SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO INVESTIGATE AND ASSESS LAWS AFFECTING AT-RISK YOUTH.

WHEREAS, each day in Hawaii there are teenagers living on the streets, running away from abusive household situations and foster care, and confronting adult issues, who are unable to legally gain shelter; and

WHEREAS, teenage parents currently are unable to legally make decisions for and seek custody of their children; and

WHEREAS, current state law only allows for emancipation of a person under the age of eighteen upon the person's marriage; and

WHEREAS, the State has a vital interest in ensuring that there are legal mechanisms available to protect young adults from prostitution, sexual predators, and abuse, and to provide necessary safety net services so teenagers do not fall through the cracks; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2006, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to conduct a study of Hawaii's laws affecting youth under the age of eighteen and to recommend appropriate statutory changes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study shall include:

- An evaluation of the efficacy of Hawaii laws governing (1)youth rights, including:
 - (A) Emancipation;
 - (B) Custody by minor parents;

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(C) Access to shelters by runaways; and

(D) Access to public benefits;

 (2) An examination of other states' laws for comparison with Hawaii's laws governing youth rights; and

(3) An assessment of the current problems facing at-risk youth;

and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Lead Judge of the Family Court of each circuit, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and the Attorney General are requested to cooperate with the Legislative Reference Bureau in its investigation and study; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to convene a working group of youth advocate stakeholders and representatives of public interest groups, including, but not limited to, Hale Kipa, the Waikiki Health Center, the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Na Keiki Law Center, Hawaii Youth Services Network, Blueprint for Change, and GirlFest to collaborate with the Legislative Reference Bureau in its investigation and study; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2007; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Lead Judge of the Family Court for each circuit, the Director of Human Services, the Director of Health, the Superintendent of Education, the Attorney General, and the Acting Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau.

OFFERED BY: