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STATE OF HAWAII  
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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
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TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 18, 2025

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1079 HD1 – RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.**

Hearing: March 19, 2025, 1:10 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration measure from the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR), and offers comments.

**PURPOSE:** This bill directs the Office of Wellness and Resilience to collaborate with the Department of Human Services to, either directly or by contract, design, administer, and implement a program for trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum for the Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services Branch staff. Appropriates funds for the program. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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

- (1) Changing the appropriation amount to an unspecified amount;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

DHS appreciates the additional support and resources from OWR to assess the Child Welfare Services Branch's (CWSB) organizational and staff needs aimed at fully adopting a

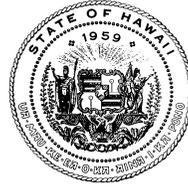
trauma-informed approach to providing vital and essential services to children and families involved in the child welfare system. The bill promotes a collaborative approach to examine and transform CWSB's practices and policies that will address recommendations of the Malama Ohana Working Group.

This collaboration will enhance CWSB's existing trauma-informed assessments, training, and policies to further address worker well-being and the vicarious trauma that DHS staff experience. The strategy may lead to reduced burnout and support staff recruitment and retention efforts. While DHS CWSB has a long history of developing innovative practices and inclusion of diverse insights from individuals and families with lived experience, cultural experts, communities, providers, and public and private partners, this OWR-led effort may lead to the improved application of trauma-informed training to daily practice.

DHS shares the goals of organizational trauma assessments: to increase awareness of the impact of trauma on individuals and how to respond effectively, improve service delivery that reduces retraumatization, support staff development and competencies when working with children and families who have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), enhance positive organizational structure where clients and staff feel safe to communicate their experience and needs and gain insights to assist with additional program development and quality improvement. Taken together, the effort should result in a stronger organization and better outcomes for children and families served by DHS Child Welfare Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.

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

**STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**  
**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**Supporting H.B. 1079 H.D.1**  
**RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE**  
**March 19, 2025 1:10 p.m., Room 225 and Video**

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Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, 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 Council supports this measure, as it aligns with our shared interest in strengthening Hawaii as a Trauma-Informed Care State. Consistent with our advocacy for workers' resiliency, we are pleased to see that this measure recognizes the need and provides for staff training on the impacts of vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout that staff experience because of their work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please contact us at [DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov).

VISION: A Hawaii where people of all ages with mental health challenges can enjoy recovery in the community of their choice.

MISSION: To advocate for a Hawaii where all persons affected by mental illness can access necessary treatment and support to live full lives in the community of their choice.



STATE OF HAWAII  
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KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1079 HD1  
RELATING TO TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

March 19, 2025, at 1:10 p.m. Room Number: 225

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** H.B. 1079 HD1, Relating to Trauma-Informed Care.

The OWR strongly supports H.B. 1079 HD1, which establishes trauma-informed organizational assessments and training curricula for the child welfare services branch within the Department of Human Services (DHS). This bill is an essential tool for improving the child welfare system's ability to effectively support both families impacted by trauma and the dedicated professionals who serve them.

The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group (MOWG) Report documents the voices of lived experiences of children and families who have navigated our state's child welfare system. In the Report, "Families involved with the Child Welfare Service Branch (CWS) find it challenging to navigate the complicated system and related services. The experience often feels adversarial, confusing, secretive, and isolating for both children and parents, causing further trauma". To address this, the MOWG puts forward the recommendation of developing a trauma-informed system that "when CWS intervenes in a family, ensure that the intervention is respectful and supportive, minimizes trauma, and does not create more harm than the original issue they hoped to address".

Under Act 291, the OWR is responsible for addressing systemic challenges affecting the well-being of all individuals in Hawai'i, which includes supporting agencies like CWS in integrating trauma-informed care practices. H.B. 1079 HD1 directly aligns with the mission of the OWR by addressing the critical barriers to well-being for both staff and the children and families served by CWS.

By using evidence-based tools to assess and improve policies and practices within CWS, H.B. 1079 HD1 will help CWS make steps towards being trauma-informed. Trauma-informed care is essential for meeting the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children in the child welfare system. It ensures that children are receiving the trauma-informed screenings, assessments, and evidence-based treatments they need, leading to better outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

In addition, a critical aspect of H.B. 1079 HD1 is its focus on the well-being of child welfare workers themselves. The bill proposes assessments that will identify and help mitigate vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout—issues that are unfortunately common in this challenging field. Additionally, H.B. 1079 HD1 calls for the development of a trauma-informed training curriculum for staff, which will include trauma-informed supervision training. This approach will help to create a supportive, resilient workforce, ensuring that trauma-informed care becomes deeply embedded in the culture of CWS. Further, by strengthening the support for those working within the system, it will then ensure better care and outcomes for the children and families they serve.

Lastly, the provisions for expert consultation to guide the implementation of these assessments, ensure that reforms are based on best practices and tailored to the unique needs of Hawai'i.

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

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

**HB-1079-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 11:41:23 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/19/2025 1:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marilyn Yamamoto	Testifying for Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HCCPR is in full support.



*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Re: HB 1079 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference  
March 19, 2025 1:10PM

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

**On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in support of HB 1079, relating to trauma-informed care.** This bill directs the Office of Wellness and Resilience to collaborate with the Department of Human Services to, either directly or by contract, design, administer, and implement a program for trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum for the Department of Human Services child welfare services branch staff, and appropriates funds for the program.

Act 86 (2023) established the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the state's child welfare system. One of the recommendations submitted in Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Report<sup>1</sup> was the need to develop a trauma-informed child welfare system. HB 1079 proposes an important opportunity to address this recommendation. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 1079.**

Kind regards,  
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.  
Policy Researcher and Advocate

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<sup>1</sup> See the Mālama 'Ohana working group Final Report and Recommendations (URL: <https://www.malamaohana.net/>).

**HB-1079-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 3:12:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/19/2025 1:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nonohe Botelho	Testifying for Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT HB1079



**LATE**

# HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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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 18, 2025

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

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1079 HD1 RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 1079 HD1 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

I serve as a member of the Hawaii Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Over the past 3 years, the task force has developed a plan and strategies that will incorporate trauma-informed approaches to services provided to children, youth, and families. This will move Hawaii closer to the goal of becoming a trauma-informed State.

This bill will enable the Department of Human Services to conduct a trauma-informed care organizational assessment and develop a training curriculum for Child Welfare Services. This may help the Department to address its critical shortage of staff (37% of Child Welfare Services positions are currently vacant). It will improve quality of services provided to families and children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director

**LATE**

Re: Testimony in support of HB1079

I strongly support HB 1079 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care which provides funding to assess and train Child Welfare Services to address the trauma experienced by families, children, and youth, and also the trauma experienced by CWS staff. This work aligns with the purpose and expertise of the Office of Wellness and Resilience and provides a mandate and an opportunity to provide the training and assessment needed in one of the most challenging administrations in the state of Hawai'i. This work will be instrumental in developing the kind of child welfare system that our state wants and needs.

In 2023 the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group was established to develop recommendations to establish a child welfare system that is trauma-informed, sustains a community-based partnership, and responds to the needs of children and families in the system and the community. I serve as Co-Chair of the working group. The working group has completed its work and a full copy of the report can be found at [www.malamaohana.net](http://www.malamaohana.net), however the working group is still subject to sunshine law until adjournment sine die. To be clear, the working group will not be making further decisions now that the report has been filed. The working group may meet during the session to provide information to the public about its report but will not make further decisions. Therefore, it is not allowed under sunshine law that more than two of us meet to discuss the report, or next steps. Therefore, I am testifying as a concerned citizen and speaking for the content of the report that was approved by the working group.

Our first task as the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group was to establish an approach to our work by cultivating and modeling the kind of listening and concern that we needed for our working group and modeling the type of child welfare system we hope for. From there, we began with the intense work of interviewing individuals, conducting conversations, and holding group discussions in Permitted Interaction Groups, which helped shape our initial understanding. We then conducted eleven community listening sessions throughout the state, gathering stories and ideas from each community we visited.

The report highlights the deep trauma experienced by children and families involved in the child welfare system—both from the circumstances that led to their involvement and from interactions with CWS itself. Key insights include:

- Families frequently experience secondary trauma from child welfare involvement, including removal of children, adversarial legal processes, and punitive rather than supportive interventions.
- Many caseworkers and child welfare professionals lack training in trauma-informed care, leading to interactions that can feel dehumanizing, coercive, or retraumatizing for families.
- Children in the system are often not provided with mental health support or healing services, leaving them with unaddressed trauma that can impact them long-term.
- Historical trauma, particularly in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, contributes to mistrust of the system, and the lack of trauma-informed approaches exacerbates this harm.

The Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group found that trauma-informed care must be the foundation of all interactions, policies, and practices in the child welfare system to prevent further harm and promote healing.

The report provides specific recommendations to integrate trauma-informed care into child welfare services, including:

### 1. Establish Trauma-Informed Training for Child Welfare Workers

- All CWS caseworkers, family court personnel, and service providers should receive mandatory trauma-informed care training.
- Training should include:
  - Understanding how trauma impacts child development and family dynamics.
  - Recognizing signs of trauma and appropriate responses.
  - Learning how to engage with families in a way that builds trust rather than fear.
  - Addressing historical trauma and cultural competency to better serve Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families.

### 2. Transform CWS Practices to Minimize Trauma

- Redesign family interactions to be less adversarial and more supportive.
- Ensure that child removals, when necessary, are handled in a way that minimizes trauma for both children and parents.
- Encourage family preservation whenever safe and possible, using trauma-informed approaches rather than punitive measures.

### 3. Provide Trauma-Informed Mental Health Support for Children and Families

- Expand access to therapy, counseling, and culturally rooted healing practices for children and parents affected by trauma.

- Ensure that all children in foster care receive trauma screenings and appropriate mental health care.
- Provide trauma-informed parenting education to support family reunification and prevent re-entry into the system.

#### 4. Implement Trauma-Informed Organizational Change

- Require state agencies to adopt trauma-informed policies and protocols.
- Create a culture where frontline workers feel supported and trained to handle trauma effectively.
- Develop an oversight system to ensure that trauma-informed principles are upheld across all child welfare services.

The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group makes it clear that without trauma-informed care, the child welfare system will continue to cause harm instead of healing. The report urges system-wide changes to integrate trauma-informed principles, ensuring that all interactions with children and families promote trust, dignity, and resilience.

We are grateful for your support of the families and children in the child welfare system, and your efforts to find ways to improve the system.