



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 in SUPPORT of H.B. 1079  
RELATING TO TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**

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

February 04, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. Room Number: 329

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

The OWR strongly supports H.B. 1079, 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 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 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 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 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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE  
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KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
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Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 2, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: February 4, 2025, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329 & 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:** 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.

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.

DHS appreciates that the proposal enhances 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.



## HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Vonnell Ramos, President  
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Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer  
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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*

February 2, 2025

To: Senator Lisa Marten, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Human Services and  
Homelessness

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

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 1079 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 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 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



**HB1079 Trauma Informed Care Training**  
**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS**

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Tuesday, Feb 4, 2025: 9:30: Room 329 Videoconference

**Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB1079:**

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

**Trauma-informed care (TIC) training is crucial in Hawai‘i** due to the state’s unique cultural diversity, historical trauma, and high rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Here are some key reasons why TIC training is essential in Hawai‘i:

**1. High Rates of Trauma and ACEs**

- Hawai‘i has a significant prevalence of ACEs, including domestic violence, substance abuse, and family separation.
- Research shows that ACEs increase the risk of long-term health issues, including mental health disorders, substance abuse, and chronic diseases.

**2. Historical and Generational Trauma**

- Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) have experienced historical trauma due to colonization, land dispossession, and cultural suppression.
- Many communities face disparities in health, education, and socioeconomic status, increasing vulnerability to trauma-related issues.

**3. Cultural Sensitivity and Indigenous Healing Practices**

- Trauma-informed care in Hawai‘i should integrate local cultural values, including mālama (care), kuleana (responsibility), and aloha (compassion).
- Incorporating traditional healing practices, such as ho‘oponopono (conflict resolution) and lā‘au lapa‘au (herbal medicine), can enhance TIC effectiveness.

**4. Impact on Healthcare, Education, and Social Services**

- Healthcare providers need TIC training to support patients with trauma histories effectively.

- Educators can benefit from TIC to create safe learning environments and address student behavioral challenges.
- Social service agencies can use TIC to improve support for foster youth, domestic violence survivors, and justice-involved individuals.

#### **5. Workforce Readiness and Community Resilience**

- Training professionals in TIC can improve service delivery and reduce burnout among frontline workers.
- Strengthening trauma-informed systems can promote resilience and healing across communities.

#### **Call to Action**

Expanding trauma-informed care training in Hawai‘i is essential for creating compassionate, culturally responsive, and effective support systems. Investing in TIC can lead to better outcomes in health, education, and social well-being, ultimately fostering a stronger, more resilient Hawai‘i.

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

February 2, 2025

To: Chair Marten, and members of the Human Services and Homelessness Committee

From: Laurie Arial Tochiki, Co-Chair Mālama 'Ohana Working Group

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.



*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: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
Re: HB 1079 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference  
Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 9:30 AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:52:02 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Godwin Higa	Consultant Trauma-Informed Restorative Justice Consultant	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Godwin Higa  
Trauma-Informed and Restorative Justice Consultant  
Member, Trauma-Informed Task Force Committee  
[4666 Aldine Drive, San Diego, CA 92115](#)  
[\(619\) 851-4119](#)

[January 30, 2025](#)

To the Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill HB1079, which proposes the partnership of child wellness and OWR in promoting Trauma-Informed practices and training.

As a Trauma-Informed and restorative justice consultant, I firmly believe that these programs are essential in creating a positive, trauma-informed environment that supports the well-being of children and families. partnership support programs foster open, non-verbal, and direct communication, ensuring a safe and risk-free setting for individuals to heal and grow in any organization. Partnerships such as these are a vital part of promoting what is good for our Keikis of Hawai'i.

I can not emphasize more the importance of high-quality training by OWR to all stakeholders who work with children and adults. This should be of high priority.

These programs are a critical step in initiating the healing process and promoting effective communication among all stakeholders. I urge you to pass Bill HB1079 , which will provide a vital framework for supporting Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations.

Mahalo, for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

Godwin Higa

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Date: February 3, 2025

To: Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair  
AND Committee Members

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support of Office of Wellness and Resilience **HB1079**

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Early Childhood Action Strategy is in strong support of following the recommendation coming out of the Malama Ohana Working Group to improve the child welfare system via **HB1079**.

Families going into the child welfare system are traumatized, as can be Child Welfare Services (CWS) branch staff and supervisors. This creates a difficult situation where outcomes are not satisfactory for all parties. By creating a strong working relation between the Office of Wellness and Resilience and CWS to look at the policies, procedures and needs of staff training through a trauma lens, improvements are far more likely to occur. House Bill 1079 will be an excellent start to building in service improvements.

Using evidence-based assessment tools, creating a cadre of internal trainers and especially trained supervisors will leave a legacy of improvement within the system as a child welfare services expert helps to implement assessment findings.

According to records from CWS, **half of all children within the system are five years old and under**. This fact makes me suggest that infant and early childhood mental health training, principles and practices be utilized within CWS as part of this improvement plan, utilizing local experts in their field while meeting the recommendations of the Malama Ohana Working Group.

Mahalo for your continued support to improve the health, safety and well-being of our youngest and most vulnerable keiki and their `ohana. We appreciate you supporting **HB1079**.

Aloha nui,

Christina Simmons

Christina Simmons

Infant and Early Childhood Behavioral Health Plan Coordinator, ECAS

TO: House of Representatives Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

HEARING: Tuesday, February 4, 2025  
9:30 AM  
Conference Room 329

FROM: Sharla-Ann Houlding, LSW

RE: In SUPPORT of HB1079 – Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

My name is Sharla-Ann Houlding, and I would like to submit testimony in strong support of HB1079 and its intent to direct the Office of Wellness and Resilience to collaborate with the Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services (DHS-CWS) Branch to directly contract, design, administer, and implement a program for trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum for the DHS-CWS branch staff, and also appropriate funds for the program.

I am currently the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative Supervisor, an Advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i. I have been working in the field with youth and families involved in the foster care system for the last 16 years in multiple roles including a case manager for youth in foster care, advocate, resource caregiver (a.k.a., “foster parent”), and Guardian ad Litem (GAL). Through these various roles, I have seen firsthand the multitude of challenges and tragedies that occur when youth and families, who are already extremely traumatized and vulnerable, are being case managed by social workers who lack the basic essential components of trauma-informed care.

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to social work that recognizes the impact of trauma on the individuals served and actively takes steps to prevent re-traumatization and further trauma from occurring and also promotes healing. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), TIC operates on six guiding principles:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, and choice, and
6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues

CWS Social workers who do not operate under this lens, and those who are facing burnout from being in practice for an extended period of time without acknowledging their experiences of vicarious trauma, tend to treat the children and families they work with as something to “deal” with rather than “heal” with. CWS social workers face high caseloads and do not have the adequate support and resources to help the families, which often leads to inadvertent feelings of resentment, an inability to collaborate, and promotes institutional racism and oppression as they tend to uphold the policies that cause further harm to this population. CWS social workers who are not trauma-informed may not understand or recognize how their interactions with youth and families may trigger painful memories, causing feelings of shame, hopelessness, and regret making it difficult for the youth and families to move forward and plan for their future.

HB1079 implements several key recommendations from the Mālama ‘Ohana Work Group by ensuring CWS staff receive comprehensive trauma-informed training, provides tools to assess

worker well-being and strategies to address worker burnout, reviews and improves current policies and practice to help youth and families involved in the system heal, and also utilizes expert consultation to create a framework and guide to help them increase their knowledge about TIC principles and best practices. The bill also asks to provide funding for evidence-based assessment tools and ongoing technical assistance, helping staff better understand and mitigate the effects of trauma, both for the children they serve and for themselves as professionals exposed to vicarious (or secondary) trauma.

The passage of HB1079 would lead to an investment in a trauma-informed system that will not only improve the outcomes for children and families impacted by the CWS system, but it would also provide the much-needed support for CWS social workers, reducing burnout and secondary trauma and stress. This piece of legislation is one concrete step that is vital to help transform our Child Welfare system into one that could truly promote healing and resilience for everyone involved.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1079 to ensure that our Child Welfare system is equipped with the proper tools and resources to serve Hawai'i's most vulnerable children and families with the compassion, care, and understanding they deserve.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

With my deepest gratitude and aloha,

Sharla-Ann Houlding, LSW  
EPIC 'Ohana, HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative

**HB-1079**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 5:40:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in Support

**HB-1079**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:11:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

House Committee on Finance

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 2, 2025

RE: Upcoming Hearing for HB1079

Measure Title: RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.

Report Title: Trauma-informed Care; Office of Wellness and Resilience; Child Welfare Service; Department of Human Services; Assessment; Training; Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 1079 as its importance should not be understated. Thank you for introducing this bill and I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony regarding it.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

Aloha ,Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Melissa Mayo, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB1079, which directs the Office of Wellness and Resilience to collaborate with the Child Welfare Services (CWS) to develop and implement a trauma-informed care training and organizational assessment program for child welfare services staff. As someone who navigated the child welfare system as a child, resource caregiver, adoptive parent, and advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the importance of embedding trauma-informed principles into child welfare practice.

The Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group (established by Act 86, 2023) has identified systematic gaps in how Hawaii’s child welfare system supports children and families who have experienced trauma. Child welfare services staff work daily with families experiencing profound hardship, including abuse, neglect, and intergenerational trauma. Without adequate trauma-informed training, policies, and support systems, both the children and the professionals tasked with their care face increased risk of harm, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress.

HB1079 takes a proactive approach by ensuring that child welfare services personnel are equipped with the necessary tools to:

1. Assess and improve policies and procedures to better support children and families.
2. Address worker well-being by mitigating the effects of vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout.
3. Implement a sustainable training model by developing a cohort of trauma-informed trainers, curriculum, and technical assistance.
4. Ensure expert consultation to guide best practices in trauma-informed care.

I urge the committee to pass HB1079. This legislation is a critical step in ensuring that Hawaii’s child welfare services become truly trauma-responsive, not just in policy but in daily practice. By supporting HB1079, we can create a child welfare system that centers healing, resilience, and sustainability for both families and the professionals who serve them.

Mahalo for your time, dedication, and commitment to improving the Hawai‘i’s Child Welfare System,

**Melissa Mayo**

President, East Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board  
Member, Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

February 3, 2025

To: Representative Marten, Chair, and Representative Olds, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Karen Worthington, Private Citizen

Re: **HB 1079: Relating to Trauma-Informed Care**  
**Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 329 and Videoconference, February 4, 2025, 9:30am**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Representative Marten, Representative Olds, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1079, which establishes trauma-informed organizational assessments and training curricula for the child welfare services branch within the Department of Human Services (DHS). This legislation represents a critical step toward creating a more responsive and effective child welfare system—one that is better able to support families impacted by trauma as well as staff who may have their own trauma histories and also experience secondary trauma through their work.

My name is Karen Worthington, and I am a children's law and policy attorney with a consulting business on Maui, Karen Worthington Consulting. I have worked as a lawyer in and around state systems affecting children and families throughout my 30-year career. I am certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children.

**Please pass HB 1079.** This legislation will strengthen our child welfare system in several important ways:

- It responds to the documented experiences of children and families who have found the current system challenging to navigate, often experiencing it as adversarial, confusing, and traumatic, as detailed in the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Report.
- It creates a framework for implementing evidence-based practices that will help ensure CWS interventions are respectful, supportive, and minimize rather than compound trauma for both families and workers.
- It addresses the critical issue of secondary trauma and burnout among child welfare workers through trauma-informed supervision training, which will lead to better stability and outcomes for both staff and the families they serve.
- It aligns with best practices in child welfare by ensuring that trauma-informed care becomes deeply embedded in the culture and practice of Child Welfare Services.

The conditions that bring families into contact with the child welfare system often involve trauma, and our system's response must be grounded in an understanding of trauma's impact. By implementing comprehensive trauma-informed organizational assessments and training, we can create a system that better supports both the families we serve and the dedicated professionals who work with them.

The Office of Wellness and Resilience is uniquely situated to support CWS in integrating trauma-informed care practices. H.B. 1079 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.

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

This change is recommended by the Mālama'Ohana Working Group and aligns with the growing body of evidence showing that trauma-informed systems produce better outcomes for children and families. If you would like additional information related to my testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at [karen@karenworthington.com](mailto:karen@karenworthington.com).

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The script is cursive and somewhat informal.

Karen Worthington