



# HCANSpeaks!

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 Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Re: SB 1520 SD 1 HD1 Relating to family

Hawai'i State Capitol

March 25, 2025, 2:00PM

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members,

**On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in strong support of SB 1520 SD1 HD1, relating to family.** This bill allows survivors in contested paternity cases to choose mediation and allows a support person such as an advocate or attorney to be present.

This bill would give survivors of domestic violence involved in contested custody cases with their abuser the choice to pursue mediation rather than going through a court battle.

Survivors should not be forced to confront their abuser during paternity proceedings unless they have made a fully informed decision and have had the opportunity to prepare themselves emotionally, mentally, and physically. For some survivors, paternity proceedings can be a path to severing ties with their abuser, not a tool for further harm or control.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of SB 1520 SD 1 HD1.**

Sincerely,

Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.

Policy Researcher and Advocate



March 23, 2025

**Position: Support of SB1520, SD1, HD1**

**To:** Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair  
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

**From:** Llasmin Chaîne, LSW, Executive Director, Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women

**Re:** Testimony in Support of SB1520, SD1, HD1, Relating to Family

Hearing: Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

On behalf of the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, I would like to thank the Committee for hearing this important bill and to express my **support of SB1520 SD1, HD1, RELATING TO FAMILY**.

This bill would enable a survivor of domestic violence engaged in a contested custody proceeding with their abusive partner the option to engage in mediation instead of court litigation.

**Survivors should not be required to face an abusive partner during paternity proceedings unless they have made an informed decision where they can prepare themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally<sup>1</sup>.** Paternity proceedings may be a way for a survivor of domestic violence to cut ties with their abusive partner. **They should not be a way for an abuser to inflict additional harm or hurt<sup>2</sup>.**

I respectfully urge this Committee to **pass SB1520, SD1, HD1, in support of trauma-informed care and safety for survivors, utilizing the practice of informed consent**. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

<sup>1</sup> Anyikwa VA. Trauma-Informed Approach to Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence. J Evid Inf Soc Work. 2016 Sep-Oct;13(5):484-91. doi: 10.1080/23761407.2016.1166824. Epub 2016 May 4. PMID: 27142906.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Day and Erica Bowen. Offending competency and coercive control in intimate partner violence. Aggression and Violent Behavior, Volume 20, 2015, Pages 62-71, ISSN 1359-1789. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178914001293>



March 25, 2025

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

Chair David A. Tarnas

Rep. Amy A. Perruso

Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe

Rep. Gregg Takayama

Rep. Della Au Belatti

Rep. Chris Todd

Rep. Elle Cochran

Rep. Diamond Garcia

Rep. Mark J. Hashem

Rep. Garner M. Shimizu

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa

Re: SB1520 SD1 HD1 Relating to Family

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 25 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support** of this measure **amendments** that address the Attorney General and Commission to Promote Uniform Laws' concerns about the ambiguity and unintended consequences of prior versions while affirming a survivor's to have a supportive person present during mediation as codified in [HRS 658H-10](#).

Page 2, line 5, add:

(3) Either party may in attendance at mediation a supporting person of their choice, including but not limited to an attorney or individual designated by that party pursuant to section 658H-10.

Page 3, line 20, add:

(3) Either party may in attendance at mediation a supporting person of their choice, including but not limited to an attorney or individual designated by that party pursuant to section 658H-10.

This bill would enable a survivor of domestic violence engaged in a contested custody proceeding with their abusive partner the option to engage in mediation instead of court litigation.



Survivors should not be required to face an abusive partner during paternity proceedings unless they have made an informed decision where they can prepare themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. Paternity proceedings may be a way for a survivor of domestic violence to cut ties with their abusive partner. They should not be a way for an abuser to inflict additional harm or hurt.

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

Sincerely,  
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

**SB-1520-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 11:57:33 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i am in strong support. Thank you.

**SB-1520-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 5:12:47 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Stand in Support

Kate O'Connor

Kaimuki

SB1520

I, Kate O'Connor, am in strong **SUPPORT** of SB1520 "Paternity Proceedings; Divorce Proceedings; Domestic Abuse; Mediation".

Throughout my graduate education and internship experiences, I have spent time educating myself on the impacts of Domestic Violence. Additionally, I have spent countless hours with survivors of Domestic Violence, specifically in a legal advocacy setting.

I have seen first hand the fear in their eyes when realizing that mediation is involved. Many clients have not seen their abusers since the most recent incident of abuse, the last incident that happened before taking legal actions. Survivors just left the control being forced on them from their abusers, and are still healing.

A mediation can be an unfair situation for some survivors, giving their abusers another chance to manipulate them, and convince the survivor into an end result that only benefits the abuser.

Giving those the option to decline a mediation can be a great way to help those who feel unsafe to interact with their abusers through a mediation. Not every survivor is the same; Healing and processing from abuse is complex and different for everyone, which is why a choice towards mediation can be beneficial.

Let's all work together to break the cycle of abuse, and give the control back to survivors. Thank you for taking the time to consider passing this bill.