



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

March 20, 2025

The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Marten and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HR133/HCR139 REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE TO DEVELOP A REPORT TO ADDRESS THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN BORN DURING THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 PANDEMIC.

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities respectfully submits **in support of HR133/HCR139**, which requests the Office of Wellness and Resilience to develop a report to address the developmental needs of children born during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are particularly vulnerable to the lasting impacts of the pandemic. Many faced disruptions in crucial early intervention services, therapy, and educational supports during this period, which are essential for their growth and development. Without targeted strategies to address these gaps, children with I/DD may experience compounding developmental delays that hinder their long-term success.

The Council believes that developing a comprehensive report with trauma-informed strategies, intervention plans, and cross-agency collaboration is essential to ensuring that children with I/DD are identified early and provided with the appropriate resources to thrive. By including research-based approaches, this report will be pivotal in strengthening the support system for children with I/DD as they transition into school and adulthood.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HR133/HCR139**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



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.C.R. 139 and H.R. 133
REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE TO DEVELOP A REPORT
TO ADDRESS THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN BORN DURING THE
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 PANDEMIC.**

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

March 20, 2025, at 10:15 a.m. Room Number: 329

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** H.C.R. 139 and H.R. 133, requesting the OWR to develop a report to address the developmental needs of children born during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic and offers comments.

H.C.R. 139 and H.R. 133 requests the OWR to develop a comprehensive report addressing the developmental needs of children born during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those under 5 years who were affected by the Maui wildfires. The requested report is in alignment with the OWR's mission to strengthen the capacity of Hawaii's communities, families, and individuals to heal from and prevent trauma. The scientific evidence strongly supports the concerns articulated in this resolution. H.C.R. 139 and H.R. 133 is an important opportunity for OWR to support research at the state level and provide recommendations that are unique to Hawai'i.

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

- **Social and emotional development impacts**
The pandemic has profoundly affected children's social cognition and emotional processing. Meta-analyses have reported a concerning prevalence rate of 24.3% for emotional and behavioral problems among preschool children during the pandemic, substantially exceeding pre-pandemic levels¹.
- **Impacts on caregivers, educators, and service providers**
The pandemic placed extraordinary burdens on our 'ohana and caregivers, who faced adapting to online education while managing increased household stress. Studies have documented increased parental stress and instability in childcare arrangements,

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

negatively impacting child development². Educators experienced unprecedented demands with limited resources, contributing to burnout and professional attrition. The cascading effects of trauma have strained our state systems and community-based providers, further challenging their ability to support keiki and 'ohana.

- **Long-term implications**

Extant research raises serious concerns about long-term impacts. Initial skill losses are likely to affect subsequent development, potentially leading to increased educational and economic inequality³. Longitudinal studies show persistent mental health symptoms even after pandemic restrictions were lifted, indicating ongoing needs⁴. Without comprehensive intervention, these developmental disruptions may have lasting consequences as keiki transition to elementary, middle school, high school, and beyond.

The OWR strongly supports this resolution's request to develop a comprehensive report addressing these issues. The requested focus on trauma-informed care, mapping of current services, analysis of support for those affected by the Maui wildfires, information on services for educators and frontline workers, and recommendations for strengthening resilience aligns perfectly with emerging research on effective interventions.

We humbly request that the requested deadline for this report be extended to December 31, 2026 as this will allow sufficient time for our office to submit on findings and recommendations to the Legislature. We anticipate this comprehensive report will provide a roadmap for addressing the unique needs of Hawai'i's pandemic-born children, supporting their healthy development, and strengthening the systems that serve them.

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

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

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

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

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



Date: March 20, 2025

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

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Concurrent Resolution 139, Requesting the Office of Wellness & Resilience to Develop a Report to Address the Developmental Needs of Children Born During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 2019

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS strongly supports the adoption of House Concurrent Resolution 139, which requests that the State Office of Wellness & Resilience develop a report addressing the developmental needs of children born during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research into early childhood development has consistently shown that a child's experiences in their earliest years sets the foundation for the rest of their life. Children who are provided with healthy and meaningful experiences early in their lives consistently report better outcomes in myriad developmental measurements, and the importance of this developmental period cannot be overstated. Moreover, *disruption* during these critical ages is highly detrimental to a child's overall development.

Studying available data will provide stakeholders with insight into gaps in services, education, and overall early childhood development for local keiki born during the pandemic. It will also allow for targeted investment by local government and the nonprofit sector alike.

More than anything, learning about the compounding effects of the pandemic on local keiki will provide policymakers and stakeholders with a wealth of information that would help to guide the overall strategy implemented to address the needs of these keiki.

For these reasons, ECAS strongly supports HCR 139.



hawaiicommunityfoundation.org

827 Fort Street Mall Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
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TO: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS
The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

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

DATE: March 19, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support for House Resolution 133 (HR 133) and House Continuing Resolution (HCR 139), requesting the Office of Wellness and Resilience to Develop a Report to Address the Developmental Needs of Children Born During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic
Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 at 10:15 am
Place: Conference Room 329 and via videoconference

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) **supports** HR 133/ HCR 139 requesting the Office of Wellness and Resilience to Develop a Report to Address the Developmental Needs of Children Born During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic. Although the pandemic has waned, infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children and their families are experiencing poor mental health. Behavior and learning challenges of children born during the years of the pandemic are noticeable to childcare, preschool, and elementary school staff; and Hawai'i should put in place a plan for addressing these emerging needs. Hawai'i had approximately 61,800 births between 2020 through 2023 which gives the estimated keiki population that would benefit from this report looking at their developmental needs.

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



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provide a good base for a systemic approach to care and services that cut across multiple agencies and community-based organizations.

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

Mahalo for hearing HR 133/ HCR 139 and HCF urges the Committee to move it forward.



Hawai'i Children's Action Network

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 & Homelessness
Re: HCR 139/ HR 133

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference
Thursday March 20, 2025 10:15AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in support of HC 139/ HR 133, requesting the Office of Wellness and Resilience to develop a report to address the development needs of children born during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Maui Wildfires have deeply impacted the development of young children, particularly those aged 0-5, exacerbating existing disparities, especially in Native Hawaiian, rural, and economically disadvantaged communities. Early learning and intervention are essential for brain development, social-emotional growth, and long-term success, yet disruptions have widened gaps in education and well-being. To address this, we must invest in early childhood education, family support programs, and trauma-informed care.

A comprehensive report from the Office of Wellness and Resilience should examine the effects of trauma on young children, recommend ways to prevent re-traumatization, and promote culturally relevant, evidence-based strategies from early childhood through high school. Additionally, we need to strengthen social-emotional learning services for children affected by the pandemic and wildfires, ensuring they receive academic and emotional support.

Lastly, frontline workers, including educators, also need policies that support their mental health, self-care, and professional development to sustain their ability to care for vulnerable children and families.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please pass HCR 139/ HR 133.

Sincerely,
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.
Policy Researcher and Advocate



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HR 133/HCR 139

TO: Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, & Members,
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Vice-President of Strategy and External Affairs
DATE: March 20, 2025 at 10:15 AM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HR 133/HCR 139, requesting the Office of Wellness and Resilience to develop a report to address the developmental needs of children born during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

Founded by residents of Kuhio Park Terrace in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

The requested report would help to inform program planning, development and strategies to effectively address the challenges of children and their families unique to the social-emotional and educational environment created by the pandemic. It will help identify gaps in services and guide the implementation of trauma-informed practices to ensure impacted children receive necessary and recommended support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or tkajimura@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.

HR-133

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 5:20:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/20/2025 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Siobhan Clarke	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and members of the committee.

My name is Siobhan Clarke. I am an undergraduate student in the Public Health program at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. I strongly support HCR139 / HR133.

As the federal government rolls back the collection of certain demographic data, programs that aim to support vulnerable populations will lose access to pertinent information that is used to create effective interventions.

Our keiki are our future. It is imperative that the children born during the COVID-19 pandemic period, are given the opportunity to grow, thrive, and excel to their full potential. In order to support them, we must understand their unique needs. This resolution offers a measure to help understand their needs and that information is vital to us all. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Siobhan Clarke

HR-133

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 7:18:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/20/2025 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Candace Vizcarra	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this resolution that seeks to develop a plan to help those with children born during the Covid-19 pandemic

HR-133

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 9:22:08 AM

Testimony for HSH on 3/20/2025 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of H.R. 133

Submitted by: A Concerned Parent

Date: 3.19.25

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of H.R. 133, which seeks to address the developmental needs of children born during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a parent of a young child with autism and a speech delay, I have seen firsthand how the pandemic has disrupted early childhood development, especially for children with special needs.

Challenges Faced by Children with Developmental Delays

The pandemic limited access to essential early intervention services, speech therapy, and structured social interactions, all of which are crucial for children with special needs. While some services have resumed, gaps remain, and many families continue to struggle to find consistent, affordable, and accessible support for their children.

1. School-Based Resources

Public schools often lack enough specialized staff, such as speech therapists, behavioral specialists, and one-on-one aides, to meet the growing demand.

More funding is needed for smaller teacher-to-student ratios and individualized support for neurodivergent children.

2. Home Support & Therapy Access

Many families rely on home-based therapy services, but these were either reduced or stopped during the pandemic.

Investing in at-home support programs and telehealth therapy options would help bridge the gap for children who struggle in traditional settings.

3. Access to Sensory-Friendly Learning Experiences

Many children with autism and sensory sensitivities benefit from alternative learning environments like museums, aquariums, and nature-based programs.

Vouchers for sensory-friendly museum visits, special education programs, and interactive learning experiences would be an invaluable resource for families.

4. Financial Support for Families

Families of children with special needs often pay out-of-pocket for private therapy services due to long waitlists or limited school resources.

If H.R. 133 leads to funding for therapy grants, school-based support, and accessibility programs, it would greatly ease the financial burden on families and ensure children receive the help they need.

Why H.R. 133 Matters

Children born during the pandemic already face unique challenges. Those with developmental delays need extra support to reach their full potential. By passing H.R. 133, lawmakers can take the first step in identifying and addressing these needs so no child is left behind.

I urge the committee to prioritize children with special needs in this study and ensure that future programs are inclusive, accessible, and fully funded.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Dacanay

A Concerned Parent

615.364.5571

Stylesbyrenee@gmail.com

Honolulu, HI

HCR 133 139 Draft Testimony

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 139/HCR 133

Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

DATE: 3/20/25

TIME: 10:15

LOCATION: Rm 329

Chair Rep. Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Ikaika Olds, and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, my name is Danny Goya , and I am submitting testimony in strong support of **HCR 139/HCR 133**, which requests the Office of Wellness and Resilience to establish a report addressing the developmental needs of children born during the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges they will face in middle and high school, with special consideration for those impacted by climate crises such as the Kīlauea eruption in 2018 and the Maui wildfires of 2023.

Importance of Addressing Developmental Challenges

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

The Critical Role of Early Learning and Intervention

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

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

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

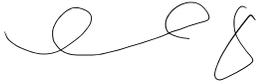
Support for Educators and Frontline Workers

Educators, early childhood providers, and community-based workers play an essential role in **mitigating learning loss and emotional distress** in young children. However, they too have faced immense stress and burnout due to the pandemic and disaster recovery efforts. This resolution calls for **identifying and strengthening support systems for frontline workers** to prevent further workforce shortages and ensure children receive high-quality care.

HCR 139/HCR 133 is a necessary and timely resolution to ensure that children affected by the pandemic and climate-related crises receive the support they need to thrive. I urge this committee to **pass this resolution** and take action to prioritize **early learning, trauma-informed care, and long-term resilience-building efforts** for our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo piha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Goya', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Goya
Ke Ala Ho'aka, LLC
TIC Trainer

HR-133

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 2:28:56 PM

Testimony for HSH on 3/20/2025 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Ebert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"As a mother of a child born during the pandemic, and as a maternal mental health therapist, I've lived and witnessed the unique challenges families face. I implore you to remember the needs of these children, who entered a world vastly different from any other generation."