

Testimony HB 741 - Healthy Start

Aloha Committee Members and thank you for your time and attention in the urgent and critical matter of ensuring Healthy Start services remain available for our Hawaii children and families.

My name is Jani Sheppard and I am the CEO of Maui Family Support Services, Inc. and this is Maria Sykes, a community member from Maui. Maui Family Support Services provides Healthy Start on Maui, Moloka'i and Lana'i. You have written testimony from community members from the islands of Molokai' and Lana'i.

Please know that we as advocates for children and families and specifically the excellent Healthy Start program, are keenly aware that these are at minimum, difficult time and that difficult decisions have to be made. We acknowledge and accept that as members of a community all have to give a little to ensure the health of our community.

In August 2008, the \$4 mil cut to DOH services resulted in a \$1.9 mil cut in funding from Healthy Start. For Maui County families this meant a cut of over \$500,000 to the Healthy Start services. 19 employees were affected. 1/3 of the staff from Moloka'i lost their jobs in a community where their family members were also losing jobs after the close of the Ranch and other economic challenges for the island. On Maui, another 7 staff members were laid off and 5 had their hours reduced from full time to part time. Instead of having the staff to serve 250 families, 180 families received service as a result of these cuts. We certainly understand the need to make difficult decisions for the good of the whole and the need for everyone to do their part until we as a community can come out on the other side of these challenging, stressful, and in some cases dire economic times. Eliminating this program means another 200 jobs statewide and another 4000 families that will not receive services.

The argument has been made that the program should be cut because it is voluntary. Most of the Department of Health programs are voluntary and it simply means that they are not mandated. By the time services is mandated, harm has been done, the intervention is more intensive and more expensive. The cost benefit is 3:1 meaning that for every dollar we spend on this service, we, as community taxpayers save 3.dollars. Voluntary does not mean low risk...the risk is most often high, the event simply has not occurred yet. A service which is available for families to voluntarily accept support and serves to prevent child abuse instead of waiting until something happens is a positive state regarding what we value as community, where we out our limited dollars, and what the families who accept the program value.

Another argument is that there are other services to take over if Healthy Start is not there. This simply not true, and the gap is in services without Healthy Start on Moloka'i and Lana'i, with extremely limited resources, Maui, including Hana, and other areas of our State with limited resources is widened, the safety net will be taken away, The Enhanced Healthy Start service is already overworked with increasing members of families and working with the 12% cut they already received in 2008. Enhanced is for families who have already entered the system.

The final argument is that the program is not effective. It continues to baffle me as to how this statement can be made when the evidence is there. Over 99% of the families who remain the program for 12 months or more are not confirmed for Child abuse or neglect; 100% of the families receive resources, support and assistance to strengthen the family and remove stressors, children receive medical home (doctor) and the list goes on which I am sure my colleagues and community members have and will continue to educate individuals on this indisputable fact. There was a report done over 10 year ago and that is outdated and should not ever be referred to again. The current data shows an effective program.

In addition to the statistics, families show and report on the importance of this program and how the services have made a difference in their lives. How different their lives and the lives of their children would be without Healthy Start.

We certainly could not afford to allocate funds to bring all of the families who wanted to be here and I am grateful to Maria, who got up at 3:30 this morning, got childcare and boarded a plane with me just so that she could share her thoughts about Healthy Start with you.

Again, I thank you for your time and attention and applaud you for your work and commitment during a time of challenge we have not seen for decades....

Maria...

Respectfully,

L. Jani Sheppard
Chief Executive Officer
Maui Family Support Services, Inc.
Maui, Moloka'i and Lana'i

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Testimony

HB 741 - Healthy Start

ATE
Testimony

We need Maui Family Support Service's Healthy Start Program.

I, myself, have been with Maui Family Support Service since I was five months pregnant, and my daughter is now nine months old, so a total of over a year. The program has really helped me throughout my pregnancy and raising my daughter. I have learned a lot. I believe without their support, it would have been extremely devastating for me. I truly needed this program.

When I was five months pregnant, I separated from my boyfriend due to domestic violence. It was a tough time for me. I felt as if I was at my wits end and was going to have a break down. The ladies with Maui Family Support Service, Cynthia, Ranee and Karen was there to help me—to guide me through my time of darkness, and gave me the support I needed.

I had to deliver my daughter abruptly because I had pre-eclampsia. After my daughter was born I went into severe depression. On top of dealing with my baby's dad, I eventually broke down. I had no close friends or family that I could count on for support so I was extremely lucky that Maui Family Support Service was there. The ladies guided me to a therapist that recommended "Shock Treatment" since I was a single parent that needed to get better quickly. I had to spend almost two months in Oahu with my daughter alone. I went through intensive treatment, having to go to the hospital three times a week, being put under and having my brain shocked, only to wake up three to four hours later confused.

The ladies with Maui Family Support helped me organize childcare during those two months. They arranged for a nanny who stayed with me and helped me with my daughter, whom was only three months at the time. Without Maui Family Support's help I wouldn't have been able to help myself. After the treatments, I temporarily lost my memory. Karin Cooper with Maui Family Support was such a HUGE help in my life at that time. (She would remind me of appointments, and she would constantly check on me to make sure my daughter and I were ok. She went through the parenting steps with me as my daughter grew. She would tell me what to expect as the months went on, and what I should be doing for my daughter's development. I learned so much through Maui Family Support's ~~Healthy Start~~ Healthy Start program. I really needed them, and I was so lucky to have had that service available to me. WE NEED THIS PROGRAM!!

which she is no longer w/ Maui Family Support do to the cuts in Funding -

A short time after my treatment, my daughter's dad and I decided to try to work on our relationship. About a month after we decided to try on our relationship we had a falling out, and I ended up homeless. I didn't have financial stability, and didn't know what I was going to do without financial resources. Karin Cooper helped me get into the KHOA shelter. I stayed there at the shelter for six weeks. Karin Cooper was always very positive, and assured me that things would get better. Without her positive support, I could have fallen again. Six weeks out and I found a place to rent. Karen helped with finding this place as well. She also helped me find the funds for my rent and my storage unit. She was so amazing during this time that she went over and beyond her duties. It was just before Christmas and I wanted a Christmas tree for my daughter's first Christmas in her new home. Karen put in such a huge effort in finding a tree but, because of the shortage of trees this year, there was no luck. All the ladies I have worked with have been so helpful in teaching me parenting skills and making sure that my daughter and I were okay. It has been two and a half months out of the shelter and I am thinking in a positive

and mature manner. My parenting skills have improved with the help and encouragement of Maui Family Support Services, ~~Maui Family Support Services~~ dedicated to Maui's children.
 which is

Dropping the funding for the ~~Maui Family Support Services~~ Healthy Start program will only hurt and jeopardize Hawaii's future. I urge for you to consider funding this worthwhile program.

Voluntarily is because we want to prevent Risk of harm to our children, so we want, and we NEED the help for our families. We do not want to get to that point of being mandated, we want to prevent it before it happens. So we do need the voluntary services.

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LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



LILLIAN B. KOLLER, ESQ.
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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
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February 5, 2009

LATE
Testimony

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 741 - RELATING TO CHILDREN**

Hearing: Thursday, February 5, 2009; 8:15 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 741 is to appropriate general funds and temporary assistance for needy families federal funds for the healthy start program.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services respectfully opposes this measure. With respect to the proposed general funds appropriation, this measure will adversely impact the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010.

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 percent in 2003 to just 3.1 percent in 2008, which is far better than the nationally accepted standard of 6.1 percent.

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

The Department of Human Services (DHS) firmly believes in the wisdom and cost-effectiveness of supporting 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 CPS. 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 since 1993. 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.

HB 741

TESTIMONY

**LATE
Testimony**

Dawna Krueger, Director
2444-A Main Street
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Governor Lingle and Legistors;

Speaking from the position of the director of Iao Preschool for 15 years, and a board member on the advisory board of Maui Family Support Services I know first hand about how important a stable first three year are. Healthy Start (HS) provides a safety net to Hawaii's most vulnerable families and infants along with its mission of preventing child abuse and neglect by providing supportive services to at-risk families. A commonsensical approach in such a desperate time would be to increase safety net programs such as HS, not to dispose of them completely, as you have proposed in your latest budget.

It is not surprising to know that economic stress on families is a large predictor of child abuse and neglect. A study for Johns Hopkins University says the "prevention programs (such as Healthy Start) saves lives, prevents child maltreatment, promote child health, development and school readiness and that these same programs save tax payer dollars by preventing school failure, delinquency and incarceration in children growing up in families experiencing disadvantage and stress."

By cutting HS services, you are allowing those families who are at-risk to fall through the cracks. By removing the safety net of the HS program, CWS and other short-term services such as Enhanced Healthy Start would be overloaded with high-risk cases. Without HS, children are being harmed by the risks that could otherwise have been prevented. In an effort to balance the budget, our children are being left to abuse and neglect. They are our future and our greatest gift, they deserve to be cared for.

Sincerely,

Dawna Krueger
Director Iao Preschool

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February 4, 2009

Regarding: HB 741

Position: Support

**LATE
Testimony**

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Research has established that prevention programs save lives, prevent child maltreatment, promote child health, development, and school readiness. These same programs save tax payer dollars by preventing school failure, delinquency, and incarceration in children growing up in families experiencing disadvantage and stress. Hawaii's Healthy Start Program is an evidence-based, public health program that addresses child well being across multiple dimensions.

Children are our future. Funding for the HSP will save state resources by supporting overburdened families' ability to care for and nurture their children. Data from research completed here in Hawaii with the Healthy Start Program show that for anxious mothers, HSP participation produced a 60% decrease in substantiated child maltreatment, and a 54% decrease in neglectful behavior toward the child. Additionally, the children of anxious mothers performed better on academic tests of achievement in grade 1 than did children in the control group.

The HSP has one of the strongest practice-research partnerships in the country. Many service programs in Hawaii and across the nation have limited objective evidence of how services are delivered and the results achieved. In contrast, the HSP has a 15-year track record of research-based program improvement. The HSP practice-research partnership has provided solid evidence of the program's accomplishments and a solid understanding of how to improve program practice to have even greater impact for more families. This approach is exactly the approach used in medicine, where modifications in treatment are carefully studied and changes made to reduce side effects and increase recovery for greater numbers of patients. This approach is our best opportunity to address the disproportionate representation of Native Hawaiian and other groups in the child welfare system. Investing in the HSP will turn the tide on school failure and the subsequent cycle of economic hardship and health problems linked to the experience of adversity in early childhood.

Recently, the Department of Health, Maternal Child Health Branch was awarded a 5-year, 2.5 million dollar grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to enhance the quality, impact and sustainability of the HSP in preventing child maltreatment. The application process was highly competitive; only 17 sites were funded nationally. It is important to note two of the many strengths mentioned by ACF regarding Hawaii's application. First, the strong collaboration of state agencies, community providers, and an independent research team was noted as a model for best practice in the prevention of child maltreatment and promotion of child health development. Second, the HSP's history of careful review of both practice and outcomes and its honest dissemination of findings were noted to have informed the work of similar programs across the nation.

I strongly support funding for the HSP. The program accurately identifies families who are most in need of support. By strengthening these families, HSP prevents child maltreatment and promotes child health and development. This, in turn, strengthens our state economy and future workforce. Prevention is the best solution to our current economic challenges.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the HSP and prevention science with you. I can be reached at (808) 949-0057 or via email at emcfarl2@jhmi.edu.

With Aloha,

Elizabeth McFarlane, PhD, MPH
Assistant Director,
Early Childhood Research

My name is Jaime DeGuzman and I would like to say a few things about the healthy start program and how it has effected my life.

I spent many years on drugs and a few years homeless. I wanted to get my life together but I had no idea how to do it. When I became pregnant I immediately stopped using. Just because I stopped using and had a beautiful baby, didn't mean that I knew how to keep my life on the right track. Or how to give myself the life I desperately wanted and my child a life she deserves. I didn't even feel like I knew the basic skills to parent my daughter.

When the healthy start program had Catholic charities come to my hospital bed. That was the first time in my life I opened up and told someone the truth about me. I let it all out! And I was told that I would be able to join a program that is a part of healthy start called Pact, their home visiting program.

My healthy start home visitor and my family counselor have helped me tremendously in becoming secure in my parenting and becoming a parent that I am proud to be. And a strong person that has no doubt that I will continue to be successful in my life. because of this program's resources and the people who offer me support and advice, I am able to say that I am a healthy person and a great parent.

such as hooking me up with the program that helped me find my current job

I needed this program I honestly believe I would not be where I am today with out it. and I know that there are a lot more people out there that also need this program. That is why it is imperative that this healthy start program continue to help all of us that need it!

Thank you for your time and giving me the opportunity to share.

Late