

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
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 29, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 237 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS.**

Hearing: March 31, 2025, 10:02 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of the measure, defers to the Department of Health, and provides comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds for the Family Health Services Division of the Department of Health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children from birth to age five and their families, including the establishment of program specialist positions. Effective 12/31/2050. (SD1)

The Committees of Health and Human Services & Homelessness amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the appropriation and position counts to unspecified amounts; and
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

The Committee on Health and Human Services further amended the measure by inserting an effective date of December 31, 2050, to encourage further discussion.

Peer support or peer-to-peer support programs for families with young children increase the exchange of information amongst parents with shared experiences and reduce social isolation. School- and community-based Family Resource Centers can serve as places where peer-to-peer support programs exist to assist families in their community, allowing them to feel comfortable and seek information and assistance. The positive outcomes of well-supported peer-to-peer support programs include participants feeling more confident about their parenting, having access to support in accessing services, increasing social connections, and their children gaining access to care and experiencing fewer unmet needs. These outcomes are protective factors that reduce risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'aina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 237, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS.

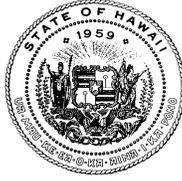
Committee: WAM
Date: Monday, March 31, 2025
Time: 10:02 a.m.
Location: Conference Room 211

Executive Office on Early Learning's Position: **COMMENTS**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports the intent of H.B. No. 237, S.D. 1 which establishes positions and appropriates funds for peer-to-peer support programs. We defer to the Department of Health (DOH) regarding implementation and funding and offer the following comments.

Peer-to-peer support programs provide opportunities for parents and families to support each other, learn effective parenting practices together, and connect with available resources and social services. These programs strengthen families and promote the well-being of our keiki. The EOEL is in support of expanding state funding for peer-to-peer programs because they enhance family engagement and support – key elements of a successful early learning system.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued investment in our youngest keiki and their families and thank you for the opportunity to share these comments.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 237 H.D. 1 S.D. 1
RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 03/31/2025, 10:02 AM, CR 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds to the Department of Health
2 (“Department”) and the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist
3 positions. The Department requests that this measure be considered as a vehicle to provide this
4 needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and requests outlined in the
5 Governor’s executive budget request.

6 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure.

7 **Department Testimony:** The Family Health Services Division (FHSD) provides the following
8 testimony on behalf of the Department.

9 Offering expectant and new parents family strengthening programs using a peer-to-peer
10 support framework is proven to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect and improve positive
11 parenting outcomes. Reestablishing this program in the Department will help strengthen
12 current community-based peer-to-peer support programs and expand resources focusing on
13 addiction/recovery and child welfare peer-to-peer supports.

14 **Offered Amendments:** None.

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



ALOHA CARE

To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Monday, March 31, 2025, 10:02 a.m., Conference Room 211

RE: **HB237 HD1 SD1 Relating to Peer Support Programs**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of the **HB237 HD1 SD1**. This measure appropriates funds for the Family Health Services Division of the Department of Health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children from birth to age five and their families, including the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist positions.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare appreciates the whole-person care approach of this measure, acknowledging that children and families, especially those experiencing health and socioeconomic challenges, require a compassionate and holistic approach to care. Peer-to-peer support is an evidence-based practice that has been shown to have numerous positive health outcomes, improving access to care, the overall quality of life, and utilization of services.¹

Peer support specialists can offer the unique perspective built on their lived experience of navigating the same systems and issues as their patients. Peer to peer support offers hope, demonstrates resiliency, and supports the healing that many cultures and communities have relied upon for ages and continue to utilize. The work is already done in our communities, however much of it is delivered in grassroots, unpaid methods by friends and neighbors.

¹ [Peer Support: Research and Reports | Mental Health America](#)



AlohaCare is proud to have established peer support positions and currently employs two full-time certified peer specialists within the Behavioral Health program. Their support has touched nearly 200 of our members this past year and has resulted in many of those members taking a more active role in their treatment and recovery. The establishment of increased peer-to-peer support programs will serve to recognize the unique skills and experience these individuals bring to the table and will further develop our healthcare and social service workforce.

In 2024 Governor Green signed Executive Order 24-01, declaring that “all Executive State Departments will collectively move towards becoming a trauma informed state by implementing evidence-based services based on the Trauma-Informed Task Force’s framework, to mitigate and respond to secondary traumatic stress and build resilience in children, adults, and communities.”² The Trauma Informed Task Force was established in 2021 by the passage of Act 209, declaring that “adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress is an emerging public health issue for Hawai‘i, and that cultural and asset-based approaches may be a resource for our community’s resiliency.”³ Peer support is one of the fundamental principles and action items integrated into the Trauma Informed Task Force’s framework and recommendations.

AlohaCare appreciates the Governor and Legislature for their efforts to create a trauma-informed state. Establishing peer-to-peer support programs through DOH is a prudent next step in this effort. This measure will give our youngest keiki, their families, and most vulnerable populations the necessary support and resources to navigate the various health and socioeconomic challenges that arise for our communities.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of the **HB237 HD1 SD1**.

² governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2402065.pdf

³

health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2024/03/23_Trauma-Informed-Care-Taskforce-Recommendations-Report.FINAL.pdf

Date: March 30, 2025

To: COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

From: Micah A. Kāne, Chief Executive Officer & President

RE: Testimony in Support for HB 237 HD 1 SD 1, Relating to Peer Support Programs
Date: Monday, March 31, 10:02 am
Place: Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) **supports** House Bill 237 HD 1 SD 1 relating to Peer Support Programs. The bill appropriates funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs. This has the potential to provide concrete aid to families through peer-to-peer programs which have proven to be an effective strategy, especially for families experiencing parenting, mental health or substance use challenges.

HCF believes in addressing the symptoms and impacts of mental health issues for all ages and supporting families facing challenges including family violence, divorce, substance use and incarceration. Establishing peer support programs will benefit keiki and 'ohana in Hawai'i by improving access to care, providing proven peer-to-peer support, and saving state funds on future interventions that would be more costly. HCF supports HB 237 HD 1 SD 1 because it relates to efforts coordinated by HCF: First, the [Promising Minds](#) initiative focused on improving mental health of keiki ages 0-5 and their families; and second, the [Health and Wellness sector of the CHANGE Framework](#) which HCF has adopted and implements through key partnerships. The approach in the Health and Wellness sector recognizes the need for preventative health and widespread uptake of trauma-informed approaches.

Please advance HB 237 HD 1 SD 1.



2345 Nuuanu Avenue #15 Honolulu, Hawaii 96817
<https://familyhuihawaii.org>

March 30, 2025

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair,
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

On behalf of Family Hui Hawai'i, I would like to provide our strong support for House Bill 237 HD1 SD1 that would appropriate funds to the Department of Health Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

In August 2024, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a nationwide advisory describing our nation's families under extreme levels of parental stress, the consequences resulting in increased risk of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect and chronic health diseases, as well as recommendations for peer-to-peer support programs as an effective strategy to address it. Peer-to-peer programs connect families through meaningful shared lived experiences which allow families to learn from each other and build a sense of belonging, resulting in strong relationships that become their network of support in times of need. Agencies that provide the framework, coordination of groups, and training for the peer leaders provide the support and evidence informed content that ensures the effectiveness of the programs.

This bill provides support for the continuum of prevention strategies, broad-based for all families to tertiary intervention for higher needs for families with children. The bill focuses on prevention measures during a child's most critical period of brain development, prenatal to age 5 years, when the foundations of executive functions needed for success in school and life are formed. Peer support programs allow the community, families and agencies to come together to play an active role in advocating for their family and their community to become stronger from within.

Family Hui Hawai'i is dedicated to strengthening families and communities, reducing violence against children, and promoting the healthy development of children, socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively, through peer to peer connection, parenting education and links to community services. Family Hui Hawai'i is a first contact provider to families with young children, prenatal-5 years serving over 1000 parents and children statewide each year. Our peer parenting support programs provide the opportunity for families to learn and grow together, sharing and helping each other through their parenting journey, discussing child development and age-appropriate effective parenting strategies, access to community resources, parental resilience and the social emotional development of their children. We see the struggles that families face every day and the difficulty they have in accessing resources and services.

HB237 HD1 allows the state to make a smart investment in the power of the people to support each other and not continually rely on institutional support. Peer to peer programs last much longer than their time in formal programs as trust is build more quickly and relationships are

stronger. There is no one who understands you like a peer. Many of our families who met in Hui as babies, continue to support each other through adolescence, not only the parents but the children themselves. Funds invested in peer to peer programs are investments in the community to partner with the state to be advocates for themselves, their families and each other, leveraging our collective finances into building a strong community of support.

The investment in the families of our youngest children is a needed and economically strategic use of funds. During these early years, learning and wellness is about the whole child, physically, cognitively, and social-emotionally. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Maui Wildfires have exacerbated the mental health crisis in Hawaii. Research shows that 52% of children in families with financial hardship are facing emotional distress. During these early years, learning and wellness is about the whole child, physically, cognitively, and social-emotionally. Early learning is not just in the classroom and does not begin at age 4 years at PreKindergarten. Learning is everywhere the child is – not only at school, but at home with their family. Families play a critical role in preparing their children to be successful in school and life. They are the constant in the many learning environments that their children will experience as they grow. It is important to have an easy access point for families to receive information about their child's whole growth and development.

Prevention strategies building family resilience, social and concrete supports, parenting and early childhood development knowledge are proven to alter the outcomes of early adversity, reducing overall family stress and increasing wellbeing. Funding to provide peer to peer support programs will provide a critical step in building a strong system for supporting our children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB237. I urge you to move this bills forward.

Respectfully,



Cherilyn Shiinoki
Executive Director



GUARDIAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT
HAWAII LLC

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz Chair,
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

RE: Strong Support for HB237 HD1 SD1 – Peer-to-Peer Support Bill

Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Vice Chair Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means,

I am writing on behalf of Guardian Capital Management Hawaii, a small business providing services statewide, with offices on Oahu and Maui, to express our **strong support** for HB237 HD1 SD1, which seeks to enhance access to peer-to-peer support services. As a private business of 19 years, we recognize the immense value that these services bring to our employees, our company, and our local community.

Our employees do not leave their personal lives at the door when they come to work. They bring their experiences, challenges, and concerns—including those of their families—into the workplace. By providing access to peer-to-peer support services, we empower them with a crucial resource to navigate stress, mental health challenges, and personal struggles in a supportive and confidential environment.

When employees can access peer support, they become **more resilient, engaged, and happier**, leading to numerous benefits, including:

- **Increased Productivity:** Employees who feel supported are more focused, creative, and motivated to perform at their best.
- **Higher Retention Rates:** Businesses thrive when employees feel valued and heard. By reducing burnout and stress-related turnover, peer-to-peer support helps us retain skilled, experienced workers.
- **Enhanced Workplace Culture:** A culture of support fosters teamwork, trust, and overall well-being, strengthening workplace relationships and morale.
- **Stronger Local Economy:** Small businesses like ours rely on a healthy, stable workforce. Retaining employees and improving their resilience translates into long-term economic benefits for our business and the broader community.

As a business owner, I have seen firsthand how workplace stress can take a toll on employees. Having **peer support available means that employees do not have to struggle alone**. This proactive approach to wellness leads to healthier workplaces, reducing absenteeism, improving job satisfaction, and ultimately fostering a stronger workforce across Hawai'i.

For these reasons, we **urge the committee to pass HB237 HD1** to expand access to peer-to-peer support programs. Doing so will benefit not just employees, but also businesses, families, and the entire community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Shiinoki, Principal

Guardian Capital Management Hawaii



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

City and County of Honolulu

Justina Acevedo-Cross
Greg Auberry
Chiyomi Chow
Kanoë Enos
JoAnn Farnsworth
Jordana Ferreira
Nadia Garcia
Danny Goya
Alex Harris
Sakinah Harrison
Erin Henderson
Monique Ibarra
Shawn Kana'iaupuni
Ryan Kusumoto
Ka'iulani Laehā
Lynelle Marble
Megan McCorrison
Marty Oliphant
Cherilyn Shiinoki
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Sunshine Topping
Kerrie Urosevich
Carol Wear
S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

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Ka'ina Bonacorsi
Kawika Mattos
Bobbie-Jo Moniz-Tadeo

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: April 1, 2025

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means

From: Commit to Keiki

RE: House Bill 237 HD1 SD1, Relating to Peer Support Programs

Commit to Keiki is a statewide, non-partisan, public-private collaborative to ensure a brighter start for Hawai'i's youngest keiki. Led by a diverse Steering Committee, Commit to Keiki's mission is to 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 early childhood.

Commit to Keiki strongly supports passage of House Bill 237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

As noted in the measure's preamble, a lack of necessary supports for parents and families can—and often will—result in negative outcomes that can include depression, mental health challenges, intimate partner violence, substance abuse and addiction, and child abuse and neglect. Challenges like these can manifest in significant and lasting trauma for children, and Commit to Keiki will continue to advocate for programs and initiatives that provide parents with the critical supports they need to lessen the likelihood of these outcomes occurring.

Peer-to-peer support programs connect parents and/or families with other parents/or families who have experienced similar parenting, mental health and/or substance addiction challenges. This results in higher rates of trust, program retention and ongoing support. Peer-to-peer support programs provide parents and families with a safe place to be supporter on best parenting practices, obtain necessary screening and referrals, and access critical resources. The overall positive effect this can have for families and children cannot be overstated. And—with 58% of children in Hawai'i already made vulnerable by family violence, substance abuse, divorce, and incarceration—the need for social programs like the one proposed by HB237 HD1 SD1 should not be underestimated.

From a strictly economic perspective, the benefits of establishing peer-to-peer programs are extremely straightforward. As a society, we understand clearly that early investment in the health and development of our community's youngest people pays dividends over the long run, and conservative estimates have identified the total lifetime economic burden created by child abuse to be roughly \$2.6 billion here in

Hawai'i. Investment in programs and professionals like the ones proposed by this measure represent the likely saving of millions of dollars in future interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of negative childhood experiences.

For these reasons, Commit to Keiki strongly supports HB237 HD1 SD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 6:20:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelle Galarza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: **Chelle Galarza**

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of 2 young daughters I am writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. **I have directly been involved in peer to peer support and my life has been directly impacted positively because of it! I was a new mom and relocated from a different area on island it was then that I attended my first peer led hui. I made new connections and now had a network of support.**

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.
Chelle Galarza

March 28, 2025

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair,
Committee Members
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Karen Worthington, Private Citizen

Re: **HB 237 HD1 SD1: Relating to Peer Support Programs**
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 211 and Videoconference, March 31, 2025,
10:02am

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator Dela Cruz, Senator Moriwaki, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 237 HD1 SD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs. This bill would enable the development of structured support networks where individuals with lived experience can provide guidance and assistance to parents and families navigating similar challenges, particularly in areas of substance use recovery and mental health.

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, including working directly with peer support initiatives. I have worked extensively with Hawai'i state departments and nonprofit organizations that support children and families who exist at the margins of our society.

Please pass HB 237 HD1 SD1, and include the following expenditures, effective July 1, 2025:

- \$200,000 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) program specialist V position and one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) program specialist IV position;
- \$270,000 for purchase of service contracts with neighborhood or location peer-to-peer based groups; and
- \$390,000 for purchase of service contracts for addiction and child welfare peer support programs.

In my research and in my work with state agencies and nonprofits, I have seen how peer support programs increase parent and child well-being, reduce the risks of child abuse and neglect, and increase the likelihood of positive health activities and outcomes such as abstaining from alcohol and drugs, caring for one's mental and physical health, and engaging in

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

positive parenting practices. Importantly, peer-to-peer helps parents access needed services and resources, reducing stressors which negatively impact parenting.

Expanding and supporting peer support programs is recommended in the DOH ADAD State Plan (See: "ADAD State Plan System of Care Implications Full Volume," Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, December 2022, https://health.hawaii.gov/substance-abuse/files/2022/12/ADAD-State-Plan-System-of-Care-Implications-Full-Volume_print.pdf). The Mālama'Ohana Working Group also emphasizes this need in their Final Report, especially for mothers struggling with substance use disorder (See: "Final Report," Mālama 'Ohana Working Group, 2024, <https://www.malamaohana.net/mowg-final-report>).

I urge you to pass HB 237 HD1 SD1. If you would like additional information related to my testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at karen@karenworthington.com.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karen Worthington

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 9:13:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heidi Allencastre	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I come before you today to share my perspective on the crucial role that peer-to-peer support programs and services play in the lives of parents and caregivers within our Hawaii communities. As a parent/caregiver myself, I have experienced firsthand the challenges that come with raising children on my own as a solo parent. Parenting challenges can feel overwhelming, especially when we face them alone. However, through the strength of peer-to-peer support, we can find solidarity, encouragement, and practical advice that not only helps us navigate our roles with greater ease but also helps us grow stronger as individuals and families.

Peer-to-peer support programs provide a safe space for parents and caregivers to connect with others who truly understand their experiences. The value of talking to someone who has walked a similar path cannot be overstated. These connections create an environment where we feel heard, validated, and empowered. In our Hawaiian culture, 'ohana, or family, extends beyond just blood relatives, and peer-to-peer support programs reflect this spirit of communal care, where families can lean on one another for guidance and strength.

In Hawaii, our communities are unique. We embrace a deep sense of 'aina (land) and community that fosters intergenerational connections and mutual support. Peer-to-peer services reflect these values by creating spaces where parents and caregivers from all walks of life can come together, learn from each other's experiences, and build lasting relationships.

In many of our island communities, parents already face significant barriers to connection. Economic factors like a lack of public transportation, parks, or community spaces can further isolate them. That's why it's so crucial to have peer-to-peer support programs that bring parents together so that they don't have to carry the weight of parenting alone.

Moreover, research tells us that parents who are under stress and lack social connections are more likely to find themselves in situations that could lead to child abuse or neglect. By creating more peer-to-peer support opportunities, we help reduce those risks and provide parents with the tools and community they need to thrive. It's not just about preventing harm—it's about building a supportive *village* around each family so they can be successful, happy, and resilient.

As a parent who has navigated these challenges myself, I can tell you that peer-to-peer support programs were the lifeline I needed. They helped me build the protective factors I needed to not just survive, but thrive in my journey as a parent. And I know this bill can help create that same village for other parents across our state.

I humbly ask you to support HB237 HD1 SD1 and invest in the well-being of our keiki and their families by providing more opportunities for peer-to-peer support.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 12:05:04 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Tanaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB237 HD1, which would allocate funding to the Department of Health’s Family Health Services Division to develop and manage peer-to-peer support programs.

As a parent of five children, I understand firsthand how essential it is to have a strong support system while raising a family in Hawai‘i. When my kids were younger, I found invaluable guidance and encouragement through various parent support groups. That network of fellow parents became my community—offering shared experiences, practical resources, and reassurance through the many ups and downs of parenting.

Parenting can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be deeply challenging. The mental health struggles that accompany parenthood—such as stress, anxiety, and isolation—are often underrecognized and underserved. Peer-to-peer support programs help fill that gap by creating a safe, empathetic space where parents can connect, be heard, and receive the emotional and practical support they need.

By investing in these programs, the State affirms its commitment to the mental health of parents and the overall strength of Hawai‘i’s families.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB237 HD1 and help ensure families across our state have access to these vital resources.

Mahalo for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Will Tanaka

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 4:37:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karolina Glover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Glover Ohana

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of a 2 year old boy and a 6 month old girl writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs.

Hui is a very important source for parents and a huge support and help for families. This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 6:29:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kari Sochor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of a beautiful little girl writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I am also not just a mother, but someone who helps run a support group for mothers and keiki that are looking to development their community, build relationships, and learn to become a leader in not just their lives, but in others too.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 8:33:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristi Kaapu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Kristi Kaapu

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of young children from Kona, writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs.

I have had the privilege of participating in both Baby Hui and Toddler Hui programs in Kona, and they have been transformative in my parenting journey. These peer-to-peer support groups provided me with a safe space to connect with other parents, share experiences, and learn valuable skills that have helped me navigate the challenges of raising children. The sense of community and support I received from these programs not only boosted my confidence as a parent but also positively impacted my relationship with my children.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kristi Kaapu

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 9:21:14 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of two college aged children. I am writing in **strong support of peer-to-peer support programs**. When my son, now 21, was a newborn infant my husband was active duty and had to deploy. We had no family in Hawaii and I was suffering from post partum depression. A dear friend suggested I connect with Family Hui Hawaii. I ended up joining a Hui and the women in my Hui literally saved mine and my son's life. To this day the women in my Hui remain dear friends.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo, for your consideration.

Ann Davis

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Leilani Novak

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am honored to provide testimony **in strong support** of funding for peer-to-peer support programs for families. Through my work and time in the community, I have been able to witness the true benefits of peer-to-peer support programs as a critical lifeline to families navigating complex challenges - providing emotional support, shared knowledge, and practical guidance that only those with lived experience can offer.

Peer-to-peer support programs empower families by connecting them with trained peers who have faced similar situations. This connection fosters a sense of community, reduces isolation, and promotes mental well-being. Research consistently shows that families who engage in peer support experience lower stress levels, improved coping mechanisms, and better long-term outcomes reducing the risks of adverse childhood experiences. Furthermore, these programs often prevent crises, reducing the need for more costly interventions and alleviating the burden on other public services.

The financial investment in peer-to-peer support programs yields substantial returns both short term and long term. By facilitating early intervention and providing accessible support, these programs reduce the reliance on crisis services, improve educational outcomes for children, and strengthen family stability. This proactive approach leads to cost savings across healthcare, social services, and the judicial system.

I urge the committee to prioritize sustained funding for peer-to-peer support programs. Continued investment ensures that families facing hardships have access to the resources and community they need to thrive. By supporting these programs, we are not only aiding individual families but also fostering healthier, more resilient communities for our future generations. As someone planning to start a family here in Hawaii, I find great comfort and confidence in knowing that peer-to-peer support programs are available to help navigate the often challenging journey of parenthood.

I hope you can help support current families, and future families for citizens such as myself, through this measure.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 8:04:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Sharon Tisza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: **Dr. Sharon M. Tisza**

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of two teen boys, and a physician in this community, practicing Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Adult Psychiatry. I am writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. **I have experienced first hand the benefits of peer-to-peer support programs as a new mother with both of my sons as part of Baby Hui Hawaii, many years ago. I have able been on the board of Family Hui Hui and seen countless families benefit from these services. As a physician and medical director in this community I refer new parents to this program every chance that I get. I cannot say enough good about these types of service.**

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 8:25:47 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
johanna nielsen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Committee on Ways and Means

From: Johanna Nielsen

Mahalo to the Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of 2 boys from Honolulu writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. I joined Family Hui Hawaii's peer-to-peer parent support group, Neighborhood Hui (Hui), in 2016. In Hui I met a great group of moms plus their babies. Moms in my Hui group came from all walks of life, from a military wife, to educator, to hairdresser, and restaurant manager. We were so different yet we could find similarities and friendship by being a mom/parent and our babies.

This group gave me the outlet I needed as a first time parent, encouraging me to get out of the house with a baby, and giving me the opportunity to develop friendships with other parents just like me. Becoming a parent was almost like learning a new language in a new country, ultimately having to figure out life from scratch. No one, not even a book, prepared me enough for life with a newborn baby. Yet women give birth and 2-days later parents are expected to go home and know how to handle it all. I certainly didn't!

In Hui we talked about our new life with a baby, the challenges, and joys we were finding. I found that the situations I was going through wasn't just unique to me, but that there are Moms who are also going through similar experiences too. We explored what our challenges looked like, from what our realities were versus the expectations we had, breast/bottle feeding to starting solids, safety and medical issues, developmental milestones, sleepless nights, discipline, and just

the ability to even manage brushing our own teeth. Most importantly, we learned from each other by reflecting on who we are as parents, what parenting looks and feels like, and hopes of what it could be like in the future.

In my Hui, I felt validated as I shared - I could talk and others would listen, empathize with me, and truly understand what I was going through. I gained new perspectives, new strategies/tips, and felt a sense of belonging with my Hui Moms, helping me to become a better and more confident parent for my own children. Even though I have a husband, I was and still continue to be, the primary caregiver for my children, carrying the most of the mental load of being a parent. Similarly, the moms in my Hui were also experiencing the same, and Hui gave us the chance to gather, share, connect, learn, and support one another during our children's first year of life.

From Hui, I gained 2 really good friends who I continue to regularly keep in touch with that have supported myself and my children over the past 9 years. In 2023, my husband was unexpectedly diagnosed with a grade 2 astrocytoma (brain cancer). He was rushed into surgery after a small seizure and an MRI discovered his tumor. One of my Hui friends took in my children as I stayed by my husband's side during the entire hospital stay. She has also helped me with child care and transportation to/from school for my children during 2 additional brain surgeries my husband had to go through in 2024.

I have very little assistance from my family for support. Without my Hui friends, I don't know how I would have been able to get through it all - support my husband during his medical surgeries and countless doctor visits, plus take care of my children and their transportation and educational needs, or myself, my peace of mind, and well being. They gave me the support I needed when I needed it the most.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Johanna Nielsen

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 8:27:33 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Carrillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm Jessica Carrillo. I strongly support HB237. My husband is in the Coast Guard and peer to peer programs have been an important part of my family's transitions when we moved to new places. They create safe spaces for families to share and empathize with each other, which leads to community building and support systems.

We moved to Astoria, Oregon when my oldest was just under one and La Leche League connected me with other families and resources. Again, when we moved to Hawaii, Family Hui Hawaii was a place where I was able to connect with other parents and find a place of belonging. Some of my dearest friends are still those that I met through those programs.

Thank you for the opportunity for me to share my story and support.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 8:33:37 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sierra Baker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: **Sierra Baker**

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent from Kaimuki, writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. Peer to Peer programs helped me tremendously during my pregnancy. Although my husband's family is here, my family is not and I did not have a lot of support during pregnancy. Hui in Bloom, a local peer-to-peer program educated me and supported me during a transformational time in my journey. I felt like I was a part of a loving and safe community, and I was offered many resources as well. I am forever grateful to these programs and look forward to using them as my baby grows.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Kiana Kauwe

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and esteemed members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Kiana Kauwe, and I am a parent of a 14-month-old daughter living in Kahului, Maui. During her first year, I stayed at home to care for her, an experience that deepened my understanding of the critical role peer support plays in the well-being of parents and caregivers. **I strongly urge you to support HB237 HD1 SD1**, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

Research consistently shows that caregiver mental well-being has a **direct and lasting impact on child development**. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, children thrive when their caregivers have access to **social connections, emotional support, and stress-buffering resources** (Harvard University, 2015). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also recognizes parental mental health as a **key determinant** of child outcomes, noting that depression, anxiety, and isolation among caregivers can negatively affect children's social-emotional and cognitive development (AAP, 2019).

Peer support programs **address these challenges** by providing caregivers with a safe, understanding community where they can share experiences, receive encouragement, and reduce the stress that so often accompanies parenting. **When caregivers feel supported, they are better equipped to provide the responsive, nurturing relationships that children need to thrive**. Investing in peer support programs is not just about helping parents—it is about creating the stable, emotionally healthy environments that are essential for our children's well-being and future success.

Through **Family Hui Hawaii's** peer-led support groups, I found a space where I could openly share my experiences and hear from other parents navigating similar challenges. Simply knowing that others were going through the same thing created connection and healing. These hui didn't just provide parenting tips; they **offered emotional support and a sense of belonging** that made all the difference in my journey as a mother.

HB237 HD1 SD1 will ensure that more families across Hawai'i have access to these vital support systems. If you support young children, you support their families too. And if you support parents and caregivers, please support this bill. I **respectfully urge** you to pass **HB237 HD1 SD1** for the well-being of our keiki, families, and communities.

Mahalo nui loa,
Kiana Kauwe

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:32:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Yanuaria	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Christopher Yanuaria

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of a one-year-old from Maui writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:33:41 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aurora O'Brien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Aurora O' Brien

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs. I am a parent of three boys on the Waianae Coast, and I am writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:39:34 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nolan Zane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Nolan Zane

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

Besides being a board member of Family Hui Hawaii, I am also a parent who has participated in peer-to-peer group as a young parent many years ago. So my wife and I have experienced its benefits of sharing resources and creating connections that have created life long friendships of a Peer-to-Peer group. Those friendships have created much needed support in rough times, and has created so me many memories while celebrating so many wonderful moments in all of our families lives.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Thank You for your time, consideration and service to our community!

HB-237-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 12:30:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mitsuko Suzuki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To:

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From:

Mitsuko Suzuki

Mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair, and honored members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for hearing HB237 HD1 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs.

I am a parent of two girls in Oahu, writing in strong support of peer-to-peer support programs. The program has been helping a lot of parents and families, including ourselves, gain emotional support and build rapport in our communities. As in our case, my husband and I were able to make parent friends, who we have been connected for almost 4 years now, through family hui. Through family hui, we were able to discuss and share our joys and challenges as parents. These dialogues have helped us understand that we are not the only one struggling. Our girls were able to make friends through this hui too, and we now hang out outside the hui programs too. This kind of bond can not be established easily in your community easily, if there is no prgorams like family hui.

This bill provides the needed support parents need to learn together, share resources, and build their self-confidence. By supporting peer-to-peer programs, you prioritize parents' mental health and well-being, which directly benefits their children in a positive way. I hope you can help support families through this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.

TESTIMONY OF MATT LORIN
Chair, Board of Directors, Family Hui Hawai'i
IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB237 SD1
Relating to Peer Support Programs
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Monday, March 31, 2025

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Matt Lorin, and I serve as Chair of the Board of Directors for Family Hui Hawai'i. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB237 SD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division for the establishment and oversight of peer-to-peer support programs for families with children from birth to age five.

At Family Hui Hawai'i, our mission is built around the conviction that strong families are the foundation of strong communities—and that parents thrive when they are connected, resourced, and affirmed by others. Our peer-parent-led Hui groups have supported thousands of Hawai'i families by providing a consistent space for shared experience, mutual support, and developmental knowledge—grounded in local culture and lived experience.

HB237 SD1 acknowledges what both national research and local families have long affirmed: that early relational support is a powerful lever in preventing child abuse and neglect, reducing toxic stress, and improving family well-being. Peer-to-peer programs are among the most cost-effective, evidence-informed strategies we must keep families stable, safe, and intact. They work because they are responsive, community-based, and empower families to be both recipients and providers of care.

The need is urgent. In Hawai'i, hundreds of children under age five are confirmed victims of abuse or neglect each year—and many more go unreported. The stressors that give rise to these outcomes are often rooted in parental isolation, substance use, untreated mental illness, or unresolved trauma—all of which peer support programs are uniquely positioned to address upstream.

The appropriations outlined in HB237 SD1—including program specialist positions and service contracts with neighborhood-based groups—represent a prudent and high-yield investment in both family well-being and fiscal responsibility. For every dollar spent in the prenatal-to-five window, research shows a sevenfold return in avoided downstream costs.

Mahalo nui loa for your time, commitment, and continued leadership.

Respectfully,



Matt Lorin
Chair, Board of Directors
Family Hui Hawai'i