



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI ŌLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.C.R. 73 and S.R. 56
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.**

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

March 24, 2025, at 1:00 p.m., Room Number: 225

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** S.C.R. 73 and S.R. 56, requesting the OWR to develop a report to address the developmental needs of children born during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic and offers comments.

The OWR's legislatively established kuleana directly aligns with the intent of this resolution. Act 291, SLH 2022 mandates our office to strengthen state service systems through a comprehensive trauma-informed care framework, coordinate cross-departmental data collection, establish wellness and resilience metrics, and implement programs addressing trauma. S.C.R. 73 and S.R. 56 provide a timely opportunity to fulfill these responsibilities by examining how the cascading trauma of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Maui wildfires, and other community traumas impact our youngest keiki during their most developmentally sensitive periods. The scientific evidence strongly supports the concerns articulated in this resolution. S.C.R. 73 and S.R. 56, 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 levels.¹
- **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 development.² 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 inequality.³ 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. S.C.R. 73 and S.R. 56 provides an important opportunity for the OWR to support Hawaii-specific research and develop recommendations uniquely tailored to our state's cultural context, community structures, and existing service systems.

We humbly request that the requested deadline for this report be extended to Dec. 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 and 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>



HAWAI'I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Judith F. Clark, Executive
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Network Membership

Access to Independence
Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai'i
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Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai'i
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Ho'okele Coalition of Kaua'i
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Kokua Kalihi Valley
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Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
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Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native
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P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
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PHOCUSED
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Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

March 19, 2025

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

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SR53/SCR69 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.**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of
youth-serving organizations, supports SR 53/SCR69/

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

The report on the needs and issues of children born during the
COVID pandemic and their families will provide data that is essential
if the children are to overcome that trauma and adverse childhood
experiences (ACES) they have experienced. Learning about and
addressing their needs now will increase their chances of growing up
safe, healthy, and ready to succeed.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



Date: March 22, 2025

To: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

From: Hawai'i Association for Infant Mental Health, dba AIMH HI

Re: Testimony in Support for Senate Resolution 56 (SR 56) and Senate Continuing Resolution (SCR 73), 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

AIMH HI supports SR 56/ SCR 73 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. As mental health providers specialized in ages 0-5, we see firsthand how the isolation, fear, and worry that infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children and their families experienced during the Pandemic and other devastating events impact them today. Behavior and learning challenges of children born during the years of the pandemic are noticeable to childcare, preschool, and elementary school staff. 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.

AIMH HI supports this resolution, as we understand how the earliest experiences of life are imprinted in the brain development of children and set the trajectory for patterns that will continue as they grow. We are committed to ensuring professionals have access to high-quality, specialized training to support this age group and that the systems around young children have developmentally appropriate services. The Office of Wellness and Resilience is the optimal team to take the lead on developing a report and recommendations for serving the children of Hawai'i who were impacted by the collective trauma of COVID-19, supporting the frontline workers who provide care to these children, and ensuring that culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate services are identified. This report has the ability to guide the recovery work that lays ahead of the mental and behavioral health sectors. Let's not wait for our children to have significant challenges before acting – the opportunity to invest in our future is now.

Mahalo for hearing SR 56/ SCR 73. AIMH HI urges the Committee to move it forward.

Na'u nō me ka ha'aha'a,

Erin Henderson Lacerdo, LCSW, IECMH-E©

Executive Director, Association for Infant Mental Health in Hawai'i

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TO: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

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

DATE: March 22, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support for Senate Resolution 56 (SR 56) and Senate Continuing Resolution (SCR 73), 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: Monday, March 24, 2025 at 1:00 pm
Place: Conference Room 225 and via videoconference

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) **supports** SR 56/ SCR 73 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

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 SR 56/ SCR 73. HCF urges the Committee to move it forward.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SCR 73/SCR 56

Committee on Health and Human Services

DATE: 3/24/25

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Conference Room 225

Chair Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Senator Henry Aquino

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, my name is Danny Goya , and I am submitting testimony in strong support of **SCR 73/SCR 56**, 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. Reduced 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. 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 service gaps 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.

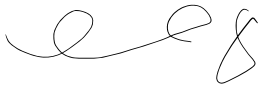
Support for Educators and Frontline Workers

As a former teacher who provided TIC training to over 1,500 individuals during the pandemic, I understand the crucial role that educators, early childhood providers, and community-based workers play in addressing **learning loss and emotional distress** in young children. However, these workers have also faced significant stress and burnout due to the pandemic and recovery efforts. This resolution advocates for **identifying and strengthening support systems for frontline workers** to prevent further workforce shortages and ensure that children receive high-quality care.

SCR 73/SCR 56 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

LATE

SR-56

Submitted on: 3/23/2025 1:47:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/24/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan P. Armstrong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Aloha mai kākou,

I am writing in support of Senate Resolution 56, and its companion Senate Concurrent Resolution 73. These measures would request that the Office of Wellness and Resilience develop a report as to the status, needs, and mitigation of problems affecting children born during the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Because of the politicization of public health science and the broader systemic failures in adequately responding to COVID-19, we know that the preceding five years ushered in an historic loss of life, loss in average life span, and negative impacts at all age cohorts of the US population. However, much of these impacts have been little or poorly investigated.

Infants and young children have been affected developmentally from infections in pregnancy, infant infections, socio-economic disruptions to the household, and concurrent illness and disease amplified due to acute health care worker shortages, lost facility capacity, et cetera.

Addressing such problems earlier on (although we're already behind over the past few years) will save money downstream, particularly through the Departments of Health and Education, and the criminal justice systems, just to name some examples.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Dylan P. Armstrong