

HB 1354



Child & Family

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**Testimony on HB 1354, Relating to Children**

**Senate Committee on Human Services**

Chair: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland Vice-Chair: Sen. Les Ihara, Jr.

Thursday, March 19, 2009, 2:15 p.m. Conference Room 016

By Howard S. Garval, President & CEO, Child & Family Service

Child & Family Service strongly supports HB1354! We must protect our keiki from child abuse and not just after the fact when abuse has already occurred. Hawaii had the incredible foresight to recognize that child abuse prevention is a great investment to make when it invented Healthy Start back in 1984. By 2001 the program was deployed statewide. It has been replicated in over 30 states under Healthy Families America because other states recognize the value and efficacy of the program.

There are multiple reasons that Child & Family Service wholeheartedly endorses HB 1354. Let me outline these below:

- Healthy Start works. In FY 08 for families that stayed 12 months or more in the program, over 99% had **no** report of child abuse! This exceeds child abuse rates that are higher nationally and in Hawaii.
- Healthy Start works with families in which at least one parent is at substantial risk of abusing and/or neglecting her/his baby/child. A scientifically validated checklist called the Kempe Family Stress Checklist is used to determine parental risk of child abuse. Only those families who score at a high enough level (scores of 30 and above) are referred to Healthy Start. Therefore, the program is working with high risk families and getting a terrific result as noted above.
- In Hawaii, Johns Hopkins University has been evaluating the program for many years. This has led to significant program improvements/enhancements that have strengthened the program. It also has helped to define a group of "anxious" mothers for whom Healthy Start has been very effective. For these moms, Healthy Start helped reduce child



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abuse by 60% and child neglect by 56%. This longitudinal evaluation was done using a control group which is the most valid form of evaluation.

- For a cost of \$3,000 per family, Healthy Start served over 4,000 families in FY 08. Estimates are that without Healthy Start services, 13% of the children would end up being abused. If one assumes 4,000 children who would be at risk if Healthy Start is eliminated, then 13% of that is 520 children who are likely to be abused. If you were to add up child welfare services costs including investigation, foster care, mental health treatment, potential future juvenile delinquency and school dropouts, the costs to the state would be substantial and would likely wipe out any savings achieved through program elimination.
- Hawaii would also walk away from **\$4.5 million** if Healthy Start is eliminated. Healthy Start bills under the Early Intervention Special Funds and draws down about **\$1.5 million** in Federal Medicaid reimbursement each year. Also, **\$.5 million** would be lost that comes in to the state from CAPTA and is allocated to the Children's Trust Fund managed by the Hawaii Community Foundation. Because of Hawaii's success in Healthy Start in having a research partner (Johns Hopkins University) with the Maternal Child Health Branch of the Department of Health, DOH recently was awarded a highly competitive grant from the Federal government of **\$2.5 million** over 5 years. If Healthy Start is eliminated, the state would be walking away from a total of **\$4.5 million** in revenue from other sources other than the state.
- While the state faces a significant budget shortfall, it makes no sense to eliminate a successful program where the cost to the state will only be higher if the services are no longer provided. Even reducing the program makes more sense than outright elimination. This ultimately would lead to fewer families being served and will heighten the risk of child abuse for



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some children, but is less damaging than no services at all to this high risk population.

- Very few programs that the state funds can match the rigorous evaluation and research that Healthy Start has had. Nationally there is growing research that documents the effectiveness and importance of home visiting programs in preventing child abuse. Even if Healthy Start is not perfect, this does not explain elimination. In fact if the state accepts the \$2.5 million from the recently awarded grant, Healthy Start can be strengthened even further so it can be even more effective.
- In addition to preventing child abuse, Healthy Start achieves certain other important outcomes such as: ensuring the family has a medical home, providing prenatal care for subsequent pregnancies for Healthy Start parents, performing developmental screening for a high percentage of one year olds and two year olds. Since children with special needs are at considerably higher risk of child abuse, it is important that special needs are identified early and referrals can then be made to appropriate service providers.
- While the Governor is to be applauded for trying to prevent layoffs of state employees, HB 1354 could soften the impact of or actually prevent layoffs in the nonprofit organizations that provide Healthy Start services throughout the state of Hawaii. Eliminating Healthy Start would result in the layoffs of 200 employees statewide among the six providers of Healthy Start services. Our estimate of the unemployment costs would be \$2.4 million. This assumes a mix of paraprofessional and professional staff who would be laid off statewide if the program is eliminated with an estimated \$300+ in unemployment payments to paraprofessionals and \$545/week for professionals for 30 weeks under the new federal extension of unemployment benefits.



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- There is no equivalent or duplicative program to Healthy Start. Enhanced Healthy Start only gets involved when the family is an active CWS case and abuse and/or neglect has already occurred. Therefore, if Healthy Start is eliminated, at least 4,000 families in Hawaii who are at risk of child abuse and neglect will not receive services. There is no other program that would pick up these families and it is likely that the family won't be known unless they end up as a Child Protection case with CWS or when the children are ready to enter school. By then, if there was abuse and/or neglect, the trauma and damage to the child(ren) will have already occurred and it will be more expensive to treat.

For all of the reasons stated above, Child & Family Service strongly supports HB 1354 that restores funding through state general operating funds and TANF funds to the Healthy Start Home Visiting program. We can continue to intervene early to prevent child abuse and strengthen families, or we can pick up the pieces only after abuse and/or neglect has occurred when the damage is already done that may have lifelong consequences for children. I urge you to opt for the former by restoring funding to the highly successful Healthy Start program.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Howard S. Garval, MSW



**PACT**

**PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER**

*A Family Service Agency*

1485 Linapuni Street, Suite 105  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819  
Tel. (808) 847-3285  
Fax (808) 841-1485

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CPS VISITATION CENTERS

EARLY HEAD START/  
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CENTER

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FAMILY VISITATION CENTER

HANA LIKE HOME  
VISITOR PROGRAM

HAWAII FAMILY SUPPORT  
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**MEMBER:**

CWLA

ALOHA UNITED WAY

COA

**TO:** Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice-Chair  
Committee on Human Services

**FROM:** Julie Falicki, Program Director  
Parents And Children Together  
Hana Like Home Visitor Program

**DATE:** March 16, 2009

**RE:** **HB 1354, HD 2**  
**In Support of Funding for Healthy Start \$9.4 M**

My name is Julie Falicki. I am the Program Director for PACT's Hana Like Home Visitor Program. Hana Like is a member of the statewide Healthy Start Network. I have worked in the Healthy Start program in a variety of roles since 1993. PACT is one of Hawaii's leading not-for-profit human services providers, with 12 programs statewide serving over 9,000 clients annually. I am submitting testimony **in support of funding for Healthy Start.**

The importance of the first three years of life has been well established. The years from birth to three lay the foundation for each child's cognitive and emotional development. The quality of the child's early environment, including their relationship with their parents and the provision of early learning experiences, is predictive of that child's later success in areas such as school performance and social adjustment.

It is the mission of the Healthy Start program to optimize each child's development during these critical years by providing at-risk families with the skills and support needed to nurture their child's development and to avoid setting patterns of parenting which may lead to child abuse and neglect and poor developmental outcomes. This is done through regular home visitation by a Home Visitor, developmental screening to identify and address developmental concerns, the provision of information on effective parenting techniques and child development, and referral to community resources to reduce family stress. The services provided by the paraprofessional Home Visitor are supported by professional Child Development Specialists, who address developmental concerns, and Family Specialists, who address risk factors such as mental health issues and substance abuse.

During these tough economic times, it is tempting to drastically reduce or eliminate programs that may be viewed by some as non-essential. Families referred to Healthy Start are those determined to be at risk for



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- CWLA
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child abuse and neglect, as measured by a validated tool. The Healthy Start program has proven to be effective in ameliorating those factors associated with child abuse and neglect, such as unrealistic expectations of children, lack of knowledge of child development, history of abuse and neglect in the parents' own childhood, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, social isolation, and limited resources. This is accomplished through direct services by the Healthy Start team, as well as referrals to community resources. The program aims to build supports and reduce stressors, thereby promoting each family's capacity to foster their child's development as well as the family's self-reliance and resilience. The program also promotes the use of a medical home, immunizations, family planning and prenatal care to avoid costs associated with crisis care.

Drastic reduction to or elimination of Healthy Start will take away this safety net for vulnerable families, which will result in increased costs elsewhere, such as Child Welfare Services and foster care, and costs associated with developmental delays such as special education. Additional short-term costs of significant program reduction or elimination include unemployment for Healthy Start employees statewide, loss of income to the state from Medicaid reimbursements drawn down by the program at a rate of around 1.5 million a year, as well as a federal Administration for Children and Families grant of 2.5 million recently awarded to the Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Branch to continue to improve the program over the next 5 years.

Long-term costs associated with child abuse and neglect include school failure, substance abuse, an unprepared work force, mental health treatment, crime, as well as illnesses now known to be associated with early trauma and neglect. Healthy Start has been a national leader in prevention services for over 20 years, and has been a model for similar programs in over 35 states. Let us continue to be a model for protecting our most vulnerable citizens.



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TO:** Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair of the Committee on Human Services  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee

**FROM:** Trisha Wilson, Program Director  
Catholic Charities Hawaii  
Healthy Start Program

**DATE:** Thursday, March 19, 2009  
2:15 pm  
Conference Room 016  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**RE:** In Support of HB 1354, HD2 RELATING TO CHILDREN

My name is Trisha Wilson. I am one of the Program Directors of Catholic Charities Hawaii's Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, also known as Ka Malama Punua (KMP). Catholic Charities Hawaii, along with six other providers and supporters, is part of the statewide Healthy Start network, providing services on six islands. Catholic Charities Hawaii is also the Healthy Start Early Identification Program service provider for the island of Oahu. I am testifying in full support of HB 1354, HD2

For over 20 years, Healthy Start has been an evolving resource for Hawaii's families by identifying families at risk of abuse and neglect and providing voluntary home-based child abuse and neglect prevention services. As Hawaii's social landscape has changed, the program has worked to change with it and respond to the acute needs of our population, including services that effectively address substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, housing instability, unwanted pregnancy, and unsafe parenting practices. This statewide program has facilitated improvement in the lives of many at-risk families by providing parents with the information, resources, and support that helped them to make safe, healthy, and nurturing choices for their children.

During times of economic crisis and decreasing resources, agencies such as Catholic Charities Hawaii turn to our mission and core values to guide us through difficult decisions. Currently our vulnerable populations are at risk of losing vital support services essential to keeping them safe. Hawaii Healthy Start is a program that speaks to the very core of our mission – which is to serve those people with the greatest need, in this case young children and their families who need the support of the social safety net to stay safe, sheltered, and healthy. We understand that the state cannot afford to fund the program at previous levels and urge that leadership fund the redesigned model of Healthy Start that keeps the best of the program and allows services to continue at a lower



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[www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org)



cost to the state. We as a state need to recognize that this investment in our children is absolutely critical to the health of our community.

Additionally, it is of the utmost importance that the statewide Enhanced Healthy Start program continues to receive funding. Enhanced Healthy Start serves families that are involved with Child Welfare Services, a segment of the population that was previously ineligible for Healthy Start home visiting services. Without services, these infants and toddlers face life in unstable and unsafe home environments and are at high risk of abuse and neglect. They also face the potential of being permanently removed from their biological parents, experiencing multiple foster home placements and separation from extended family.

Since receiving referrals in February of 2006, the Catholic Charities Hawaii Enhanced Healthy Start (EHS) program has helped families in the following ways:

- Provided assistance in locating and maintaining housing for several families;
- Initiated counseling services and provided treatment referrals for families struggling with substance abuse;
- Engaged parents successfully discharged from Drug Treatment and facilitated visitation with their infants;
- Initiated therapeutic services for children.
- Ensured that every infant/toddler with documented in-utero drug exposure and/or physical injuries received appropriate developmental services.
- Participated in Ohana Conferences and Kapiolani Child Protection Team meetings to ensure a safe environment for the infants;
- Provided parents with positive discipline techniques, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

The program has also produced the following favorable measurable outcomes:

- 100% of families involved in Catholic Charities Hawaii EHS services have had no new, confirmed reports of abuse/neglect.
- 89% of birth families have experienced reduced risk factors after 6 months of participating in EHS services.
- 100% of families have had no new, confirmed reports of abuse or neglect six months after successful discharge from EHS services.

It is critical that the Enhanced Healthy Start program continue to receive funds at the current level in order to continue to serve this very vulnerable population. These services help to create and maintain stronger families and provide for a safe and healthy environment for Hawaii's children.

We ask for your support for the children and families of Hawaii who are vulnerable and benefit from Healthy Start Services. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**A JOINT LEGISLATIVE EFFORT**

E-Mail: [HMSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:HMSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov)  
Regarding: Senate HMS Hearing  
Hearing on: March 19, 2009 @ 2:15 p.m. in room #016

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**Date:** March 17, 2009  
**To:** Senate Committee on Human Services  
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr. Vice Chair  
**From:** Dennis Arakaki  
Executive Director  
Hawaii Family Forum / Hawaii Catholic Conference  
**Re:** Support for HB 1354 HD2 Relating to Children

Honorable members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, I am Dennis Arakaki, representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii.

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii. The Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii.

For over 20 years, Healthy Start has been an evolving resource for Hawaii's families by identifying families at risk of abuse and neglect and providing voluntary home-based child abuse and neglect prevention services.

This statewide program has facilitated improvement in the lives of many at-risk families by providing parents with the information, resources, and support that helped them to make safe, healthy, and nurturing choices for their children.

Currently our vulnerable populations are at risk of losing vital support services essential to keeping them safe. Hawaii Healthy Start is a program that speaks to the very core of our mission – which is to serve those people with the greatest need, in this case young children and their families who need the support of the social safety net to stay safe, sheltered, and healthy.

During the current economic struggle, we understand that the state cannot afford to fund the program at previous levels; however, we urge the leadership to fund the redesigned model of Healthy Start which keeps the best of the program and allows services to continue at a lower cost to the state.

This investment in our children is absolutely critical to the health of our community.

HB 1354 HD 2 Relating to Children  
Support  
Page Two

**Additionally, it is of the utmost importance that the statewide Enhanced Healthy Start program continue to receive funding.**

Enhanced Healthy Start serves families that are involved with Child Welfare Services, a segment of the population that was previously ineligible for Healthy Start home visiting services. Without services, these infants and toddlers face life in unstable and unsafe home environments and are at high risk of abuse and neglect. They also face the potential of being permanently removed from their biological parents, experiencing multiple foster home placements and separation from extended family.

Since receiving referrals in February of 2006, our community partner, Catholic Charities Hawaii Enhanced Healthy Start (EHS) program, has helped families in the following ways:

- Provided assistance in locating and maintaining housing for several families;
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- Engaged parents successfully discharged from Drug Treatment and facilitated visitation with their infants;
- Initiated therapeutic services for children.
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It is critical that the Enhanced Healthy Start program continue to receive funds at the current level in order to continue to serve this very vulnerable population. These services help to create and maintain stronger families and provide for a safe and healthy environment for Hawaii's children.

We ask for your support for the children and families of Hawaii who are vulnerable and benefit from Healthy Start Services.

Mahalo you for this opportunity to testify.



Hearing date:  
Thursday,  
March 19, 2:15  
pm.  
Senate Human  
Services  
Committee  
Room 016

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Vice Chair  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director  
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Thursday, March 19, 2009, 2:15 pm  
Conference Room 016

Subject: **SB1354 SD2: Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.**

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a policy and advocacy organization focused on Hawaii's youngest children and their families. We strive to ensure a nurturing, safe and healthy development for all children from pre-birth to age eight. We believe all children deserve safe and supportive environments that meet their needs as they grow and develop.

**We support this bill.**

Hawaii's Healthy Start program is regarded as foundational to our early learning system. The hospital screenings as well as the home visits are critical to the prevention of child abuse and neglect for Hawaii's families. Healthy Start also initiates vitally important parental engagement and training as to how the family can foster a child's early learning and healthy growth.

At a time when Hawaii's weakened economy is placing more stress on families, it is critical that programs such as Healthy Start not be eliminated. At a minimum, the maintenance of prevention programs is a must. Long-term studies show that if we do not support prevention, our state will have to pay more in social services and remedial education costs years from now as these children enter school, and eventually join the workforce and become parents.

Please protect our young children and support their healthy development.

Mahalo for your support.

For more information contact: Good Beginnings Alliance; phone: 531-5502;  
[lchun@goodbeginnings.org](mailto:lchun@goodbeginnings.org)



UNIVERSITY  
of HAWAII\*  
MĀNOA

March 19, 2008

Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Chair  
Members of the Human Services Committee  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hi 96813

Re: HB 1354, Relating to TANF

Dear Senator Chun-Oakland:

I am Gail Breakey, Director of the Hawaii Family Support Institute testifying in support of HB 1354, to ensure TANF funding for both the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start programs..

With elimination of general funds in the budget for Healthy Start, TANF funding will be a critical part of restoring adequate funding for programs state-wide to survive. It is clear that in this time of economic downturn, these funds will be sorely needed as part of the effort to maintain services for the highest risk families.

As you know, the service providers have developed a more streamlined assessment process and services that will actually intervene with only the highest risk families, those with scores of 40 and over on the Family Stress Checklist, who according to the validation study on the Checklist have a 50% likelihood of becoming a child welfare case.

Thank you very much for your understanding of the importance of this statewide program to help ensure the safety and well being of Hawaii's most vulnerable Keiki, and your serious consideration of allocating these funds to the Healthy Start program.

Sincerely,

Gail Breakey

J

Testimony strongly in favor of 1354, from Linda Coble,  
Advisory Board, Hawaii Family Support Institute

Aloha to the Human Service Committee and Lawmakers Dedicated  
to the Prevention of Child Abuse,

This is testimony strongly in favor of cross over HB1354, from Linda  
Coble, Advisory Board, Hawaii Family Support Institute and long-time  
supporter and board member of Healthy Start, since the mid 80's.

Aloha and mahalo for your support of keeping the child abuse  
prevention program, Healthy Start, alive and well at a time when the  
most vulnerable of our citizens...our keiki...need your attention and  
vision. Because without Healthy Start, children will slip through the  
safety net...and I will have the horrendous responsibility of reporting  
on the egregious death of this child or that child, at the hands of  
frustrated, frightened, ill equipped parents, who strike out at the most  
innocent in the family.

I am not employed by an organization supported by a state contract.  
But I care about the consequences of ripping away the safety net of  
prevention....pre-natal and just after birth hospital based identification  
of at-risk families...home visitation and referrals to the necessary  
agencies identified by Healthy Start teams. The Centers for Disease  
Control has endorsed home visiting as an effective intervention to  
avert abuse and promote healthy development. Promoting good  
parent-child relationships reduces the risk and promotes development  
of our keiki. There is no way that statistical data can measure the  
positive supportive person...the Healthy Start Home Visitor...in the lives  
of families. And yet, Healthy Start has been evaluated more than any  
program I know, and for families that stay 12 months or more in the  
program...in FY 2008, more than 99 percent had no report of child  
abuse.

Eliminate this program, and 4-thousand families at risk of child abuse  
will not have an alternative way out. Eliminate Healthy Start, and we  
will wait together, for the time reporters describe the grizzly details of  
child abuse on the evening news or in the paper...and we will sit back  
and say....you know, we could have prevented this, by investing in  
prevention. It would have been one dollar invested for a 3 to 4 dollar  
return. The children neglected and abused today will be in tomorrow's

rehab and prisons...they will fail in school and will not be able to contribute to society as productive citizens.

Preserve our keiki safety net, by restoring funding to Healthy Start. It will preserve not only the health and safety of families, it will keep valid the 2.5 million dollar Administration for Children and Families grant to expand Healthy Start's effectiveness in improving the prevention efforts over the next five years. And to critics who say, "Ain't no big thing, we have Enhanced Healthy Start."....that program serves children where abuse or neglect has already been reported. Relying solely on Enhanced Healthy Start will mean the elimination of PREVENTION SERVICES.

We must break the cycle of abuse.

Mahalo for the opportunity to express my thoughts and strongly encourage support for 1354.

Aloha,  
Linda Coble  
Advisory Board, Hawaii Family Support Institute  
284-2000

To whom it may concern,

**I support HB1354 HD2.**

**Please appropriate TANIF funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs** in order to continue the **critical work** being done in the homes of **needy and overwhelmed families** with young children 0-3 years old. These families, often in crisis, **depend on the supportive services Healthy Start** and Enhanced Healthy Start provide which consist of child development and parenting information, crisis intervention and guidance to outside resources. **Healthy Start services are a life line for families in need** and without them we can be sure child abuse and neglect will increase.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Pietsch  
Intake Supervisor  
Maui Family Support Services

March 17, 2009

The Honorable Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Subject: Letter of strong support for HB 1354 HD2  
RELATING TO CHILDREN.

Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.

It is definitely a stormy season for the Healthy Start program as it has suffered severe funding cuts at the expense of at risk families with infants and toddlers that desperately need support during this deluge of economic hardships! The rainy day is here, and the most vulnerable population of newborns, infants and toddlers need protection and adequate support!

Healthy Start's home visiting services have been proven to be effective in protecting the most vulnerable families and young children in the community, helping to **prevent** child abuse and neglect, catching developmental delays, referring families to other needed resources, improving family functioning and preparing the young children to be school ready to lead productive lives in the future.

TANF funds and general revenue funds will be well invested in home visiting services facilitated by Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start, providing the eyes and the ears and advocacy for helpless infants and toddlers of families in need.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ave Diaz  
Healthy Start Home Visiting Supervisor  
1844 Wili Pa Loop  
Wailuku, HI 96779  
242-0900

Nicole Holler  
March 17, 2009  
Organization: Individual  
Testify: in Support  
HB 1354 HD 2

Aloha Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair Senator Les Ihara, Vice chair, and members of the committee. My name is Nicole Holler. I am a student at the University of Hawaii. I am in the masters program in social work and I am a member of NASW. I ~~am testifying in opposition of bill HB 1354 HD 2.~~ → *amitted to clarify*

I strongly feel that bill HB 1354 will improve the quality of life in Hawaii for the population of mothers and children. This bill will provide the funds necessary to continue healthy start and enhanced healthy start programs. These services will benefit Hawaii's children and mothers.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on bill HB 1354 HD 2. I strongly urge you to support this bill.

To the Honorable State of Hawaii Committee members on Health and Human Services:

While considering **HB1354 HD2** please keep in mind the State of Hawaii's Healthy Start Program (HSP) modeled after nationwide and internationally for its effectiveness. The HSP works with low-income, high risk families with very young children between the ages of zero to three years old.

It is critical family and mothers with newborn babies are informed of infant growth and brain development and to develop a healthy environment at home to prevent repeated generations of domestic violence that leads to low self-esteem, lack of self worth and chronic illness and suicide. Please we are the voices for the babies and we are the support for every family in HS to develop a healthy lifestyle and environment. A 2000 study conducted by Felitti on "Adverse Childhood Experiences" showed that early intervention is essential.

The program is funded through the State's Department of Health and HSP has been targeted with deep cuts at the peril of non-existence. I humbly ask you to search for provision for its continuity. We are hoping for the viability of the program once Federal funds and other private resources are available.

Thank you for your kind attention and consideration,

Tammy Ruiz  
Kula, Maui 96790  
(808) 269-3506

*Tammy Ruiz*

March 16, 2009

The Honorable Suzanne Chung Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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RELATING TO CHILDREN.

Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.

Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2:15 p.m.

Honorable Senator Suzanne Chung Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.:

**PLEASE** pass **HB 1354 HD2** which includes funding for the State of Hawaii's Healthy Start Program. This program identifies high risk families with very young children between the ages of zero and three years old and provides home visiting services to them. The Healthy Start Program helps break the chain of child abuse. The Healthy Start Program teaches parenting skills, ensures the babies are receiving regular medical care including immunizations, identifies areas where a family may need more help and collaborates with other community resources to make sure the needed help is received.

The Healthy Start Program is funded through the State Department of Health and has already received deep funding cuts this year. Providers are struggling to continue to serve as many families as they can while being told they must cut the number served drastically to stay within the new budget. Please, I respectfully ask you to approve this bill so that the Healthy Start Program may continue providing services to Hawaii's at-risk families and children.

Thank you!

Doris MacFarlane  
Haiku, Maui, HI 96708  
(808) 575-7478

From Lisa Dillon  
Po Box 2005  
Kaunakakai  
HI  
96748

HB 1354

SUPPORT

Aloha

I live on Molokai the birth place of Healthy Start. This is something I learned at the meeting on Molokai with Senator English.

Twenty eight years ago Clair Iverson had an office just up stairs from where Linda Lingle had an office a a journalist. I mention that because as a journalist you are keenly aware of your community success and failures and the needs of people. I was chosen by our Kupuna on Molokai who work for Healthy Start to come and speak here and I am humbled and honored to do so. Please, when you listen to me realize you are listening to the families impacted by Healthy Start. The result of Healthy Start are the over 4000 clients served State wide. Again Healthy Start workers are your first responders in criss prevention Not only young mothers in crisis are involved. Healthy Start creates a network of health and education for young parents and concerned family members that is invaluable to preventing crisis. As well as gives our young parents the tools to make responsible decisions concerning their children with confidence. Take away Healthy Start, when our Country and State are in a Recession already depressed to the hilt. I don't understand this, it is courting crisis and irresponsible thinking to cut Healthy Start.

The whole family is involved in raising our children on Molokai. Many homes on Molokai are multi-generational family's and those family members are also learning positive parenting skills that aid to help these young families. I am speaking to every one of you that is a parent or grandparent. Imagine if you did not have the services to catch early developmental delays for your children or your grandchildren. I know the feeling because it took three years before my grandson on the mainland was diagnosed with sever autism. Healthy Start would have caught that so much sooner had that program been available to my older daughter. I called our local health providers and asked if we have had an increase in teen births in the past 5 years. "There has been a marked increase in the past 3 years and it is not slowing down anytime soon". Every aspect of of the health community is outraged and saddened by this decision to cut funds for Healthy Start. Some who have been directly served by Healthy Start and became Community leaders because of the Nurturing of a handful of over worked and under paid workers from Healthy Start. Take away the safety net Healthy Start creates you are asking for a rise in crisis and all the costs crisis entails. Can Hawaii afford that? Healthy Start saves the State 3 dollars for every dollar it spends on crisis intervention and crimes involved in neglect and abuse. I am sure the number are higher. I see the difference in family's who are involved in Healthy Start, these young families are gaining tools, knowledge and confidence to be great parents. Because of my disabilities, I live with my daughter and her family, I see first hand the lessons implemented and the results.

Every parent deserves to know they are doing the right thing with their children. Our young mothers read the healthy parenting magazines at their Dr's office. Every one of them tell them "early childhood development i best for baby" Where are our young mothers and fathers going to get that without Healthy Start. Many Healthy Start workers volunteer more than just hours to help their clients. Ms Lingle wants to cut a program that needs proper funding.

A Report from the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics finds the program 40% underfunded. I implore you to take a moment and read the entire report Please, our Kupuna on Molokai say no thank you to

*new parks and roads at expense of our Keiki. Soon Father Damian will be made a Saint, do we have to dumb down our children to pay for it in beautification projects for tourists. I asked our Catholic Deacon on Molokai if we are ready for this? Please, the world will soon focus on Molokai are they going to see an Island in crisis? they will if there are no funds for Healthy Start.*

*People are not going to just drive from one end of the Island to another and not observe the people. Aloha is more than just a word it is a gift you give for goodness sake. As a grandmother, I ask you to reconsider cutting funds for this program that helps my grandchildren. I promise every one of you you will not regret your decision. My grandchildren are better people because of Healthy Start. Every child impacted by Healthy Start is stronger because of it. That is the foundation of a healthy community. Hawaii has money for Pork barrel spending? but not for Healthy Start, a program with a 98% success rate? I am sorry it just makes no sense.*

*You were elected and entrusted with the future of Hawaii and now we have the dubious distinction of being the 2nd highest on the list of Pork Belly Spending States. Is this really how politics has to get things done? Our Healthy Start workers found out on Dec. 22nd by way of the TV that Gov. Linda Lingle aims to cut the program! For all the hard work Healthy Start Hawaii does! For all of the hours volunteered above and beyond because of lack of funding this is how our Government says Mahalo?*

*Take a walk down town Kaunakakai you will see babies at every turn. I look into their faces and wonder just what kind of future does Ms Lingle plan for them. My daughters graduating class of 2007 had 28 girls, all but 3 are mothers today. Remember from the Woman's Health Center "We have seen a marked increase rise in teen pregnancy and it is not slowing down any time soon" Who are these young mother and fathers going to turn too for best advise?*

*Healthy Start workers are our first responders. You take away that extra set of eyes the Health Dept Nurse needs, you cost the State more money! You take away the eyes of crisis prevention, you add to already over burdened systems. It just does not make any sense financially. President Obama aid in one Speech "No Working Program will be cut" Healthy Start not only has a 98% success rate here in Hawaii but also has great success Nation Wide. How can our fine Governor argue with that?*

*Thank you for your listening.  
Much Aloha.  
Lisa Dillon*

Greetings, this testimony is from a Healthy Start Participant.

HB 1354

Hello,

I am writing on behalf of the Healthy Start Program. I understand that its funding may be cut, or that the program may eventually be eliminated all together.

I have been a part of HS since I was pregnant. That was over two years ago. I have received so much from the program. From counseling when I couldn't afford it, and desperately needed someone to mediate for son's father and I before he moved away from Hawaii, to always having someone to help guide me toward the right resource (healthcare info, low income housing info, affordable daycare info, rental assistance info, parenting class info).

HS has been such a large and important part of mine and my son's life. I have learned so much about child development, and I have shared this info with friends of mine and in turn, I know that I have changed the lives of other parents and children, by helping them to be more aware of children's needs. I also feel that sometimes parents just need extra support, so that they can be at their best as parents. HS provides that support, and to people who need it the most....people who are typically under more stresses than most...single parents, new parents, parents with low income and little support in their lives.

I think that HS plays such a big role in early intervention....if I didn't have HS, I might not have received the support I needed to create a positive foundation with my son's father. Instead, HS helped me by allowing me to work with the clinical specialist, who helped me through numerous issues and hardships related to ironing things out with him. Today we have a weekly phone schedule, where he calls and talks to his son.

I have called and enrolled for welfare in the past, when I had little to no money to raise my son with. I found out the phone number and how to go about signing up, through HS. My family support worker helped me to sign up for a food assistance program, WIC, for food stamps, to receive extra food from the food bank, to know where to look for low-income housing, rental assistance, and a daycare that I can afford. On top of all of this, I have learned to be an excellent parent, and I can see the results in my two year old son, who is attentive, bright, and loving.

I have been so inspired by the HS program, that I have become a volunteer and a parent leader. I have organized a hiking group and a parent support group. I have helped with a free swap, where parents can come to shop for things they might be able to use at home. I want parents to know they are supported, because I believe this is the number one way that they can in turn be better parents.

I hope that you will consider giving the Healthy Start program the funding it deserves. It's the family's like mine, who appreciate it the most. And I am just one family. There are hundreds, thousands even, more.....and those children are our future. They deserve to have the opportunity for an excellent start in life, like my son Kin has.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer R. Hunt

Support

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Subject: Letter of strong support for HB 1354 HD2  
RELATING TO CHILDREN.

Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.

Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2:15 p.m.

Honorable Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.:

Aloha, my name is Scotty Wilhelm and I am testifying in strong support of HB1354, HD2

As for my personal testimony, I am a native of Molokai and I can attest to the fact that living on the Island there is hard. We do whatever we can to provide for our families, we hunt and fish and farm. It is a basic living, but there are stresses and outside influences that make it hard sometimes to deal with. It's easy to get caught up also in a life that is on the wild side, and I've had my share of difficulties and have tried to overcome many of them.

For me, having our family in the Healthy start program was one of the factors that helped me find the strength to be a more successful father. Even in my darkest times the kindnesses extended to me by the healthy start workers and the love I saw in Auntie Lottie as she helped my family, softened my heart. Auntie Lottie and her quiet willingness to help us, made me more willing to pick up reading materials she would bring by and learn things I wasn't open to before. I could see, from a father's standpoint, my child growing and learning things quicker than I thought possible.

My eyes became open as my partner would share things she learned in meetings and visits, and these were important things to my family. The healthy start team did a lot to help my family during financial hard times, and when times became better they were filled with encouragement. Every time I went to a monthly family meeting or gathering, they went out of their way to encourage me, a father. That had an immediate impact on my confidence. I felt it more possible for me to be a better provider, not just by having a job, but by being there to offer emotional support to my family as well.

I am very much in support of this program, and resolution HB1354, HD2 and I hope more father's can have a positive impact through this program, Healthy Start.

Please support HB1354, HD2  
Thank you for this opportunity,  
Scott H. Wilhelm

*The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813*

*Subject: Letter of strong support for HB 1354 HD2  
RELATING TO CHILDREN.*

*Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.*

*Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2:15 p.m.*

*Honorable Senator Suzanne Chung Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.:*

*Testimony for Wednesday, March 18, 2009.  
In SUPPORT of HB1354, HD2  
Written Submittal for Barbe Bright  
Former client of the Healthy Start Program*

*Aloha,*

*My name is Barbe Bright, I am a former client of the Healthy Start program, Molokai. I am testifying in support of HB1354, HD2 and I thank you for hearing my testimony today. I am testifying to the fact that this program is an important and effective on the Island of Molokai, and has indeed touched our lives with positive results.*

*As a mother of a recent Healthy Start Graduate, and proud parent of Mahealani, a healthy, happy, well adjusted 3 1/2 year old who is school-ready. I can attest to the fact that this program is one of the reasons for my daughter's hope-filled future. I can personally say that this program has helped our family through some very challenging times, and has been so supportive of Mahealani throughout her stages of development, both mentally, and physically.*

*Auntie Lottie, our affectionate name for the worker who has tirelessly stood beside our family through the good and the bad times, as helped us early on with home visits, and with moral support. She brought to our attention updated research findings and information available to help us parent our child in the most educated and effective ways. She informed us of local events that would foster her social development. She was on top of Mahealani's childhood progress from birth through her graduation of the program with a number of questionnaires and developmental age-appropriate suggestions to help us along. She worked with us continually while being sensitive to my personal parenting style. Always willing to answer questions I had, and being available night or day, at home or work. This was especially valuable as parenting is a 24 hour process.*

*During our rough and stressful times of going without some of the basics, when we needed a hand, Auntie Lottie and all the staff at Healthy Start Molokai were there for us, sometimes with food certificates from the local grocery stores, sometimes Christmas presents and basic necessities items. More importantly at times they*

*provided less tangible things, like a simple hug, or words of encouragement that go a long way to help a very stressed out mother trying to raise a child during times of extreme difficulties.*

*Even after the rough times subsided, the staff at Healthy Start gave us positive suggestions and directed us to other helps, like the Tutu and Me program, which is a kind of "mommy & me" type of pre-school, where we are still attending, and where my daughter continues to flourish.*

*I thank God Mahealani is a very Healthy child, and besides the tough economic times there were no physical challenges or learning disabilities to overcome, but I speak now on behalf of other parents that have come through the program, or may need it in the future. Some may have other trials or hardships to go through, and some may not. But I sincerely believe that this program is a necessary comprehensive safety net that definitely would help any child and family who are participating get the maximum care and possibly prevent a variety of problems that could emerge, if not for that family-style program and close relationship that these staff members build. I believe that some problems truly can be minimized or stopped before they become something too large for a child or parent to overcome.*

*I stand before you thankfully, with a Healthy Child who has a bright future and implore you on behalf of those who come in the future, please support HB1354, HD2 so that we can have more bright futures for our keiki ahead.*

*Thank you for this opportunity to present my testimony in support of HB1354, HD2.*

*Barbe Bright*

The Honorable Suzanne Chung Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**Subject: Letter of strong support for HB 1354 HD2  
RELATING TO CHILDREN.**

**Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.**

**Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2:15 p.m.**

MICHELLE FUJIE

P.O. Box 630005  
Lanai City, Hawaii 96763

Governor Linda Lingle

Dear Governor Linda Lingle,

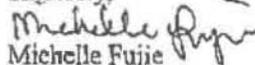
My name is Michelle Fujie and my daughter's name is Meyah. I am writing this letter to urge you to save the Healthy Start program by not cutting it from the Department of Health budget in July. Please reinstate the Healthy Start program into the budget.

My daughter and I are participants in the Healthy Start program on the island of Lana'i. There are not many programs offered on island because of our small population. However, the Healthy Start program is one of the few programs offered that focuses on the development of young children and parents. I cannot image how Lana'i would feel knowing that the wide range of parenting information and services provided to them through the Healthy Start program is suddenly unavailable. It is sad to think that such a valuable program could be taken away from Lana'i.

I feel that this program is very effective and that it is meeting a real community need. The Healthy Start program is important to my daughter and I because it provides me with the support and information necessary to raise my daughter in the most happy and healthy environment. I am a single parent trying to raise my daughter the best that I can and I must admit that not everyone knows how to effectively raise let alone parent children. The program gives me a chance to become a better parent by learning valuable skills to deal with the difficult challenges of raising a child. Without the Healthy Start program I would not know much about or where to look for these kinds of resources. Parenting is a full time job and I believe that any parent who is lucky enough to participate in this program is investing in the their child's future.

Governor Lingle, please realize that it is a big mistake to stop funding the Healthy Start Program because the program is a valuable, effective, and efficient investment in the future of Hawaii's parents and children.

Sincerely,

  
Michelle Fujie

*The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813*

*Subject: Letter of strong support for HB 1354 HD2 RELATING TO CHILDREN.  
Appropriates Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the  
Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional  
staff and for provider training.*

*Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2:15 p.m.*

*Honorable Senator Suzanne Chung Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.:*

*I am sure you are all aware of the facts pertaining to HB1354 HD2 as you have read them many times over. I will not reiterate the numbers again. What I do want to convey to you is behind each fact and number is a face of a child and the voice of each family member that have received Healthy Start Services. Each child's face and each family's voice represent the future of our State...the children and families that will showcase Hawaii to their neighbors, to the nation and to the world, in the future years to come.*

*The benefits of Healthy Start services ARE really short-term as each child reaches school readiness in just three years after birth. You who are parents know that three years go by pretty fast. Children become eager to participate in learning because their parents become eager for their success! Within another short spurt of growth and development, a child stands on the precipice of becoming a citizen of its community. How a child chooses to participate in his or her community becomes the most crucial selection for us. Through participation in the Healthy Start Home Visiting Program, parents are given the opportunity to promote their child's empathy for neighbors and promote self pride as result of accomplishments whereby fostering self worth and good decision making skills.*

*Whether a child chooses to impact their community through the education system, through the State's work force or chooses to drain their community's resources through the juvenile and adult criminal justice system, greatly influences the State of Hawaii's economic sustainability. How can the State's Legislative body say a child's formative years are too long of a term to reap the economic benefits of this program?*

*Healthy Start is in the dream building business. It helps parents visualize the opportunities that are there for their children. It supports the "I can do this" self talk. And as parents dream...so do their children... and we all know that dreams are what futures are made of.*

*Please support HB1354 HD2 for our future.*

*Glenna Okamura, M.S.W.  
Resident  
Maui, Hawaii*

Testimony for HMS 3/19/2009 2:15:00 PM HB1354

Conference room: 016  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Colleen Welty  
Organization: Individual  
Address: 328 Hololani St. Pukalani, HI 96768  
Phone: 808-572-0964  
E-mail: [colleen@mfss.org](mailto:colleen@mfss.org)  
Submitted on: 3/17/2009

Comments:

Please support this Bill Related to Children and support funding for both Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start. These 2 programs are up and running with trained staff who go into the homes as family support workers and help families on the front lines to be better, more attentive and caring parents. This is working, don't break it!!!

Testimony for HMS 3/19/2009 2:15:00 PM HB1354

Conference room: 016

Testifier position: support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Annette Keanu

Organization: Individual

Address: 87-1236 Hakimo Road Waianae, Hawaii

Phone: 808-306-5947

E-mail: [akkeanu@hawaii.edu](mailto:akkeanu@hawaii.edu)

Submitted on: 3/17/2009

Comments:

I understand the hearing is scheduled for March 19, 2009. I am in support of HB 1354 and I respectfully request my written testimony be read. Thank you.

March 18, 2009

Honorable Suzanne Chung Oakland and Senator Les Ihara, Jr.  
State of Hawaii, Joint Hearings  
Twenty-Fifth Legislatures  
State Capitol  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Subject: Letter of Support for HB 1354 HD2 (Relating to Children)  
Hearing to be held on Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2:15 pm

Aloha,

I'm a strong supporter of Healthy Start, and I write this letter to urge you to please support Bill HB 1354 HD2 (Relating to Children) that appropriates temporary assistance for needy families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.

Healthy Start programs are in crucial need of funds to continue early intervention services to families. Researched evidence proves that Healthy Start programs/home visiting services prevent child abuse and neglect. Healthy Start programs offer vital services to families at-risk and it would be a tragedy for families in need to not be able to access services.

Your **SUPPORT** and consideration of this Bill is appreciated.

Lots of Aloha,

Robin Dickson  
(808) 878-6062



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

March 19, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1354, H.D. 2 - RELATING TO CHILDREN**

Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2009; 2:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of H.B. 1354, H.D. 2 is to appropriate Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds and general revenue funds for the Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start programs, to maintain current services, to hire additional staff and for provider training.

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) respectfully opposes this measure.

The Healthy Start program has been associated with prevention of child abuse since its inception as a pilot program in 1985. However, a Federal review of Hawaii's Child Welfare program in 2003 showed that Hawaii's rate of child re-abuse was no lower than the rest of the nation.

Since that 2003 federal review, the Department has been able to successfully utilize its TANF funding in developing and implementing contractual services that began

putting more emphasis on strengthening families and addressing risk factors before they led to abuse. The results of these efforts have been:

- a) The number of children in State care has decreased by half, from about 3,000 children in 2005 to just 1,500 children today. This is the lowest number since 1993; and
- b) Hawaii currently has one of the lowest rates of child re-abuse in the country. The child re-abuse rate dropped from 6% in 2003 to just 3.1% in 2008, which is far better than the nationally accepted standard of 6.1%.

During this same period of time, the Healthy Start program had been experiencing reductions in State general revenue funding and, as a result, a reduced presence in the community.

DHS firmly believes in the wisdom and cost-effectiveness of supporting a diverse array of poverty prevention programs using our annual block grant of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Federal funds.

We do not believe that expanding our investment of TANF funds in Healthy Start, a Department of Health program, would be the best use of our limited TANF Federal funds.

It is important to note that Healthy Start already receives about \$1.7 million in TANF Federal funds each year under Act 107, which Governor Linda Lingle signed into law in May 2007. Also, we already invest \$3.2 million of TANF Federal funds in Enhanced Healthy Start, which targets families reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) for child abuse or neglect.

To provide some background, DHS has invested Federal TANF funds in a wide range of family strengthening and positive youth development initiatives across the State for families, keiki and youth. These include programs that help youth succeed in school

and prepare for rewarding careers, while deterring substance abuse, truancy, crime and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Other TANF-funded programs improve parenting skills and help prevent domestic violence.

All our TANF-funded poverty programs are having a positive impact on reducing child abuse and neglect. Among these programs is Enhanced Healthy Start, which is based on Healthy Start and designed exclusively to help at-risk families who are involved in Child Protective Services. DHS provides Enhanced Healthy Start with \$3.2 million in TANF Federal funds each year to promote healthy childhood growth and improve parenting skills and parent-child interactions.

Our investment of TANF Federal funds in a wide range of anti-poverty initiatives is already producing significant results. As cited previously, since 2005, the number of children removed from their biological parents and placed in foster care has declined by half to just 1,500 children – the lowest number in 16 years. More importantly, the child re-abuse rate has also fallen by half since 2005, meaning that Hawaii's keiki are now among the safest in the nation.

**The success of these anti-poverty programs would be undercut if additional TANF Federal funds are diverted into the Healthy Start program. This would likely, and paradoxically, lead to a rise in child abuse and neglect cases, along with an increase in foster care placements. It should also be noted that Healthy Start, a voluntary program, had greater funding prior to 2005, but the number of foster care placements was rising during that time, along with our child re-abuse rates.**

In conclusion, funding for Healthy Start should not come at the expense of anti-poverty programs that are producing significant results. Diverting additional TANF funds would also be contrary to the DHS mission of helping our most vulnerable residents, including at-risk families and children.

The Department also respectfully requests that the \$28.2 million in TANF Federal funds restricted in the current State fiscal year 2009 budget be restored for the biennium so that we can continue to fund the programs, services and benefits that have, among other positive outcomes, strengthened families and contributed to the reduction, by half, of child re-abuse and neglect since 2005. This is neither the time to freeze Federal funds nor divert Federal funds from the investment we have made that is working so well.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.