriate accountability that focuses on the unique capacity of children to grow, change and be rehabilitated. SB 544 does that, by simply giving judges greater discretion when sentencing children. It does not require judges to do anything, aside from consider how children are different from adults at the time of sentencing. And if children are not deserving of mercy when they make mistakes, who among us is?

We strongly urge this committee to vote favorably upon SB 544 to give judges greater flexibility to depart from mandatory minimum sentences for children and to ensure that their trauma is adequately considered by the court. Thank you for your consideration.

With hope and love,



James. L. Dold  
President & Founder,  
Human Rights for Kids



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## Traumatized Children Need Our Love, Not Mass Incarceration

By: John Mizuno



Every year the United States prosecutes more children as adults than any other country in the world. A [2023 report by Human Rights for Kids](#) (HRFK) found that today there are more than 32,000 people in our prisons for crimes committed as children and more than 80 percent of them are people of color. In nearly every case where a child is tried as an adult, they are contending with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which measure ten distinct types of abuse, neglect, and traumatic events in early childhood. A national ACEs survey by HRFK of children tried as adults revealed that more than 70% experienced emotional and physical abuse, and another 40% experienced sexual abuse prior to their system-involvement.

Parental divorce or separation is the most common traumatic event reported and is often accompanied by household substance abuse (75%), domestic violence (53%), mental illness (54%), and incarceration (64%).

Most of these children first come into contact with the system in our juvenile or family courts. Yet, the legal system rarely identifies or effectively responds to these levels of severe childhood trauma which have been causally linked to adverse brain development. Instead, when young children reach adolescence and predictably begin to act out we label them “Super Predators” and lock them away in cages.

Our mass incarceration of children begins as young as elementary school. In Hawaii, for example, we don’t have a minimum age for when a child can be arrested or prosecuted in juvenile court. Most Hawaiians might be shocked to learn that between 2020 and 2023 nearly 600 children age 11 or younger were arrested on the islands. These are kids in grade school who still believe in Santa Claus and the tooth fairy.

Treating children this way is a clear violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). While states like Texas, Louisiana, and Massachusetts have passed laws establishing a

minimum age for delinquency, sadly we have not. The CRC also prohibits sentencing children by the same standards we use for adults and placing children in adult jails and prisons. Despite Hawaii passing a resolution urging the U.S. government to ratify the CRC, we have yet to embrace these requirements.

That is why when I was in the Legislature, I worked with former Rep. Karen Awana to end life without parole sentences for children and then worked to pass a law requiring children to consult with legal counsel prior to waiving their Miranda Rights in 2023. These laws were based on human rights norms embraced the world over.

We still have more work to do in Hawaii which is why I am encouraging my former colleagues in the legislature to pass a trio of bills recently introduced by Senator Gabbard. His legislation would require judges to consider the impact of childhood trauma when sentencing youth tried as adults and give judges the flexibility to deviate from mandatory minimums. Another bill would prohibit children from being placed in adult correctional facilities in order to protect them from physical and sexual violence at the hands of adult prisoners. Finally, his reforms would also establish a minimum age of 12 before a child could be arrested and adjudicated delinquent.

Fred Rogers once said that “Love is at the root of everything, all learning, all relationships. Love or the lack of it.” We must embrace this notion and show the most victimized and vulnerable children in our state that we love them despite their mistakes. We can uphold public safety while simultaneously protecting the human rights of our children. Senator Gabbard has provided a blueprint; we should embrace it.

# Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i

# KAWAIILOA

February 7th, 2025

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Hearing Time: 9:25 AM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 16

Re: SB544, Relating to Sentencing of Minor Defendants

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we are writing in **support of SB544, Relating to Sentencing of Minor Defendants**. This bill requires courts to consider certain factors when sentencing a person convicted as an adult for an offense that the person committed when the person was a minor. Allows courts to reduce a mandatory minimum period of incarceration or depart from a mandatory sentencing enhancement if the court determines that the reduction or departure is warranted given certain factors.

Youth who are subjected to harsh living conditions and severe trauma often face a significantly higher risk of incarceration. These behaviors that are often learned out of hardship and relied upon for survival often create strife with the court system and cause issues with establishing stability. To address this, courts should consider essential factors during sentencing, such as childhood trauma and family dynamics. By doing so, courts can levy increasingly ethical sentences for vulnerable individuals and ensure they are not penalized for circumstances out of their control. Additionally, allowing courts the discretion to depart from mandatory sentencing in cases of trauma and homelessness reduces the likelihood of causing further harm. This approach cuts down on the punitive methods of the justice system and allows for a more formative approach where the cycle of incarceration can be broken.

Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth homelessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

**Please support SB544.**



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Det. Sgt. Neil Woods, Fmr.  
Staffordshire Moorlands, England  
LEAP UK

Date: February 7, 2025

Re: SB 544 and SB 691

Position: SUPPORT

To: Hawaii Senate Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), I write in strong support of SB 544 and SB 691. These bills would allow some variation from mandatory minimum sentences for certain children sentenced in adult court and establish a minimum age of 12 before a child could be formally charged as a delinquent. We believe these essential bills are in the interest of both the children themselves and society at large, since children who are incarcerated experience high rates of rearrest.

LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

As law enforcement, we have seen far too many young people thrown into a justice system that only further destabilizes their lives, making them more likely to engage in criminal activity in the future. Mandatory minimum laws – and the current lack of an age limit for delinquent charges – are a key driver of this counterproductive approach, often subjecting children to lengthy prison sentences and other harsh legal consequences.

Thanks to developments in brain science, we now know that sentencing youth according to adult standards simply does not make sense. Research has shown that human brains are not fully formed until age 25, meaning young people are neurologically less capable of properly considering the long-term consequences of their actions. Punishing children with decades of incarceration for behaviors they may not fully understand or be able to control constitutes a human rights violation, according to [international standards](#).

**LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org**

*Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition*

The data also makes clear that incarcerating youth is an inappropriate response to crime. Nationally, more than [70% of children](#) within the criminal justice system report experiencing both physical and emotional abuse prior to their offense. Research also shows that [unresolved trauma from abuse](#) is one of the strongest predictors of future violence. When we punish traumatized youth as adults simply for following the examples that were set for them, we risk [perpetuating the cycle of violence](#) and doing longer term harm to public safety.

As law enforcement professionals, we regularly encounter children who have spent much of their short lives in the criminal justice system. In some cases, involvement in the system begins below the age of 12, with adjudications branding young people as “juvenile delinquents” and subjecting them to formal criminal justice processes. Such rulings often end up doing lasting harm, leading to greater instability and further contact with the system. In many states, up to [80% of youth](#) who are incarcerated reoffend within 3 years of release.

Thankfully, Hawaii now has the opportunity to take an important step in the right direction by passing SB 544 and SB 691. SB 544 - Relating to Sentencing of Minor Defendants, would allow courts to deviate from mandatory minimum sentences and require judges to consider adverse childhood experiences prior to sentencing a youth in adult court. This would enable judges to treat children like children, giving them the discretion to ensure that the punishment truly fits the crime and is in the best interest of public safety. Senate Bill 691 - Relating to Family Courts, would establish a minimum age of 12 for filing delinquency petitions. This would institute a more developmentally appropriate response to youth transgressions, focusing on treatment and support rather than punishment for children who are too young to comprehend the consequences of their actions.

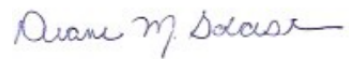
Together, these bills would allow the justice system to account for developmental differences between children and adults and help protect victimized and abused youth, instead of casting them deeper into cycles of violence and abuse.

This legislation would also help rebuild our community’s trust in the justice system. When we punish children—some so young that they still believe in the Easter Bunny—with extreme prison sentences and other collateral legal consequences, we undermine the public’s belief in the legitimacy of the system as a whole. As law enforcement, we know that we are only as strong as our relationships with the public. System wide, the research underscores that having trust from the people we serve [directly impacts public safety](#). We can only prevent, detect, and solve crime if witnesses and victims are willing to come forward to report criminal activity and work with us to address it. If people see lawmakers taking steps to protect children and rectify systemic wrongs, they will be more likely to assist us in our efforts to uphold safety and justice.

By recognizing the intrinsic differences between children and adults and better prioritizing the wellbeing of youth in the legal system, we can improve juvenile justice and public safety across Hawaii. We urge lawmakers to pass these crucial bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for these measures.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diane M. Goldstein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Lt. Diane Goldstein (Ret.)  
Redondo Beach Police Department  
Executive Director, Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)

**SB-544**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 3:49:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/7/2025 9:25:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Andrew Grandinetti	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing you in support of SB 544 which will be heard this Friday in the Senate Judiciary Committee. SB 544 would require judges to consider Adverse Childhood Experiences prior to sentencing a youth in adult court, and allow courts to deviate from mandatory minimum sentences. Every year hundreds of children are brought into Hawaii’s criminal justice system. Research by Human Rights for Kids has shown that nearly all of these children are contending with severe childhood trauma which inhibits brain development and leads to behavioral issues in adolescence. Nationally, more than 70% of children in the criminal justice system experienced both physical and emotional abuse prior to their offense. Another 45% experienced sexual abuse. Almost every child, according to HRFK research, comes from a broken home where witnessing domestic violence (53%), substance abuse (75%), mental illness (54%), and incarceration (64%) are normalized.

While this does not excuse delinquent or criminal behavior it is important context for understanding how and why kids end up in the justice system. It should also inform how we hold youth accountable. Sentencing youth by the same standards we use for adults, as well as prosecuting children in elementary school are human rights abuses. Children with baby teeth who still believe in Santa Claus are simply too young to be held criminally responsible for their actions.

These are the human rights abuses that Senator Gabbard’s bill would end.

Lawmakers from states across the country have passed similar policies with bipartisan support. This is not a Republican or Democrat issue, it is an American issue about who we want to be as a country. Please support these critically important reforms so that Hawaii can join other states in protecting the human rights of system-involved children.

Thank you,

Andrew Grandinetti, PhD

**SB-544**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 10:21:22 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/7/2025 9:25:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB544. We are talking about our CHILDREN here.

Mahalo for your consideration.



**SB-544**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:07:58 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/7/2025 9:25:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Veronica Moore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 5, 2025

RE: Upcoming Hearing for SB544

Measure Title: RELATING TO SENTENCING OF MINOR DEFENDANTS.

Report Title: Minor Defendants; Criminal Law; Sentencing

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 544 because its contents emphasize and affirm that there are other factors that need to be considered prior to sentencing an individual defendant, in this case a minor. In spite of the crime(s) committed, the severity of the crime(s), whether the individual is believed to be dangerous, etc., this bill recognizes that there are profound differences between a child and an adult (i.e., brain/mind, etc.), and adverse childhood experiences, childhood trauma, and the vulnerability that results are sufficient to warrant a reconsideration of how sentencing is applied. What also needs to be considered are the long-term implications these factors can have on a child if appropriate treatment is not offered/provided in a timely manner. If left completely unaddressed or inadequately treated, patterns of problematic behavior persisting into and/or throughout adulthood is, likely, inevitable. I strongly believe that enacting this bill and providing timely, effective follow-up treatment will produce short and long-term benefits that will afford our children of today with the opportunity to become the adults of our future that will have the aptitude to “pay it forward” and assist others dealing with, or that have dealt with, similar childhood experiences. Thank you for introducing this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony regarding it.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore