

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 04/10/2025

Time: 11:30 AM

Location: 329 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Human Services &
Homelessness

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Resolution Title: SCR 0073, SD1 REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE TO DEVELOP A REPORT TO ADDRESS THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN BORN DURING THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 PANDEMIC.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports SCR 73, SD1, and recognizes the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students born between 2018 and 2025. The disruptions experienced during these formative years have affected their social, emotional, and academic development. Educators and caregivers who support these students have also faced significant challenges, further exacerbated by the 2023 Maui wildfires and persistent disparities affecting vulnerable communities.

If this resolution is adopted, the Department remains committed to collaborating with the Office of Wellness and Resilience by providing information on existing services that support student development and well-being, as outlined in the resolution.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.C.R. 73 SD1
REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE TO DEVELOP A REPORT
TO ADDRESS THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN BORN DURING THE
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 PANDEMIC.**

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

April 10, 2025, at 11:30 a.m., Room Number: 329

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** S.C.R. 73 SD1, requesting the OWR to develop a report to address the developmental needs of children born during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic and offers comments.

The OWR's legislatively established kuleana directly aligns with the intent of this resolution. Act 291, SLH 2022 mandates our office to strengthen state service systems through a comprehensive trauma-informed care framework, coordinate cross-departmental data collection, establish wellness and resilience metrics, and implement programs addressing trauma. S.C.R. 73 SD1 provides a timely opportunity to fulfill these responsibilities by examining how the cascading trauma of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Maui wildfires, and other community traumas impact our youngest keiki during their most developmentally sensitive periods. The scientific evidence strongly supports the concerns articulated in this resolution. S.C.R. 73 SD1 is an important opportunity for OWR to support research at the state level and provide recommendations that are unique to Hawai'i.

To share some of the key research findings that underscore the urgency of this matter:

- **Social and emotional development impacts**
The pandemic has profoundly affected children's social cognition and emotional processing. Meta-analyses have reported a concerning prevalence rate of 24.3% for emotional and behavioral problems among preschool children during the pandemic, substantially exceeding pre-pandemic levels.¹
- **Impacts on caregivers, educators, and service-providers**
The pandemic placed extraordinary burdens on our 'ohana and caregivers, who faced adapting to online education while managing increased household stress. Studies have documented increased parental stress and instability in childcare arrangements,

¹ Jing, J.-Q., Yang, C.-J., Wang, Y., Su, X., & Du, Y. (2024). *Impact of COVID-19 on emotional and behavioral problems among preschool children: a meta-analysis*. BMC Pediatrics, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-024-04931-8>

negatively impacting child development.² Educators experienced unprecedented demands with limited resources, contributing to burnout and professional attrition. The cascading effects of trauma have strained our state systems and community-based providers, further challenging their ability to support keiki and 'ohana.

- **Long-term implications**

Extant research raises serious concerns about long-term impacts. Initial skill losses are likely to affect subsequent development, potentially leading to increased educational and economic inequality.³ Longitudinal studies show persistent mental health symptoms even after pandemic restrictions were lifted, indicating ongoing needs⁴. Without comprehensive intervention, these developmental disruptions may have lasting consequences as keiki transition to elementary, middle school, high school, and beyond.

The OWR strongly supports this resolution's request to develop a comprehensive report addressing these issues. S.C.R. 73 SD1 provides an important opportunity for the OWR to support Hawaii-specific research and develop recommendations uniquely tailored to our state's cultural context, community structures, and existing service systems.

Mahalo for your consideration of this important resolution. We stand ready to answer any questions the committee might have.

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

² Hacioglu, B., Burns, S., Davidson, A., Perlman, M., & White, L. A. (2024). Examining the Stability and Durability of Child Care Arrangements during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Canada. Canadian Public Policy-Analyse De Politiques, COVID-19. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2023-037>

³ Werner, K., & Woessmann, L. (2023). *COVID-19 and Pupils' Learning*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1864>

⁴ Crowe, L., Clarke, C., Geraghty, D. A. P., Collins, B. C., Hearps, S., Pugh, R., Kilpatrick, N., Branson, E., Payne, J. M., Haebich, K. M., McCloughan, N., Kintakas, C., Charles, G., Trajanovska, M., Hsieh, I., Hartmann, P. L., King, S., Anderson, N. R., & Anderson, V. (2025). *Mental Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Australian Children and Adolescents with a Medical Condition: Longitudinal Findings*. COVID, 5(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/covid5010010>

TO: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

FROM: Justina Acevedo-Cross, Senior Director of Community Strategy

DATE: April 8, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 73 SD 1 (SCR 73 SD1) requesting the Office of Wellness and Resilience to Develop a Report to Address the Developmental Needs of Children Born During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 11:30 am
Place: Via videoconference

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) **supports** SCR 73 SD 1 requesting the Office of Wellness and Resilience to Develop a Report to Address the Developmental Needs of Children Born During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic. Although the pandemic has waned, infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children and their families are experiencing poor mental health. Behavior and learning challenges of children born during the years of the pandemic are noticeable to childcare, preschool, and elementary school staff; and Hawai'i should put in place a plan for addressing these emerging needs. Hawai'i had approximately 61,800 births between 2020 through 2023 which gives the estimated keiki population that would benefit from this report looking at their developmental needs.

HCF is supporting this resolution as it relates to the [Promising Minds](#) Initiative focused on keiki ages 0-5 and their families; and the potential positive impact it has on the broader [Health and Wellness sector of the CHANGE Framework](#) of which preventative mental health is a large part. It is estimated that 29,000 keiki under 5 are in need of mental health support. To date, HCF's Promising Minds have invested more than \$5 million in strengthening Hawai'i's early childhood and health systems so both systems actively address mental health needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Promising Minds partners remain committed to expanding behavioral health services for young keiki, strengthening the early childhood mental health workforce, and embedding behavioral health tools within education and care settings. Having the Office of Wellness and Resilience take the lead on developing a report and recommendations for better serving "Covid babies"—who were

born or spent their early developmental years during the pandemic across Hawai'i—would provide a good base for a systemic approach to care and services that cut across multiple agencies and community-based organizations.

This resolution will address the needs caused by trauma and toxic stress that increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. If we provide an ounce of prevention in the early years, the social and health benefits from those brief interventions can positively impact a lifetime.

Mahalo for hearing SCR 73 SD 1 and HCF urges the Committee to move it forward.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SCR 73/SCR 56

Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

DATE: 4/10/25

TIME: 11:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Conference Room 329

Chair Representative Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Representative Ikaika Olds

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, my name is Danny Goya , and I am submitting testimony in strong support of **SCR 73/SCR 56**, which requests the Office of Wellness and Resilience to establish a report addressing the developmental needs of children born during the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges they will face in middle and high school, with special consideration for those impacted by climate crises such as the Kīlauea eruption in 2018 and the Maui wildfires of 2023.

Importance of Addressing Developmental Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted the early childhood development of children born between 2018 and 2025. Reduced social interactions, increased screen time, and unstable learning environments may have resulted in **developmental delays in communication, emotional regulation, fine motor skills, and social interactions**. We have yet to determine how many children have had developmental delays, but research supports how formative the early years are. If we can produce a report through this resolution, it will help us to support our providers in the up-and-coming years. These children may face additional challenges as they transition into formal schooling and later into adolescence.

The Critical Role of Early Learning and Intervention

Early childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong success. Research demonstrates that **early intervention in social-emotional learning and academic readiness significantly mitigates developmental setbacks**. This resolution prioritizes **identifying service gaps and implementing trauma-informed practices** to ensure these children receive the necessary support.

The Long-Term Impact of Trauma and the Need for Support

Children who experienced **both the pandemic and natural disasters, such as the Maui Wildfires and Kilauea eruption, face compounded trauma**, making them particularly vulnerable. Left unaddressed, **the effects of early trauma can result in long-term educational, behavioral, and mental health challenges**. This resolution will help provide much-needed **research, recommendations, and culturally grounded interventions** for their long-term well-being.

Support for Educators and Frontline Workers

As a former teacher who provided TIC training to over 1,500 individuals during the pandemic, I understand the crucial role of educators, early childhood providers, and community-based workers in addressing **learning loss and emotional distress** in young children. However, these workers have also faced significant stress and burnout due to the pandemic and recovery efforts. This resolution advocates **identifying and strengthening support systems for frontline workers** to prevent further workforce shortages and ensure that children receive high-quality care.

SCR 73/SCR 56 is a necessary and timely resolution to ensure that children affected by the pandemic and climate-related crises receive the support they need to thrive. I urge this committee to **pass this resolution** and take action to prioritize **early learning, trauma-informed care, and long-term resilience-building efforts** for our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo piha,

Daniel Goya
Ke Ala Ho'aka, LLC
TIC Trainer