

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY GEORGINA K. KAWAMURA  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
STATE OF HAWAII  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
ON  
HOUSE BILL NO. 2138

January 26, 2010

RELATING TO HEALTHY START

House Bill No. 2138 creates the Healthy Start program and exempts the program from the budget allotment system under Sections 37-32, 37-34, and 37-37 to the extent that services provided by or contracted by the Department of Health for the Healthy Start program shall not be diminished or eliminated due to budgetary shortfalls.

We oppose this bill. Notwithstanding the current fiscal condition of the State, it is not prudent to require a set amount of general funds to be directed to a specific program. Program funding requirements should be reviewed on a statewide basis and allocated to programs based on statewide priorities within available resources. Additionally, exemption from Sections 37-32, 37-34, and 37-37 would negatively impact the Administration's ability to pursue appropriate policies to prudently manage public resources and meet the balanced budget requirement stipulated by the Hawaii Constitution.



UNIVERSITY  
of HAWAII®  
MĀNOA

Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work  
Office of the Dean

January 25, 2010

Representative John Mizuno, Chair  
Representative Scott Nishimoto, Co-chair  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HB 2138, Relating to Healthy Start

Dear Representatives Mizuno, Nishimoto and Committee Members:

I am Gail Breakey, Executive Director of the Hawaii Family Support Institute at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work testifying in support of HB 2138. The purpose of this legislation is the exempt the Healthy Start child abuse prevention intensive peri-natal home visiting services from (will look for and insert bill language). There are extremely important reasons for doing so:

- (1) About 80% of all serious abuse occurs among children under age five; around 43% of deaths occur among children less than one year of age.
- (2) While we are very fortunate in Hawaii to have a good differential response system, this is tertiary intervention after the fact, and very different from secondary prevention with high risk families to avert abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place. We know that abuse, neglect and poor parenting of very young children can continue for long periods of time before being observed and referred by the community. The impact on brain development in the first weeks and months of life can be severe and long-lasting
- (3) The social and economic consequences of early neglect and abuse far outweigh the costs of prevention. The National Institute on Trauma has published results of many studies showing high correlations between early trauma and neglect with substance abuse, mental illness, school failure, juvenile and adult crime. The ACE study shows correlations of adverse childhood experiences with a range of chronic health problems, including those causing greatest cost burden on the health care system. The US has the highest per capita incarceration rate among developed countries; largely related to substance abuse.
- (4) The universal screening and early intervention components of Healthy Start not only supports efforts to prevent child abuse before it occurs; it also is an entry point for high risk infants and toddlers into an Early Learning system. Hawaii has extremely high percentages of children entering kindergarten who do not meet school readiness assessments. In some neighborhoods the percentage of kindergarten age children who possess the cognitive and social-emotional skills to succeed in school is very low- less than 25% of those entering kindergarten. This is a major reason why school systems are failing.

- (5) Business communities across the country are understanding that early child development means community development; that success in school is a pre-requisite for an adequate workforce of competent adults.
- (6) The issue of young adult competency is now a concern of the military and our national security. The military recently published information that as many as 75% of young men applying for military service do not meet minimal requirements related to reading and writing.

Given the severe current economic crisis, we believe it is possible to achieve the goal of this bill without placing undue stress upon the state budget. During the last legislative session, the home visiting service providers developed a plan for sustaining a framework for a state-wide program in each community by maintaining a more streamlined hospital based assessment process and for providing intensive home visiting for only the highest risk families, those with assessment scores of 40 on a scale of 0-100. Initial research on the assessment instrument showed that the actual abuse rate among these families was about 50%. All of these children would be at risk for attachment and other parenting problems. This plan was supported and funded by the legislature, but funding but not released resulting in almost total collapse of the program.

This plan would minimize the burden to the state budget, actually representing the budget that was approved in 2009 by the legislature. While provision of services beyond the core of services to the highest risk are needed, only the core of "highest risk" would be a required service. We hope that you will give serious consideration to this legislation.

Sincerely,

Gail Breakey, Executive Director  
Hawaii Family Support Institute

January 26, 2010  
Tuesday  
9:00 AM  
Conference Room 329

To: House Committee on Health  
Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

From: Raydeen Busse, MD, Chair  
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Hawaii Section

Re: **HB2138 RELATING TO HEALTHY START**

Dear Chairman Yamane, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and Committee Members:

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), Hawaii Section, supports HB2138. We strongly support the Healthy Start program, which has provided much needed screening for high-risk mothers and assistance for new mothers and infants.

As obstetrician/gynecologists, we have first-hand knowledge regarding the importance of screening all new mothers for high-risk factors and providing additional community support to those at high-risk. Based on our professional experience in caring for pregnant and postpartum mothers, we believe that the Healthy Start program has resulted in the identification of high-risk mothers and subsequent mother and child interventions contributing to a healthy family.

Unfortunately, the recent decrease in Healthy Start program funding has resulted in a decrease in screening of our new mothers, particularly on the neighbor islands. Instead of face-to-face screening by trained Healthy Start staff, neighbor island hospital nurses already over-worked due to inadequate staffing now perform screening of our new mothers. Due to funding cuts, these forms are reviewed by the Healthy Start staff after the mother has left the hospital. Based on our clinical experience, we believe that funding cutbacks have led to a decrease in identification of high-risk mothers and a subsequent decrease in services and support provided to these mothers. This will result in putting more mothers, babies and families at risk for domestic violence, substance abuse, and poor health.

Hawaii ACOG has always supported issues of importance to women and their families, and we strongly support HB2138. During these trying and economically stressful times, this program is even more important than in the past. The community needs this assistance to assure the well-being of our new mothers and babies.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TO:** Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair Committee on Health  
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee

**FROM:** Darlene Beatty, Division Administrator  
Catholic Charities Hawaii

**DATE:** Tuesday, January 26, 2010  
9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**RE:** In Support of HB 2138 Relating to Healthy Start

My name is Darlene Beatty. I am the Family and Therapeutic Services Division Administrator of Catholic Charities Hawaii's under which the former Healthy Start and current Enhanced Healthy Start Programs, also known as Ka Malama Punua (KMP) are administered. I am testifying in full support of HB 2138.

For over 20 years, Healthy Start has provided 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 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 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. However, due to the current economic crisis services to the state were drastically cut due to budget cuts during the last legislative session leaving the vast majority of the family in the state unserved.

I urge you to support HB 2138 that exempts Healthy Start services from the allotment system because intervening early in the life of an at-risk child has proven to prevent major emotional and behavioral problems for the child. Healthy Start services also provide the child and family an opportunity for the child to be ready to learn and thrive.

It is critical that Healthy Start services be exempted from the allotment system so that funds will be available statewide 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.

I 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.



**TESTIMONY  
ON  
HB 2138 RELATING TO CHILDREN  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

**January 26, 2010**

**9:00 am**

**Room 329**

Aloha Chair Yamane and members of the House Committee on Health. Blueprint for Change (BFC), a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve Hawai'i's Child Welfare System **supports** HB 2138. BFC's is interested in this bill because it relates to preventative efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect.

For the past 10 years, BFC, using TANF funds under a contract with the Department of Human Services, has worked to establish a state-wide series of family strengthening walk-in facilities, called Neighborhood Places, that provide support and strengthening services to family who may be at risk of child abuse and neglect. Neighborhood Places' staff members are truly special individuals who work hard at diverting these families away from being engaged with the State's Child Welfare System. Through the training and resources they provide, families become stronger, more able to withstand the stresses that come with financial hardship and crises, and they become more self-sufficient and less dependent on State assistance in the long term.

These prevention/diversion services save the State millions of dollars every year. As an example, for families who become engaged in the system, the State is frequently forced to pay thousands of dollars to cover the costs of placing the children into foster care. The monetary and societal cost increase exponentially when there are serious incidences of child abuse and/or neglect occurring in the family. Studies have clearly shown that children who are victims of abuse are much more likely to drop out of school, partake in dangerous and illegal activities, become incarcerated, and eventually become abusers themselves, thus continuing the endless cycle.

Like the Neighborhood Place programs, Healthy Start identifies and provides support and strengthening services to young families who may be at risk for various reasons of not being able to properly care for the basic needs of their newborn child. Although it has been funded by the Department of Health in the past, we consider Healthy Start to be a key component of the State's Early Prevention/Intervention System in Child Welfare. If passed, HB 2138 will ensure the permanency of Healthy Start by establishing it as an essential State program under the Department of Health and that the program funding is kept stabilized.

We strongly urge passage of HB 2138. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE, 2010  
STATE OF HAWAII

H.B. NO. 2138

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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

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RELATING TO HEALTHY START.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

SECTION 1. Hawaii has long been a leader in early childhood services, reflecting an understanding of the importance of early childhood development and proactive legislation to ensure the safety and well-being of infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers. As a result, over the past twenty-five years, many early childhood programs, services, and concepts have been developed and expanded, including the healthy start program, the zero to three program, the early learning council, good beginnings alliance, the concept of universal pre-school for four year olds, baby safe, keiki play mornings, the parenting hotline, and the family center.

A recent renaissance in research and national-level policy on early childhood underscores the foresight of these actions. For example, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child published *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do* (Harvard University, 2007). Comprised of leading neuroscientists, pediatricians, developmental psychologists, and economists, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child reviewed all current research and literature on early childhood development. Based on this research, the publication presents the following core concepts of development and considers



**From:** Nia Kaulukukui [niak808@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2010 9:12 AM  
**To:** HLTtestimony  
**Cc:** niak808@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** Bill HB2138

Aloha & Good morning,

My name is Nia Kaulukukui and I writing this letter in support of Bill HB2138. I have been in the PACT Program for over a year. When my daughter Kalena was born my life was a mess: going through a divorce, business went bankrupt and life in general was a huge cloud of depression and hopelessness.

At the time I felt like a loser - losing my business (livelihood). I felt helpless - how would I be able to afford the roof over my head, food on the table or diaper for my newborn. Overall, I didn't want to go out of my house or see anybody being ashamed of my situation.

The Home Visitors from PACT helped me set small but realistic goals that allowed me to help myself and better my situation. Their monthly visitations was always an encouragement for me to focus on my goals versus what I lost. It was comforting for me to have the Home Visitors come to my home and 'talk stories' and figure out ways how to put my life together and be a better mother to my children. Together we found community resources that could help. Learned about ways to be a better parent. They also offered Counselors that helped me sort out my feelings and lift the cloud of depression that hung over my head.

I am indebted to the PACT Program. Today I am in much healthier place - - mentally, physically and emotionally. I am a happier person than I was a year ago. I have hope for better days. I am a better mother to my children because of all the help & support that the PACT Program was able to offer me.

My life story could have been different. We only need to look around us to see the possible outcomes of depression & hopelessness. The PACT Program was that 'hope' for me.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,

Nia Kaulukukui  
[niak808@yahoo..com](mailto:niak808@yahoo..com)