

## EAST HAWAII FRIENDS OF FOSTER FAMILIES

February 14, 2019

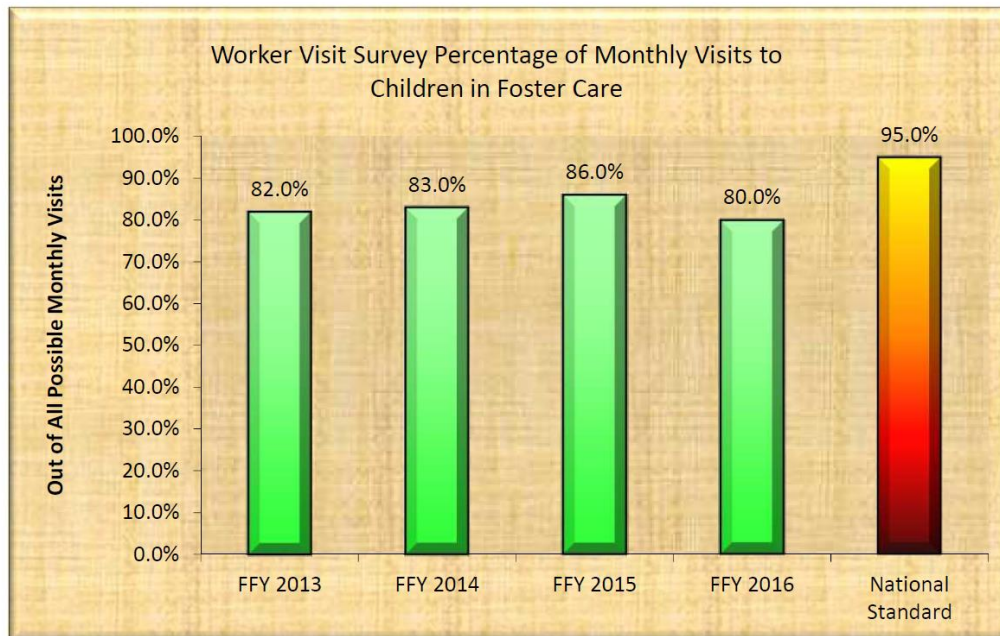
**The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Hearing at 10:00am in Conference Room 211  
Testimony in SUPPORT of SB1022**

### CURRENT SITUATION:

The federal government in 2018 evaluated Child Welfare Services and found no improvement from the last evaluation in 2009. In the seven outcome categories reviewed, the state failed to be in *substantial conformity* in all seven, the same as eight years ago. Our hope is that this task force will directly address concerns currently facing Child Welfare Services and make legislative recommendations to improve outcomes.

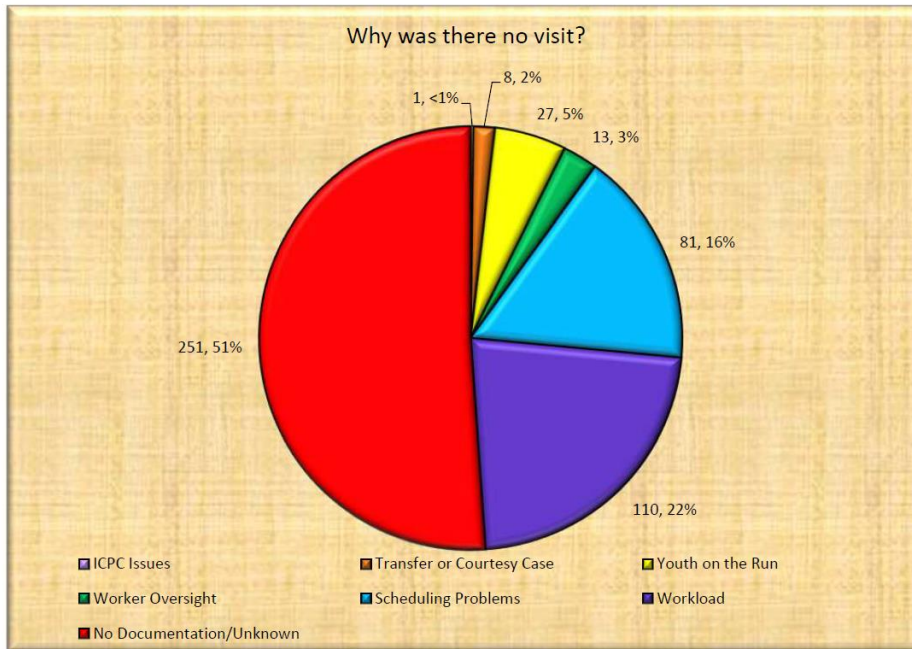
We see the largest problem currently facing Child Welfare Services as the high caseloads and vacancy/turnover rates in positions. Child Welfare League of America recommends social workers carry a caseload of no more than 12-15 children. Currently our social workers carry an average of 40. These high caseloads have severely negative consequences. For the state to remain eligible and compliant for federal funds social workers are required to do monthly face-to-face visits with the children and parent(s). In 2016 Child Welfare Services did a staff survey of reasons behind missed visits (below). When answers are grouped the survey found that only 8% of these missed visits were unavoidable where as 92% were due to workload/oversight/scheduling/unknown. Unknown because either there was no documentation that a visit took place for that month, or the worker could not confirm that a visit occurred, or the worker had left employment with no further information obtainable.

Figure 41: Worker Visit Survey Percentage of Monthly Visits to Children in Foster Care FFY 2013-2016



Data Source: DHS, SHAKA, Statewide Worker Visit Survey

Figure 43: Why Was there no visit? – FFY 2016



Data Source: DHS. SHAKA, Statewide Worker Visit Survey

**STAFFING:**

Large amount of vacancies have been a problem for many years with CWS.

Figure 65: CWSB Staff Positions and Vacancies – 2013 - 2017

CWSB Staff Positions and Vacancies					
	May 2013	May 2015	May 2015	April 2016	March 2017
Total CWSB Positions	428	411	409	399	403
Vacant CWSB Position	94	93	72	67	97
Parentage of Vacancies	22%	23%	18%	17%	24%

Data Source: DHS, CWS

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

This bill is about collaborating to ensure we do the job right. Our hope is that this task force can focus on how we can reduce caseloads and move CWS to a stable and staffed workforce. Once achieved we expect to see these outcomes:

- More-thorough investigations that result in less removals and investigators having more time to focus on family strengthening
- Shortened time-in-care for children that do enter
- Increased reunification rates
- More-supported and happier foster parents that results in greater retention and easier recruiting
- Improved social worker job-satisfaction that results in less turnover
- Less-burdened court system with fewer sanctions
- Better outcomes for our children

THE ASK:

We humbly ask you pass this bill. As one of our GAL's puts it:

*Social workers are often difficult to reach and many are not conducting their minimum monthly face-to-face visits. It may seem like a small thing, but is hard to put into words how deeply unfair this is to foster children. By definition, the most important adults in their lives have already failed them. When we entrust their care to a state agency without the means or the staff to meet their needs, we send them a powerful and damaging message about their worth.*

Thank you for scheduling this hearing and giving us the opportunity to testify,

Joseph O'Connell  
East Hawaii Friends of Foster Families  
808-640-0905  
PO Box 11058  
Hilo HI 96721

**SB-1022-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/12/2019 2:51:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/14/2019 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
kawai saniatan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This testimony is to express my strong support of SB1022 to continue with the help of protecting the health and safety of our community.

**SB-1022-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/13/2019 8:54:56 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/14/2019 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jonathan Mendoza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



PANKAJ BHANOT  
DIRECTOR

CATHY BETTS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 13, 2019

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

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 1022 SD1 RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Hearing: Friday, February 14, 2019, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent, and offers comments. The Department respectfully requests the Child Welfare Advisory Council, which is currently in operation, be the vehicle to engage our partner agencies and community stakeholders, statewide, to examine best practices to improve child safety through Child Welfare Services Branch. There are many community partners and stakeholders participating in this council, with statewide representation and include a former foster youth, birth grandparents, and resource caregiver.

**PURPOSE:** This bill would establish a child welfare services task force to examine the work of the Child Welfare Services Branch (CWSB).

The Department is committed to increasing child safety and continuous quality improvement, and there already exist numerous evaluative bodies and methods to provide feedback and direction to Hawaii's Child Welfare Services Branch.

Based on the results of the recent review by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which the bill references, CWSB has completed a thorough root-cause

analysis with guidance from ACF and the federal child welfare Capacity Building Center for States (CBCS). This analysis involved examinations of CWSB data from multiple perspectives, focus groups with staff, meetings and discussions with administrators, community partners, and stakeholders. Out of this thorough analysis, an action-based, formal Program Improvement Plan (PIP) has been developed with support from ACF and the CBCS. This PIP includes twenty-four distinct activities that are anticipated to result in improved outcomes for children and families. As part of the PIP, these activities will be regularly evaluated for efficacy, and altered, if needed, based on the evaluation data.

In addition to the federal ACF review, two independent groups meet regularly to review relevant data and information and then provide guidance to CWSB. The Citizens' Review Panel is made up of statewide community volunteers, who meet monthly, examine ways to improve CWSB practice, and provide feedback to CWSB. The Child Welfare Advisory Council meets quarterly, with statewide representation from numerous state agencies, community groups, service providers, stakeholders, and CWSB leadership. The Advisory Council reviews CWSB data, discusses CWSB projects and initiatives, and provides direction to CWSB.

Additionally, every year, CWSB's data is subject to federal audit, as well as State audit. Any deficiencies found in these audits are formally addressed through the implementation of written corrective action plans, whose progress is externally monitored.

CWSB's continuous quality improvement (CQI) focus is also evident in the partnered projects with its CQI contract with University of Hawaii, Maui College. The biggest collaborative project is the statewide reviews of CWSB cases. These reviews are conducted continually throughout the year, using the same formal evaluation tool as the federal case review system. The outcomes of these reviews become the basis of geographic-specific action plans to improve both CWSB performance and the outcomes for families in each area of the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**LATE**

**SB-1022-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/14/2019 7:44:42 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/14/2019 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Melodie Aduja	Testifying for O`ahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i	Support	No

Comments:



**LATE**

**SB-1022-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/13/2019 11:26:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/14/2019 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
kia-lyn.campbell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**SB-1022-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/13/2019 11:30:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/14/2019 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Shandon Cuba	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha WAM Committee,

My name is Shandon Cuba and my sisters and I spent many years in foster care. I support this bill because it actively seeks to find solutions to this over-burdened system. I think social workers should have enough time to do their visits every month. My sisters and I often went months without being visited and we weren't able to see each other because our homes were far apart. They got abused in that foster home and maybe that could have been prevented if the monthly checks were happening. Please support this bill.

Thank you for your time and the chance to testify,

Shandon Cuba