



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalu Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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and
Programs

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 3094, SENATE DRAFT 2, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS.

By

Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 27, 2024; 3:30 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & via Videoconference

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports the intent** of Senate Bill (SB) 3094, Senate Draft (SD) 2, House Draft (HD) 1, which proposes to establish a working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists.

DCR supports the intent of this measure for the following reasons:

- As the newly redesignated DCR, our focus is to shift from what historically has been a punitive model, to a rehabilitative, restorative, and reentry-focused system. In making this paradigm shift, peer support specialists, especially those with lived experiences, will play an integral role in the delivery of effective mental and behavioral health treatment.
- Research has shown that peer support is effective in reducing, among other things, substance use and depression. Many in our custody could benefit from peer support specialists who have lived through similar social, behavioral, and economic challenges. Creating a safe environment to share similar experiences will help to establish trust in others.

- Studies have also shown that peer support increases social functioning and social support. For those in our facilities, this type of assistance is key to successful reentry into the community. Such success may empower those released from our custody to become productive members of our community, thereby reducing recidivism.

The establishment of a working group to develop and make recommendations for a standardized framework for peer support specialists is a step in the right direction to serve individuals in need. However, this measure should not be allowed to negatively impact the priorities as outlined in the Governor's Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of SB 3094, SD 2, HD 1.



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
March 27, 2024

The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Yamashita and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB3094 SD2 HD1 RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **support of SB3094 SD2 HD1**, which establishes a working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists. Appropriates funds for hiring an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the working group.

My journey has shown me just how crucial trauma-informed care and peer-to-peer support are, especially for individuals like me with developmental disabilities navigating systems like Child Welfare Services (CWS). I've been through multiple placements in CWS foster homes while trying to cope with overwhelming grief and trauma. It's crystal clear to me now that what's needed most is a compassionate and understanding approach to care.

Trauma-informed care has been a game-changer for me. It's all about recognizing how trauma affects every aspect of our lives and creating spaces that prioritize safety, trust, and empowerment. Given my past, understanding the roots of my trauma and knowing what might trigger it is absolutely vital for providing support that truly helps. Trauma-informed approaches don't just acknowledge what I've been through—they actively work to prevent any further harm by fostering environments of empathy and understanding.

Now, as a Grief and Trauma Facilitator at Kids Hurt Too Hawaii, I get to share my own journey of healing with others who are going through similar struggles. By opening up about my experiences with grief and trauma, I not only validate what others are going through but also show them that there's hope and resilience on the other side. Peer support creates this incredible space where we can connect on a level that's deeper than words, sharing insights, coping strategies, and endless encouragement.

Bringing trauma-informed care and peer-to-peer support into organizations like Kids Hurt Too Hawaii is not just a nice to have, it is an absolute must. These principles don't just enrich the support we provide to individuals with developmental disabilities; they also create a sense of belonging and understanding that's so desperately needed. My dedication to this cause is fueled by the belief that these approaches can truly make a difference in nurturing healing and resilience, even in the face of the toughest challenges. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SB3094 SD2 HD1**.

Sincerely, James LeBrie, Chair State Council on Developmental Disabilities



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
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Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 3094 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

REPRESENTATIVE LISA MARTEN, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Wednesday, March 27th, 2024, 3:30 pm, House Conference Room 308 and via Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The fiscal implications are unknown.

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) supports this measure and
3 offers the following comments.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) provides the following
5 testimony on behalf of the Department.

6 The Department supports SB3094 SD2 HD1, which proposes the creation of a working
7 group that will consist of state department decision-makers, community organizations, and
8 people with lived experience to create a statewide framework for standardizing peer specialist
9 roles, ethics, training, and data measurements that demonstrate peer specialists support as an
10 invaluable and proven evidenced-based model of care. In addition, the Department supports
11 this bill's intention to identify supervision standards, develop a state inventory of certified peer
12 specialists, and develop a sustainability plan to ensure current and future peer support
13 expansion and opportunities.

1 The AMHD offers two peer specialist training tracks: Hawai'i Certified Peer Specialist and
2 Hawai'i Certified Forensic Peer Specialist. The training is provided for adults with lived mental
3 health experience. Many also have lived experience with homelessness and forensic
4 involvement, and most have been in long-term recovery from substance abuse issues. There
5 are 27 newly certified Hawai'i Certified Peer Specialists and 17 Forensic Peer Specialists
6 throughout the Islands. AMHD is the only program in Hawai'i that certifies adults with mental
7 illnesses as peer specialists. The Department of Child and Adolescent Division (CAMHD) trains
8 and certifies youth and parents with lived experience working with children with mental
9 illnesses. The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) trains and certifies peer specialists with
10 lived experience recovering from drug abuse issues. This unique certification status allows any
11 peer specialist hired by any Medicaid-qualified agency to bill for their services. Until recently,
12 the Department was unaware of other peer specialist training programs in communities
13 throughout the State. The proposed working group would assist with ending this disconnect.
14 The Department would be honored to participate and collaborate with the listed participants in
15 this measure.

16 **Offered Amendments:** The Department suggests the addition of representation from
17 the Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, the Veteran's Administration, and
18 the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). These entities all have organized peer support
19 programs.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA
MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I



KATHERINE AUMER, PhD
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON
LUNA HO'OMALU O KA PAPA

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

**WRITTEN
TESTIMONY
ONLY**

**STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
SUPPORTING SB 3094 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS**

March 27, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. in Rm 308 and via Video

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CHAIRPERSON:

Richard I. Ries PsyD, MSEd

EX-OFFICIO:

Marian Tsuji, Deputy Director
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Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii law, HRS §334-10, established the State Council on Mental Health (Council) as a 21-member body to advise on the allocation of resources, statewide needs, and programs affecting more than one county as well as to advocate for adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbances, individuals with mental illness or emotional problems, including those with co-occurring substance abuse disorders. Members are residents from diverse backgrounds representing mental health service providers and recipients, students and youth, parents, and family members. Members include representatives of state agencies on mental health, criminal justice, housing, Medicaid, social services, vocational rehabilitation, and education. Members include representatives from the Hawaii advisory commission on drug abuse and controlled substances and county service area boards on mental health and substance abuse.

The State Council on Mental Health continues to strongly support SB3094 _SD2_HD1. Current reports within the Council and published literature support the effectiveness of peer support specialists in improving quality of life and engagement of clients as well as reducing stigma and direct costs. This legislation represents a critical step forward in enhancing mental health services statewide by establishing a working group tasked with creating a comprehensive framework for peer support specialists.

We particularly commend the bill's focus on developing a framework that includes clear definitions, ethical guidelines, standardized training, and effective supervision for peer support specialists. This comprehensive approach will ensure consistency and quality in peer support services across the state.

By appropriating funds for hiring an administrative facilitator for their time and expenses related to working group meetings, this measure ensures the working group can effectively carry out its duties. This investment will lead to the development of strong guidelines that prioritize the well-being of those seeking peer support services. **We also recommend considering the role and service that could be provided to this working group by the State Council on Mental Health.** Many of our members and attendees are experienced with the needs and challenges facing peer support specialists in Hawaii.

This proactive approach not only strengthens our mental health infrastructure but also reaffirms our commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for individuals on their journey towards recovery. We urge the House Finance Committee to pass SB3094_SD2_HD1.

Some References:

- An Update of Peer Support/Peer Provided Services Underlying Processes, Benefits, and Critical Ingredients [PubMed Central]:
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35179660/>
- Peer Support in Mental Health: Literature Review [PubMed Central]:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7312261/>
- Peer Support: Research and Reports [Mental Health America]:
<https://mhanational.org/center-peer-support>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2024 Regular Session

House Committee on Finance

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 27, 2024, 3:30 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

by

Adriane Abe

Program Specialist

Office of the Deputy Chief Court Administrator, First Circuit

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 3094, S.D. 2, HD 1, Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

Purpose: Establishes a working group to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists. Appropriates funds for hiring an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the peer support specialist working group in carrying out its duties and compensation for peer support specialists on the working group for time spent on working group meetings and related work and travel expenses. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Takes effect 7/1/2112. (SD1)

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports Senate Bill No. 3094, S. D. 2, HD 1 and appreciates the Legislature's recognition of the value Peer Support Specialists provide in the delivery of effective behavioral health services.

The Judiciary supports this bill for the following reasons:

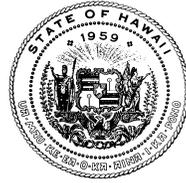
1. This bill provides for a multidisciplinary working group to develop a framework for the inclusion of peer support specialists in the service array for the state.



Senate Bill No. 3094, S.D. 1, Relating to Peer Support Specialists
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, March 1, 2024
Page 2

2. This bill provides deliverables for the working group to develop a framework which includes role clarification and definitions for peer support specialists; and the development of a trauma informed model of supervision which will be important to ethically and effectively deliver services with the assistance of peer support specialists.
3. There are examples of jurisdictions across the country where peer support specialists have been successfully incorporated into the service array providing hope, encouragement, and support that a peer with lived experience brings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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

**Testimony of Tia L.R. Hartsock
Director, Office of Wellness and Resilience**

**House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, March 27, 2024, 3:30 p.m., State Capitol, Conference Room 308**

S.B. No. 3094, S.D.2, H.D.1, Relating to Peer Support Specialists

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** S.B. No. 3094 S.D.2 H.D.1, Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

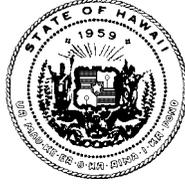
Established through Act 291, the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. OWR is focused on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. OWR explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

Peer support specialists are people who have lived experience receiving services from systems of care that assist others experiencing similar situations. Peer support is one of the six guiding principles to a trauma-informed approach; through shared understanding, respect, and mutual empowerment, peer support specialists help people in their healing process. OWR strongly believes that increasing opportunities for peer support specialists to provide assistance in the healing journey of trauma-survivors is *an integral piece* of making Hawai'i a trauma-informed state.

S.B. 3094 No. S.D.2 H.D.1 establishes a working group that will develop a framework for peer support specialists in the State. Department of Health currently administers the Hawai'i Certified Peer Specialist (HCPS) program that supports the recovery of people with mental illness. If this measure is passed, the State will have an opportunity to create a framework that will expand peer support beyond mental health. The bill proposes to do so by creating a working group consisting of State departments, community partners, and peers to collectively identify what they need to onboard peer support specialists in their departments, including training and certification. The OWR will be honored to assist with the creation of a framework that incorporates the voices of lived experience and expertise, including how the state can support peers support specialists in a trauma-informed, healing-centered way.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
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 26, 2024

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3094 SD2 HD1 – RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS.**

Hearing: March 27, 2024, 3:30 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) strongly supports this administration measure. DHS defers to the Office of Wellness & Resilience and the Department of Health.

PURPOSE: This bill establishes a working group to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists. Appropriates funds for hiring an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the peer support specialist working group. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Takes effect 7/1/2112. (HD1)

The Committee on Government Operations (SD1) amended the measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that the chairperson may invite as members of the working group, two caregivers with lived experience as the caregiver of a child or youth in behavioral health, child welfare, or the juvenile justice systems;
- (2) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2112, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

The Committee on Ways and Means (SD2) amended the measure by changing the appropriation to an unspecified amount to facilitate further discussion.

The Committee on Human Services (HD1) amended this measure by making technical, non-substantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Department supports strengthening peer support specialists. DHS's Med-QUEST Division (MQD) recognizes the value of peer support specialists for many people whom the Medicaid program serves, including individuals suffering from mental health or substance use disorders, homelessness, or involvement with the justice systems. Peer support specialists can offer a level of acceptance, validation, and hope by sharing their own lived experiences. Thus, MQD welcomes the opportunity to participate in such a workgroup to make recommendations for a framework to expand and sustain peer support specialists in the State.

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



SB3094 SD2 HD1 Peer Specialists

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday March 27, 2024, 3:30 Room 308

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SB3094 SD2 HD2:

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, prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

Peer Specialists are people who have been successful in the recovery process and now help others experiencing behavioral health conditions

- Substance abuse.
- Psychiatric disorders including PTSD and depression.
- Trauma. They can especially help to address trauma.
- They have been trained to counsel or assist others.

We note that DOH: AMHD and now ADAD too had peer specialists and training programs behavioral health as well as co-occurring disorders.

Peer Specialists in all forms of behavioral health services add value by contributing to others their shared experience of recovery and are exceptionally good at addressing diverse viewpoints. They can positively and constructively challenge individuals and groups to help them in their recovery journey to improve.

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



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

*Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i
Big Island Substance Abuse
Council*

*Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i
Collins Consulting, LLC
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC `Ohana, Inc.*

*Family Programs Hawai`i
Family Support Hawai`i
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
Kahi Mohala*

*Kokua Kalihi Valley
Kaua`i Planning and Action
Alliance*

*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*

*PFLAG - Kona, Big Island
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 25, 2024

Representative Kyle Yamashita Chair
And members of the Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3094 SD 2 HD 1 RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) strongly supports SB 3094 SD 2 HD 1 Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

Peer support programs can empower youth to provide mental health support, reduce isolation, increase self-help skills, and empower other youth. Additionally, youth involved in peer support programs and leadership roles can help create systems of services that better meet young people's needs in the ways that matter to them.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark
Executive Director



1130 N. NIMITZ HWY, SUITE C-210, HONOLULU, HI 96817
PHONE: (808) 838-7752 TOLL FREE: (866) 636-1644 FAX: (808) 838-1653

March 11, 2024

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB3094 SD2, HB1

Re Peer Support Specialists

EPIC 'Ohana is a non profit organization serving families and children in the child welfare system, and youth experiencing social and emotional challenges. We employ Parent Partners and Makua Allies. These are birth parents with lived experience in the child welfare system, and/or with perinatal substance use disorder. We also employ Youth Partners who work with the young people served by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division of the Department of Health, with foster youth served by Child Welfare Services, and youth served at the Youth Outreach Center for Homeless youth. What we have learned in the last few years is incredible power of lived experience to engage peers in services, and provide hope in ways that no one else can. The impact is tremendous. We also support the efforts of the Pū'ā Foundation to establish a culturally based certification and training program for peer support specialists in many arenas including justice involved men and women, and parents. And we partnered with the Early Childhood Action Strategy network and the Association for Infant Mental Health, Hawai'i, and Zero to Three Court to find ways to collaborate and integrate the services of peer support specialists into these services.

Peer support is an anchor in the articulated guiding principles of trauma-informed care. (Learn more about the benefits of peer support specialists: <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/peers>.) What we realize is that the tremendous impact of this work needs both champions and support. There are obstacles to the utilization of peer support in state agencies and in contracts with the state. There are nationally articulated standards for peer certification and training, that EPIC follows, but should be discussed across agencies. Employers, including state agencies, must have an understanding of how to effectively work with peer support specialists and integrate them into programs in ways that are trauma informed. Community based organizations and state agencies employing peer support specialists need sustainable funding sources. At this time, many of our programs are funded by short one, two, three, or at best six year demonstration or pilot project funding.

This bill proposes to identify best practices to expand peer support opportunities across the continuum of care, creates a framework for the collaborative expansion of peer support, allowing us all to work together to enrich our community with this vital service.

Please pass SB3094 SD2 HB1.

Laurie Arial Tochiki, JD, Ph.D

Executive Director



Our Mission

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



Steering Committee

Honolulu County

Justina Acevedo-Cross
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Kaua'i County

Sarah Blane
Alice Luck

Hawai'i County

Sulma Gandhi
Kahi Moreman
Angela Thomas



Contact Info

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

info@committokeiki.org
CommitToKeiki.org

Date: March 26th, 2024
To: House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Committee Members

From: Commit to Keiki
Re: Support for **SB3094 SD2 HD1**, Relating to Peer Support Specialist Working Group

Commit to Keiki strongly supports passage of SB3094 SD2 HD1, which would establish a working group to develop and make recommendations for a framework for peer support specialists in the State.

Commit to Keiki has three key priorities to support early childhood development and the health and wellbeing of Hawai'i youngest keiki and their families. Priorities include

1. Child Care and Early Learning
2. Early Childhood Mental Health
3. Family Violence Prevention

Peer support specialists are critical for our `ohana with keiki prenatal to age five. Parents and caregivers may be experiencing parenting challenges which put keiki at risk for abuse and neglect, they may be struggling with intimate partner violence or they may be working through substance abuse issues.

Peer support specialists provide the lived expertise to come alongside parents and caregivers to provide encouragement, expertise and lessons learned. Peer support specialists impact behavioral outcomes and play a critical role in preventing family violence, mental health and substance use challenges. Please invest **early** in our `ohana so that they get off to the right start. Not only does this help our keiki but we will save valuable, finite, downstream taxpayer dollars! What makes Peer-support Specialists so special is that they are trusted and are one of the most helpful strategies in ensuring our young families fully access the supports that they need. We strongly urge you to support **SB3094 SD2 HD1**.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

To: House Committee on Finance
RE: SB3094 SD2, HD1 in support
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 308
March 27, 2024; 3:30 pm

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT of Senate Bill 3094 SD2, HD1** relating to Relating to Peer Support Specialists.

SB3094 SD2 proposes the creation of a working group that will consist of state department decision-makers, community organizations, and people with lived experience to create a statewide framework to expand the role of peer support specialists within our state systems. The bill proposes to identify best practices to expand peer support opportunities in all state agencies, not just in the field of mental and behavioral health.

Peer support is one of the six guiding principles of trauma-informed care that has numerous positive behavioral outcomes. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) cites peer support as effective workers who provide non-clinical, strengths-based support in non-judgmental practices that advance recovery for those in similar situations. This would also create a framework to expand peer support in a collaborative manner, allowing state departments, community partners, and peers to identify collectively what they need to onboard peer support specialists in their departments, including training and certification.

Establishing a working group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience would elevate the voices of those experts with lived experience in the child welfare system to lend their voices to the state in a trauma-informed, healing-centered way. It is time we listen to our community voices. Mahalo for your support for our community.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mai Hall, M.Ed.

Children's Health Coordinator

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2024 11:09:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sydney Story	Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 27, 2024

House Committee on Finance

Hearing Time: 3:30 PM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 308

Re: SB3094 SD2 HD1, Relating to Peer Support Specialists

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we are writing in **strong support** of SB3094 SD2 HD1, relating to peer support specialists. This bill establishes a working group to create a statewide framework for peer support specialists. It appropriates funds for hiring an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the peer support specialist working group. The bill takes effect on 7/1/2112.

Importantly, the working group requires the participation of an individual with lived experience as a child or youth in the welfare system, an individual with lived experience in the juvenile justice system or the adult correctional system, two caregivers with lived experience as the caregiver of a child or youth in the relevant systems, an individual with lived experience with recovery from substance abuse and experience with homelessness, and an individual with lived experience navigating the mental health system as a child, youth, or adult.

The inclusion of peer support specialists in mental health care has been shown to be immensely beneficial. These individuals bring unique perspectives and experiences that traditional mental health professionals may not possess. By establishing a statewide framework for peer support specialists, we acknowledge the importance of lived experience in mental health recovery and fostering a system that is more holistic and inclusive. These experiences introduce a wealth of empathy and understanding into a system that often feels deeply isolating. Further, peer support specialists can foster deeper relatability and trust by offering the ear of someone who has walked a similar path, and can then help break down barriers and build trust more quickly than with traditional mental health professionals. The breadth of lived experience of the individuals listed above will ensure a comprehensive address of many aspects of the justice system, and will uplift the voices of those communities in decision-making processes—an essential aspect of a fair and just democracy.

Opportunity 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 SB3094 SD2 HD1

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/25/2024 6:28:41 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia Kaneshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am encouraged that SB3094 is advancing through the Legislature.

I am a Hawaii Certified Peer Specialist. I have lived experience with a mental health condition and have gone through focused training provided by the state Department of Health to provide support to others who have similar challenges. I use my own experience to offer hope that we do not have to be defined by our diagnoses.

I am trained to inspire individuals to build on their strengths while at the same time I realize that I am not a replacement for case managers, social workers and psychiatrists. Instead, I collaborate with mental health professionals to see the person and not the diagnosis.

I am in favor that someone from Med-QUEST will be on the working group. That way, Medicaid reimbursement rates can be explored for peer support services. Billing Medicaid could also be a reliable source of revenue and thereby free up state monies to be used for other projects and programs.

Additionally, setting up billing Medicaid for peer support services could also open other avenues to expand Medicaid coverage for other health issues.

I would like the working group to explore what other states have done to set up their peer specialist programs for adults as well as for adolescents.

Big Mahalo

Cynthia Kaneshiro

Kapaa, Kauai

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/25/2024 11:49:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am in **STRONG SUPPORT** of SB3094 SD2 HD1. I meet with the Hawai'i Clubhouse Advocacy Coalition weekly and am a board member of Friends of Ko'olau Clubhouse. These members are very special and I have witnessed how supportive and caring they are towards their peers ALL the time. It's incredible- we could certainly benefit from more of this compassion in our society today.

As people who are challenged with mental illness, it is imperative that they have the resources they need to support each other emotionally. Some of our members are currently serving as Peer Support Specialists and truly make a difference in their peers' lives. We need more of them and this bill would be an important step in making that happen.

Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2024 12:02:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erica Wilson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. No. 3094 Relating to Peer Support Specialists

My name is Erica Wilson and my current role is serving as a Coordinator to a program that employs Peer Support Specialists. Prior to that, I have worked in various roles throughout our communities providing direct services to individuals and families statewide. I have had the opportunity to serve in a capacity which helped combat circumstances such as homelessness, substance use/perinatal substance use disorder (PSUD), domestic violence, and other social determinants of health while striving to increase access of care throughout the continuum.

I have seen firsthand the efficacy of Peer Support Specialists in our community and how individuals being served have a natural gravitation and are more receptive to accepting assistance and information from someone who has once been “in their shoes”. I have also witnessed how much effort and funds have been allocated into our communities from multiple government agencies and then witness how a Peer Specialist's lived expertise in navigating these systems alleviate financial burden leading to multi-system cost avoidance.

A great start to move forward in many areas would be to make a small investment to explore ways to sustain this work, scale down duplicate efforts across agencies, and innovatively work upstream. I have personally witnessed lives transformed & repurposed into the greater good of the community, families thriving in unity, and hearts healed through the work of Peer Support. The positive outcome will definitely outweigh this initial investment and it would only be evident if first given a chance.

I support S.B. 3094 and encourage the legislature to support Peer Support Specialists in Hawai‘i.

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2024 2:23:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janae Davis	EPIC 'Ohana	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Janae Davis and I support the SB3094 SD2 HD1 Peer Support working group.

Kimmy Takata
President
Pacific Peer Connection
3/24/24

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and representative,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 3094, concerning the financial provisions for peer support specialists. As this bill progresses through the finance stage, I urge you to consider the significant benefits of compensating peer support specialists and the positive impact it can have on our community.

Peer support specialists play a crucial role in our healthcare system, providing invaluable assistance and guidance to individuals facing mental health and substance abuse challenges. These peers, often individuals with lived experience of recovery, possess unique insights and understanding that traditional healthcare providers may not possess. Their ability to connect on a personal level, offer empathy, and share their own journeys of recovery can be instrumental in supporting others on their path to wellness.

Across the mainland, numerous states have recognized the importance of compensating peer support specialists for their contributions. By providing financial support to these individuals, states have witnessed several key benefits:

1. Enhanced Effectiveness: Studies have shown that peer support services lead to improved outcomes for individuals receiving mental health and substance abuse treatment. Paying peers acknowledges their expertise and dedication, motivating them to continue providing high-quality support to their peers.

2. Cost Savings: Investing in peer support can lead to cost savings in the long run. By preventing relapses, reducing hospital admissions, and promoting community integration, peer support services can decrease overall healthcare expenditures.

3. Workforce Development: Compensating peer support specialists helps to professionalize the role and attract individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. This strengthens the peer support workforce and ensures a more comprehensive range of support services for individuals in need.

4. Reduced Stigma: Valuing the contributions of peer support specialists sends a powerful message that recovery is possible and worthy of support. This can help combat stigma surrounding mental health and substance abuse issues, encouraging more individuals to seek help without fear of judgment.

5. Prevention of Relapse and Hospital Readmissions: Peer support specialists can offer ongoing support and guidance to individuals recovering from mental health or substance abuse issues. By providing a supportive environment and helping individuals navigate challenges, peers can reduce the likelihood of relapse or crisis situations that may lead to costly hospitalizations or emergency room visits.

6.Promotion of Wellness and Self-Management: Peers can empower individuals to take control of their own health and well-being by teaching self-management skills, coping strategies, and healthy lifestyle choices. By promoting wellness and resilience, peer support can help individuals avoid costly interventions and treatments down the line.

7.Reduction of Criminal Justice Involvement: Many individuals with mental health or substance abuse issues end up involved in the criminal justice system, leading to significant costs for law enforcement, court proceedings, and incarceration. Peer support can help individuals stay on track with their recovery, reducing the likelihood of involvement in criminal activities and subsequent legal expenses.

8.Support for Transitional Housing and Employment: Peers can assist individuals in accessing stable housing and employment opportunities, which are crucial factors in maintaining recovery and avoiding costly homelessness or unemployment-related services.

9.Enhanced Engagement with Healthcare Services: Peer support can improve engagement and adherence to healthcare services, leading to better health outcomes and reduced healthcare costs in the long run.

Overall, investing in peer support in Hawaii can lead to cost savings by preventing crises, promoting wellness, reducing criminal justice involvement, supporting transitions to housing and employment, and enhancing engagement with healthcare services. By recognizing the value of peer support and providing adequate resources, Hawaii can create a more effective and sustainable system of care for individuals struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 3094 presents an opportunity for our state to recognize the importance of peer support specialists and provide them with the financial support they deserve. By investing in these individuals, we can improve outcomes for individuals struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues, promote recovery, and ultimately create a healthier and more resilient community.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Senate Bill 3094. I urge you to prioritize this critical legislation and ensure its passage for the benefit of all.

Mahalo,

Kimmy Takata
President - Pacific Peer Connection

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2024 2:54:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Cogo	Hawaii Clubhouse Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in Support of this Bill

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/26/2024 3:22:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Derwin	Hawaii Clubhouse Advocacy Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Derwin Teranishi, a member of the Hawai'i Clubhouse Advocacy Coalition at the WAC. I'm in support of SB3094 SD2 HD1, which will give our peers the necessary guidance as a unified group, focussing on consistency in the attempts to service those in need towards a more fulfilling recovery process.. Establishing this working group will be encouraging to those in this field of service, allowing collaboration to further our individual growth. For myself, this gives more meaning to the role of service that I currently participate in, being a Certified FPS, PS and a trainer at this time. I believe this component is a needed piece to solidify all the efforts that the organizations with PS services are providing. I would appreciate your consideration to pass this bill, and allow this State of Hawai'i to support all our Peers!

God Bless

Thank You,

Derwin Teranishi

SB-3094-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2024 8:25:30 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/27/2024 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Chow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill, I know peer specialists in the field who are doing a good job and this bill could provide them with the support to stay in the field. There is a big need in the field because there is a shortage of workers.