



The Judiciary, State of Hawaii

Testimony to the House Committee on Finance

The Hon. Sylvia Luke, Chair
The Hon. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
The Hon. Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 27, 2013 11:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

By
R. Mark Browning
Deputy Chief Judge/Senior Judge
Family Court of the First Circuit

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 873, H.D. 1, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Purpose: Establishes a new Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care program.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports this bill.

We have long been aware of the barriers that youth face when they are in foster custody at the time they turn 18 years old. All of us who are parents of young adults know too well that there are barriers enough in this day and age even for children who have stable homes. To “age-out” without the benefit of a stable and committed loving family leads to high rates of homelessness and unemployment. We are hopeful that this bill will ease the journey for the youth who are willing and able to make use of it. We are also hopeful that the entire child protective network in the community can double their efforts to ensure that all youth will reach the threshold eligibility requirements at least by their 18th birthdays.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 702 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 531-2198 Fax: (808) 534-1199

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Daryl Selman, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive Director

Aloha House

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii

Bay Clinic, Inc.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu

Big Island Substance Abuse Council

Blueprint for Change

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Project

Kids Hurt Too

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Planned Parenthood of Hawaii

REAL

Salvation Army Family Intervention Svcs.

Salvation Army Family Treatment Svcs.

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Susannah Wesley Community Center

The Catalyst Group

The Children's Alliance of Hawaii

Waikiki Health Center

Women Helping Women

YWCA of Kauai

February 25, 2013

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Finance

Testimony in Support of HB 873 HD1 Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 873 HD1 Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act.

Young people who age out of foster care at age 18 face significant challenges. The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth showed that by age 24:

- 40% of young people had been homeless since leaving foster care;
- 1/4 did not have a high school diploma (compared to 7.35 of peers who did not experience foster care);
- Half were unemployed (twice as high as the general young adult population);
- 81% of males had been arrested (compared to 17% of all young adults);

Outcomes are much better for young people who stay in care to age 21 (from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief - :

- Those required to leave care at age 18 were 2.7 times more likely to have been homeless;
- Remaining in care more than doubled the odds that young people would be working or in school at age 19;
- Those remaining in care were twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21;

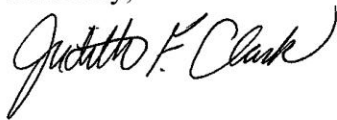
- Young women remaining in care experienced a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy before age 20;
- Those remaining in care were more likely to access independent living services.

Extending foster care to age 21 has financial benefits for both the young adult and society. Increasing opportunities to complete college and vocational programs results in higher earning potential over a lifetime. Extended foster care decreases costs to society from early child bearing as teen mothers are 2.2 times more likely to have a child placed in foster care than those who delay child bearing until age 20 or 21.

Most young people are not prepared to take on all of the responsibilities of adult living at age 18. Our youth in foster care deserve this support in making successful transitions to adulthood.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith F. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "F".

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 873, HD1: Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act.

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair, Representative Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair, Representative Aaron Johanson, Vice Chair, Members of the Committee on Finance

FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Social Policy Director, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Wednesday, February 27, 2013 11:30 a.m. Conference Room 308

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of HB 873**, which establishes the young adult voluntary foster care program which will support former foster youth in their transition to independence and self-sufficiency until the age of twenty-one.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 60 years. CCH has programs serving families, elders, children, developmentally disabled, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable of the people in Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii has many years of experience in working with foster youth and currently has several programs serving foster youth and resource families. CCH also has a program called Horizons that provides housing and independent living skill development services for young adults age 18 – 25 who are transitioning out of the foster care or juvenile justice systems. We recognize that services past the age of 18 for this group of young people are critical to their prospects for successful independence.

There are many reasons why foster youth are usually not ready for independence at age 18. One important reason is that foster youth have all experienced trauma at some point in their young lives. Trauma affects emotional development, arresting aspects of development at the age in which the trauma occurred. This constriction of normal emotional development can negatively impact learning, judgment, self-image and decision-making. The added disadvantage of not having a sound support system in place leaves these young people vulnerable to the greater hazards of independent living.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. **We urge your support for HB 873.** Please contact me at (808)527-4810 or trisha.kajimura@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808)527-4810 • trisha.kajimura@catholiccharitieshawaii.org



FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 25, 2013 12:42 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: annsfreed@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB873 on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM

HB873

Submitted on: 2/25/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ann S. Freed	Hawai'i Women's Coalition	Support	No

Comments: As stated in previous testimony, the Hawai'i Women's Coalition is in strong support of this bill. It is the humanitarian thing to do and may very well prevent foster kids from having to live on the streets. This has been a costly proposition, both financially and humanly. Ann S. Freed Co-Chair, Hawai'i Women's Coalition

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Judith Wilhoite
Family Programs Hawai'i

RE: HB 873 - Related to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the Family Advocate for Family Program Hawaii's It Takes An `Ohana (ITAO) program and a resource caregiver, formerly referred to as foster parent. I strongly support this bill.

HB 873 is a very well crafted bill and explains why this change needs to be made. I would just like to add the following table that gives a clear view of outcomes for young people formerly in foster care compared to the general population of young people.

Outcome	Foster Care	General
No high school diploma or GED	24.4%	7.3%
Not employed	52%	24.5%
Average income from employment	\$12,064	\$20,349
Have health insurance	57%	78%
Males who have been arrested	81.2%	17.4%
Females who have been pregnant	77%	40.4%

Courtney, et al. (2010)

Allowing foster youth to continue to receive support until 21 will help bring better outcomes for our foster youth and thus for all of us. In fact, there is research that shows the financial benefits of extending foster care – both for the individual youth and for society – outweigh costs to government by a factor of approximately 2 to 1.

I applaud this DHS initiative and strongly support this bill to set the requirements needed to extend the foster care to 21.



Hale Kipa

615 Pi'ikoi Street, Suite 203 T 808 589-1829
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-3139 F 808 589-2610
E info@halekipa.org

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TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013, 11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Jaque Kelley-Uyeoka, ACSW
Deputy CEO, Hale Kipa

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT

My name is Jaque Kelley-Uyeoka and I am the Deputy CEO at Hale Kipa, Inc. Thank you for allowing me to testify in SUPPORT of this bill that increases the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21.

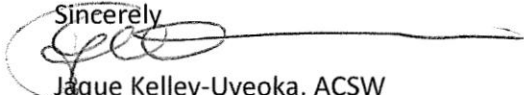
As the Oahu Independent Living Program provider as well as having transitional living residences and access to housing vouchers for youth who are transitioning out of foster care as well as homelessness, Hale Kipa has had a long and active history in recognizing the challenges youth transitioning out of foster care face as well as developing an array of services designed to build skills, offer opportunities and eradicate barriers. Many of our young people leaving foster care, even if possessing skills and supports, could use more time to mature and make the transition to adulthood. This bill would give them the potential to remain in foster care with access to a range of benefits that allows for a more gradual adult transition and lasting positive success.

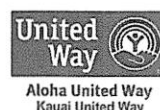
Other States which have extended foster care have demonstrated a trend toward more positive outcomes in the young person's acquisition of education and employment which would suggest more long-term stability. One study noted the "financial benefits of extending foster care-both for individual youth and for society- outweighed initial costs of government by a factor of approximately 2 to 1."

Not all young people will be eligible or choose to participate in this voluntary option but it will prove to be a critical opportunity for many and a safety net for youth who try to do it on their own but discover they could use a little more time and help!

Again, thank you for the opportunity to express our support and please feel free to contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,


Jaque Kelley-Uyeoka, ACSW
Deputy CEO, Hale Kipa, Inc.



Barbara A. Campbell
Vice President
Outrigger Enterprises Group
2375 Kuhio Avenue
Honolulu, Hawaii 96816

February 25, 2013

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Barbara Campbell

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding HB 873.

I strongly support this bill.

Foster youth have endured frequent trauma due to abuse or neglect, separation from their parents, and often-repeated separations from a succession of foster families. When they turn 18, many automatically leave their resource families, sometimes by choice, sometimes kicked out. One study found that half of youths who exited foster care possessed less than \$250 at the time of their release. (*Transition from Care: Status and Outcomes of Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care*, 2003)

Statistics for Foster Youth Aged Out of Foster Care:

- 65% leave foster care with no place to go (www.childrensrights.org)
- 1/3 to 1/2 become homeless (www.childrensrights.org)
- Four times as many become single parents prematurely as non-foster youth (Casey, 2005)
- More than half are unable to obtain employment (Groves & Kenny, High Cost of Emancipation);
- Of those who are employed, most have earnings below the poverty level (www.heysf.org; www.childrensrights.org)
- Over 70% of CA state penitentiary inmates were former foster children (Groves & Kenny, High Cost of Emancipation);

The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth showed that by age 24:

- 40% of young people had been homeless since leaving foster care;
- ¼ did not have a high school diploma (compared to 7.35% of peers who did not experience foster care);
- Half were unemployed (twice as high as the general young adult population);
- 81% of males had been arrested (compared to 17% of all young adults);

Outcomes are much better for young people who stay in care to age 21 (from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief) :

- Those required to leave care at age 18 were 2.7 times more likely to have been homeless;
- Remaining in care more than doubled the odds that young people would be working or in school at age 19;
- Those remaining in care were twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21;
- Young women remaining in care experienced a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy before age 20;
- Those remaining in care were more likely to access independent living services.

Thank you for your support of [HB 873](#) that, if passed into law, will help bring about better outcomes to Hawaii's youth and families!



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February 26, 2013

Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 873 with concerns about HD 1
Voluntary Foster Care to 21

Voluntary Foster Care to 21 is a good example of the Family Court, the Department of Human Services, and the State of Hawaii working together collaboratively to do what is right for our young adults emerging from foster care. The proposed legislation was crafted with the agencies working together, and with thoughtful insight from consultants and technical assistance provided by the Jim Casey Foundation. This is not continued foster care in the sense of being a continuation of childhood. Instead voluntary care needs to be accountable, user friendly, and developmentally appropriate.

I am concerned that the amendments in HD 1 specifically amendments that, although unclear, seem to imply that young adults will be asked to attend two hearings, in person, each year, even if there are no issues or concerns. The original language under the section on Periodic review stated that the judicial review "may be either by court hearing or court review." Perhaps by taking this language out, the option of court review has not been precluded – it is unclear. However, I believe that young adults are struggling to hold on to jobs – often hourly jobs - in which the three or four hours required to catch a bus to Kapolei, wait for a hearing time, talk with the judge, and then catch a bus back to work – will be an onerous responsibility. It could even endanger a job to tell an employer that one is not available twice a year.

Clearly this needs to be an accountable system, and judicial oversight is important. The right to speak with a judge about concerns is important. Our judges have worked very hard to be supportive and build relationships with the young people under their jurisdiction. But keeping the option of a face to face hearing in the hands of the young person is the better option to a required face-to-face hearing.



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Even with these concerns, I cannot emphasize enough how vitally important this measure is to helping young adults, OUR young adults, achieve a safe and stable future.

Since 2004 EPIC `Ohana provided Youth Circles for transitioning youth. In a Youth Circle we work with a foster youth transitioning to adulthood to help them develop and execute a plan for their future. We help youth connect to the resources they need to make a successful transition. But we know that even with the transition plan in place, foster youth are not ready to be independent at 18. Actually very few children are ready for independent at 18 – even those children who have intact families and have not faced the issues and challenges of being a foster child.

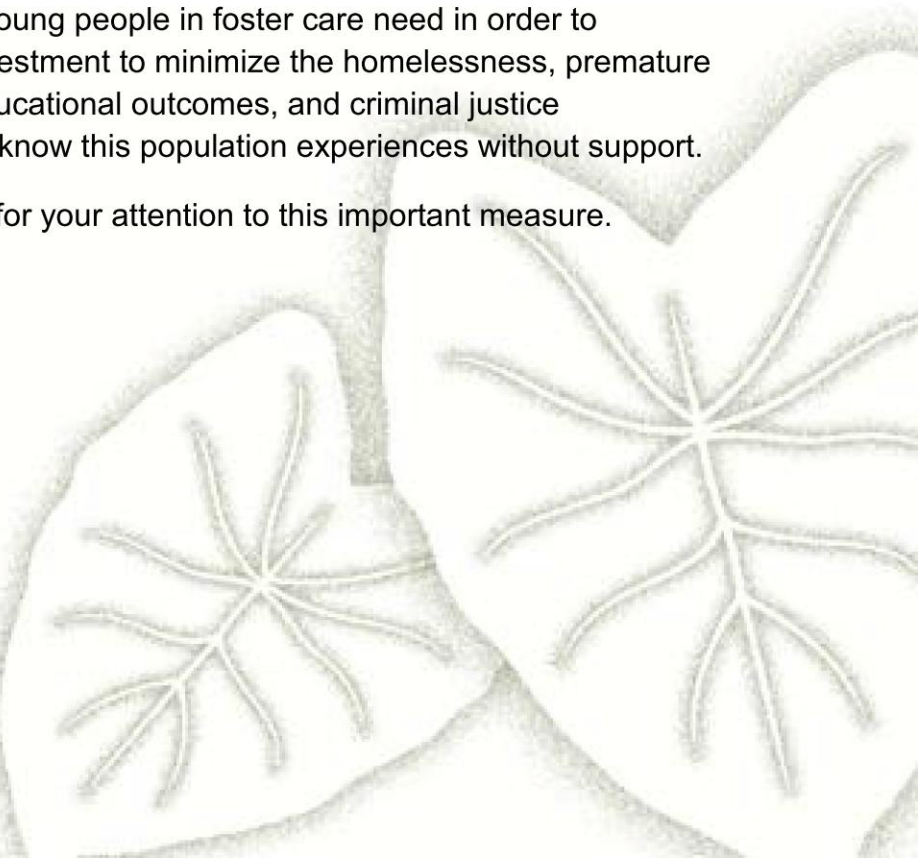
The foster youth in Hawai`i are OUR children, and deserve the love and support that we give the children in our own biological families. It is our duty, but it is also a very good investment for the future. It is the goal of the child welfare service and family court to find permanent homes and connections for children who cannot be reunified with their parents. Even though this is the goal, each year more than 100 children “age out” of the system without permanent family and connections. This bill gives the state the tools it needs to help young people develop better paths to adulthood. It gives the state tools that will help develop the network of support young people in foster care need in order to succeed. It is an investment to minimize the homelessness, premature parenthood, poor educational outcomes, and criminal justice involvement that we know this population experiences without support.

Thank you so much for your attention to this important measure.

Aloha

Laurie Arial Tochiki

President & CEO





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To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Delia Ulima, Statewide Initiative Coordinator**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

Re: **In Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult
Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Aloha! My name is Delia Ulima and I am a Statewide Initiative Coordinator for the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative. We are the local site for the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and EPIC 'Ohana is the lead agency for this Initiative in Hawai'i. The Initiative works with systems, such as the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare, other service providers and partners within the public and private sector to create opportunities and support transitioning foster youth to successfully move into adulthood and become a contributing part of our community.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873, which provides young people with the voluntary option to remain in a developmentally appropriate foster care program up to age 21.

The State of Hawaii is the "parent" of young people who are in permanent foster care custody. As "wards" of the State, they are in a unique legal class. For those who exit out of this system at age 18, they often find themselves without the necessary supports that any 18-year old would need to survive, let alone thrive. Nationally, outcomes for transitioning foster youth are grim. By the time they are 24, one in four will experience homelessness, 77% of young women will become pregnant, only 3% will obtain a four year college degree, earn significantly less than their peers and 81% of males will be arrested. A Chapin Hall Study showed that the extension of foster care to 21 resulted in the following benefits: increased college attendance, increased earnings, decreased unintended pregnancies, decreased usage of public assistance, decreased homelessness and decreased incarceration.

States currently have the option to extend eligibility across certain Title IV-E programs. Under the 2008 Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, federal funds may be drawn down to support the extension of foster care when certain employment and education requirements are met. Currently, there are over 13 states that have opted to extend foster care beyond age 18.

In closing, I would ask this committee to consider what kind of future we would like these young people to look forward to. Think about what our own families provided for us in our very young adulthood? What do we expect to provide for our own biological children? Most in this room would find it unrealistic to expect our own 18 year old children to be completely financially, physically, mentally and emotionally on their own with no parental guidance, no financial supports for a first car, first apartment, support with college, spending money, medical coverage and basic love and encouragement. Providing an option for young people in our foster care system to have additional supports beyond 18 makes ethical and in the long run, financial, sense.



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My comments regarding the amendments reflected in HB 873 HD 1 are simple. Young people should have the option to meet face to face with a judge to review their case or to participate in a review process that does not absolutely require them to show up in court. Making this process user-friendly for the young people, while still providing the option to have legal processes in place is important for young adults who are often juggling school, work and family schedules. The bottom line is that this legislation is vitally important and should be passed for the well-being of our young people aging out of the foster care system.

We respectfully ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. Mahalo nui loa.





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To: **Committee on Judiciary**

Thursday, February 7, 2013

2:00pm, Conference Room 325, State Capitol

From: **Sharla-Ann Fujimoto**, Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative,
EPIC 'Ohana

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young
Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Aloha, my name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto and I work for EPIC 'Ohana, Inc. and assist with the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative and the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873, which extends voluntary foster care to the age of 21. I have worked with youth in foster care and formerly in foster care for almost five years and I feel that this is a population in need of support.

Today, there is a youth turning 18, but they are not celebrating the way their peers normally would because this youth is a foster youth. This foster youth is packing their things (most likely into trash bags) while asking themselves the question, "Where am I going to go?" This youth will most likely end up homeless on the street or will end up going back to the biological family they were taken away from only to face the same traumas that that landed them in foster care to begin with. This youth will most likely face extremely poor outcomes because they do not have adequate support.

Those of us who have not been in the foster care system do not understand the true pressure behind turning 18. Most of us were excited at the prospect of turning 18. Most of us have had parents help us out get into college, buy a computer, help us with transportation, and maintain a stable living situation. Most of us that have not been in foster care were not expected to find a job, find housing, get into college, and find adequate transportation on the same day we turned 18. Most of us had a choice if we wanted to leave home or not. For our youth aging out of care, they have no choice and they are absolutely terrified of their 18th birthday—they are expected to make huge life



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President / CEO

decisions that they may not be developmentally able to make at such a young age and without adequate supports put into place.

I fully support this bill because if youth in foster care were given the option to remain in care up until the age of 21, they would have a few more years to build the adequate support they need to become successful, self-sufficient adults. They would be able to experience a different type of foster care that is developmentally appropriate for them. They would be given the chance to plan their life as they see fit for them because they would have more than just one day to make all of the huge life decisions.

In closing, I humbly ask this committee to pass House Bill 873. It would benefit the foster youth by supporting the notion that we believe in them and that supports do not end at the age of 18. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Finance**

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Gernani Yutob Jr., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873-Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Good morning, members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Gernani Yutob, Jr. and I am the President of the O`ahu HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. The Initiative is a national and local effort to create and support successful outcomes for transitioning foster youth.

I aged out of the foster care system in 2008 at the age of 18 and will be turning 23 in April. I will be graduating with my Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration degree with Academic Distinction at the University of Hawai`i – West O`ahu in May. Did you know, only 3 percent of foster youth who age out of the foster care system at 18 will graduate with a four-year degree by the age of 25 compared to about 20 percent from the general population? I was very fortunate to have my resource caregiver take me under her wing after I graduated from high school. This meant that I had a place to stay and was able to fully concentrate on school and work without worrying about where I will spend my next night at. Had this not happened, I would be a 23 year old who would most likely not be graduating on time because my main priority would be to survive and figure out where I will get my next meal. Not a lot of foster youth who age out of care will have a supportive adult and the resources they need to guide them through one of the most difficult phases in life. Did you kick your child out of your home when they turned 18 without offering any type of support or guidance and expect them to make it out on their own? Even at the age of 18, when they are legally considered an adult, they are not ready for what lies ahead just yet. It is imperative that we have support and resources for youth transitioning out of care to become successful adults in the future.

In closing, I would like to humbly ask this committee to pass HB 873 and give foster youth to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition to adulthood. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Judy Adviento, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873 Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Judy Adviento, I am 21 years old and I am the Secretary of the Oahu HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit this testimony in support of HB 873 and its intent to provide the option to participate in voluntary foster care up to age 21.

Some foster youth are not prepared to go out on their own when they turn 18. There are so many negative statistics about youth who age out of care. For example, in a study of young people formerly in foster care, 24% have experienced homelessness at least once, and 81% of the males get arrested in comparison to 17% of their peers in the general population.

I went into foster care at the age of 16. Even before I went into care, I was quite independent. I worked and a lot of my paperwork by myself so when I went into foster care, I was ready to take on those obstacles. It also helped that I had a lot of supportive people around me. When I turned 18, I felt prepared but not every youth is as prepared as I was and it's expressed through the statistics.

I am currently my younger brother's resource caregiver (foster parent) and it would terrify me if I found out that my brother "fell through the cracks" because he was not ready to go on his own at the age of 18. Every youth matures at different rates. This is even true with our peers in the general population. The difference is that foster youth sometimes don't know/have anywhere and anyone to go to when they are in trouble and struggling financially, emotionally, physically, etc.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important option for youth, and they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible. In closing, I ask this committee to pass HB 873. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Filipe Tauaika, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Good morning, my name is Filipe Tauaika, I am 20 years old and a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Oahu.

I support HB 873 to provide foster youth with voluntary foster care to age 21. I was in foster care at a young age and aged out of the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facilities (Ko'olau) at the age of 18. I didn't have a plan for where I would live or what I would do. Fortunately, I found relatives and they helped me with housing, a job and guidance. I was also lucky I found something that I loved to do, boxing. It kept me out of trouble and gave me a goal to work towards, which is to be an Olympic boxer. With the support of my family, coach and others in the community and church, I was able to find resources and stay on track.

Unfortunately, many other young people aging out of foster care don't have the same chances. They don't have knowledge about medical coverage, housing, employment, resources and other basic necessities they need to be a successful adult. If they had these supports and resources, they would have better opportunities for a better life.

I humbly ask that you pass HB 873. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Apuauro Turano, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

Aloha my name is Apuauro Turano and I am 22 years old. I am a new member of the Oahu HI H.O.P.E.S youth leadership board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. I am submitting my testimony in support of extending Hawaii's foster care from the age of 18 to 21. I believe if Hawaii's foster youth are given the opportunity for voluntary extended care, they would be more successful in transitioning into adulthood.

At age 11, I lost my father to cancer and I ran away from my mother's because the living arrangements were not safe. I ran away to a friend's house, whose family became my first foster home. However, I felt I wasn't getting the proper treatment. I wasn't provided with enough clothes and items I needed for football. I was treated like an outsider. I met another friend who told his family about me and asked if they could take me in. I asked my social worker if I could go with my friend's family and that request changed my life. In my sophomore year of high school, I was taken in by my friend's grandparents and they became like my own grandparents. They showed me love and gave me the guidance I needed as a teenager. They taught me responsibility which helped me graduate from high school and join the Hawaii Air National Guard. Even though I aged out of foster care at age 18, my grandparents are still an active role in my life now at the age of 22.

I learned a lot while I was a part of the foster care system, both good and bad. I understand that other youth who experience foster care face difficult challenges and are not fortunate enough to have a family to love and help them as they become young adults. They, in turn, suffer from poor outcomes, like homelessness and unemployment. If optional foster care is extended to 21, more young people will have opportunities and hope for a better future. I humbly ask that you pass House Bill 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Finance**

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany "Ipo" Lynch Ma'e, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Tiffany "Ipo" Lynch Ma'e and I am the president of the East Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board.

I would like to submit testimony in support of HB 873 and the option it provides for voluntary extended foster care up to age 21.

1 in 5 youth who age out of care become homeless. And only 3 percent of youth who aged out of care graduate with a bachelor's degree. It's a haunting future. The extension of foster care to 21 as an option promotes a healthy transition into adulthood for my foster brothers and sisters in care.

Without a shadow of a doubt, I feel that with the passing of this bill the negative statistics that haunt youth in care will change from negative to positive. Where only 3 percent of foster youth DON'T graduate with a college degree and 97% complete one.

We are taken into care by the State, who becomes our 'parent', and promised a better life than the ones our families are able to provide us. When my peers turn 18, their parents don't stop loving or supporting them. Why then, are foster youth expected to survive on our own with little or no preparation or supports when we turn 18?

In closing, I humbly ask that this committee passes HB 873 and give my foster brothers and sisters the continued support they need and deserve through their transition to adulthood. Mahalo nui loa.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Keola Limkin, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Keola Limkin, I am 22 years old and I was born and raised on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am the Secretary for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. During most of my childhood I lived with my mother and my five younger siblings. When I was a sophomore in high school, my siblings and I were placed in foster care until I aged out of child welfare services.

My younger siblings frequently moved between foster homes until my mother regained legal custody of them. I was fortunate to remain with the same foster parent during my entire experience. I developed a strong relationship with my foster dad to the point where I felt permanence. Immediately after graduating from high school, I lived at the University of Hawaii at Hilo dormitory while attending school. Our bond did not wither and he allowed me to live with him during summer break.

I support HB 873 regarding Voluntary Foster Care Act to extend care to 21 in Hawaii. I believe that allowing foster youth to have an option to remain in foster care up until the age of 21 would nurture positive community members. The age group of 18-21 years is a window where healthy risk taking can take place. These young adults will face many new experiences and a foster parent could provide both support and counseling. Foster parents should also be trained to parent these young adults in this specialized period if policy is to change. Foster parent guidance during this critical period for learning will ensure that they succeed in their future endeavors. Please pass HB 873.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Ashley Slater, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Ashley Slater and I am the President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaiꜰ Youth Opportunities Initiative in West Hawaiꜰ. I am for HB 873 and its Extension of Foster Care to age 21 in the State of Hawaiꜰ. There are many reasons that I think this Bill should be passed.

One of my reasons is that I feel with this extension, foster youth have more time to grow and learn what they need to, to survive in the real world. I also feel that it gives them a little extra time to connect with that foster family and to safe and comfortable to contact them when exiting out. I feel that every foster youth deserves some one they can fall back on for help and support. Granting this bill allows the foster youth the time they need to build supportive relationships. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Karen Hagopian, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Karen Hagopian, and I am 19 years old. I am the Vice-President of the West Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board. I support HB 873 to the fullest extent. By extending foster care to the age of 21, it gives the foster youth a better chance to get a support system such as building a family relationship, obtaining knowledge of schooling, having a housing system in place, and being able to balance school and work without having to fret about where they are going to sleep that night.

For me when I aged out of foster care at 18, it was hard to focus on school and work because I knew that I would have to move out of my foster home and find a place to live. Because of that my grades slipped in college and I had to focus more on work. This is why I think extending foster care to 21 is important. I humbly ask that you pass HB 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Rachel Burke, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (West Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Rachel Burke and I am 19 years old. I am part of the West Hawaii HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board. I fully support HB 873.

Extending voluntary foster care to the age of 21 is very important for several reasons. At age 18 most youth are not able to support themselves. It takes a while to get a job, buy a vehicle, find a place to live, and still be able to save money. By extending the age to 21, it gives young people an opportunity to have the support system they need to get these things done. This gives them a chance to slowly start doing things on their own but also being able to turn to someone for help. I think this bill is crucial to the success of foster youth in Hawaii.

When I aged out of foster care I had a great support system. I had my foster family who told me multiple times that I would always have a place to stay; that they weren't kicking me out at 18. They helped me with transportation, finding a job, getting a place to stay, buying groceries etc. To be honest, I would not have been able to accomplish anything without my support system. I am very thankful that I have them and I can always turn to them for help.

I ask your support in passing HB 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol
From: **Sassy Lean, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii),**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative
Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Princess Johnisa Lean, I am 19 years old and I was born on the island of Oahu, and raised on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am the Vice President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii. Although my mother had custody of me, I lived with family members and my godparents for majority of my childhood. As an adolescent I lived with my mother until I was placed in foster care in my sophomore year in high school. I was granted guardianship with my foster parent until I aged out of foster care.

I lost connections with my siblings and their children while I was in foster care. They remained in the custody of my mother when I was placed in my foster home. I was fortunate enough to remain in one placement throughout my experience in foster care. My guardian and I acquired a powerful bond that till this day has never changed. I still call her for advice and I am always welcomed in her home. She has given me a sense of stability, guidance and permanency. Besides her role as a mother to me, she is a Social Worker for Child Protective Services in Hawaii. She has supported me as a parent would their own child, she treated me no different from her biological children and helped me achieve a successful transition into adulthood.

I support HB 873 regarding Voluntary Foster Care Act to extend care to 21 in Hawaii. I believe that offering foster youth the option to remain in foster care up until the age of 21 would increase their chances of a positive and successful transition into adulthood. Youth that age out of care with no support, no social capital, no guidance, no stability, and no sense of permanency will either become homeless, or incarcerated. I strongly feel that no 18 year old whether in foster care or not is ready to live on their own. As foster youth the state is our parent, so the option of foster care to 21 will help increase our success as adults. Many youth in the general population at the age of 18 can continue to live with their parents, therefore I believe that foster youth should have the same option to ensure successful transitions into adulthood. I ask this committee to please pass HB 873. Thank you.

To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Noy Worachit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative, EPIC 'Ohana HYOI Assistant

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 873, Relating to Foster Care**

Good morning members of the House Committee on Finance. My name is Noy Worachit, I am 19 years old and I am the Vice-President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative on Oahu. HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for Hawaii Helping Our People Envision Success. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board provides the youth voice for the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 which supports the voluntary option to extend jurisdiction for foster youth beyond age 18. I support the intent of this bill to have foster care extended up to age 21.

For some of those who have aged out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own or they lack the support they need to be successful adults, which is why I feel it is important that we should have the option of being in foster care until the age of 21. When I was 18, I was a single parent to my 2 year old daughter. I was working two jobs and also attending school full-time. The support I received throughout my transition out of foster care is similar to what extended foster care would be like in a sense. For example, my foster parents allowed my daughter and me to stay in their home even after I turned 18. They also cared for my daughter while I went to work and school and eventually became temporary legal guardians of my daughter to allow me to pursue my dreams of having a career in the military. It gave me peace of mind as a mother to know that no matter what happened, my children and I will always have someone to lean on for support.

Currently, I am only a few semesters away from obtaining my Associate's degree in Administration of Justice and I have also been with the same employer for nearly 2 years. I truly believe that I would not be here today if it were not for the support of my foster parents.

However, this is not the case for most foster youth. Many of them have very little or no support when they age out of foster care.

In Hawaii, 33% of former foster youth in a recent poll, ages 18 to 23, reported having couch-surfed or moved from home to home because they did not have a place to stay. That is more than the national average of 24% of former foster youth who experience some form of homelessness by age 24. In recent studies, 67 % of youth formerly in foster care are dependent on public assistance compared to only 7% of their peers who have never experienced foster care. And by age 23 and 24, youth formerly in care will earn a yearly median of \$8,000 compared to their peers at \$18,300. By extending foster care to 21, it will help increase positive

outcomes in employment and decrease negative outcomes in the areas of homelessness and dependency on public assistance.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important **option** for youth, and that they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible.

In closing, I ask that you afford us the same opportunities as you would for your own children and I ask this committee to support the intent of and pass House Bill 873. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany Tuilata, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Oahu)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 873, Relating to Foster Care**

Good morning, Chair Luke and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Tiffany Tuilata and I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 and support the intent of the voluntary foster care act, which extends the option to remain in foster care up to age 21.

I'm 24 and I aged out of foster care while on the run. I immediately found myself homeless with no support or knowledge on the resources available. When you find yourself sleeping in public restrooms or beaches, you begin to wish you had someone you could rely on or someone who could lend a helping hand. Just thinking of where my next meal would come from or when it would be safe to sleep in the park, it isn't a feeling that any youth should endure. As recent as a year ago, I found myself homeless with two children.

Thankfully, I participated in the Opportunity Passport Program, a program through the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative which teaches financial literacy training, helps us open bank accounts and have our money matched for asset purchases. I was able to use my matched savings account to make my first purchase for a housing deposit and first month's rent. I was so happy to have a place for me and my children to call home.

Nationally, statistics show that 24% of former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. Unfortunately, I was one of those statistics and I don't wish any transitioning youth to experience the hardship of being without a home or a supportive adult.

In closing, I would humbly ask this committee to pass House Bill 873 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need to be successful adults in our community. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Tiffany Darragh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Maui)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Tiffany Darragh, I am 19 years old and a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on Maui. I recently aged out of foster care on Maui.

I support House Bill 873 to extend voluntary foster care to 21 because I know many youth who have aged out who have absolutely no place to go. They are living at the park or jumping from friend's house to friend's house. If foster care was extended to the age of 21 there would be less worries about where the youth are going with their lives.

When my brother aged out, he was kicked out of my grandparent's house. My brother had never had a job and he didn't do much thinking on how he would find housing. So aging out was a big shock for him. My brother was homeless for a while. He decided to go to college to make his life better. Our independent living worker helped him find a cheap place that he could afford with money he received for higher education every month. My brother is on food stamps. Then he also lost that place he was staying at. Once again, he was on the streets. I felt bad for him but there was nothing I could do. If the system extends care to the age of 21 then no youth in the future would have to go through what my brother and many others have gone through.

Please support House Bill 873. Mahalo.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Samantha U'u, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Maui)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Samantha U'u, I'm 18, and I am a member of the Maui HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunity Initiative. I would like to submit a testimony in support HB 873. The Bill supports the extension of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

I aged out of the foster care system when I turned 18 last February. I knew what I wanted, but I didn't know how to achieve it. I didn't have the knowledge of where to go or what to do because nothing was planned out. I was lucky enough to be guided through the process of what I wanted for my future because I continued on with my schooling.

My brother on the other hand struggled much more. He was homeless at one point because he did not receive the necessary support that he needed. Statistics show that many former foster youth experience a form of homelessness and my brother was one of them. To get out of the state of being homeless he decided to continue on with his schooling in college. He received the support that he needed, but later found out that school wasn't for him. When he dropped out of college, the support stopped, as well. I feel that if he had a planned out future along with support of other people he wouldn't have been homeless at the time, with nothing other than school support to rely on.

In closing, I would like to ask this committee to pass HB 873. To help other foster youth out there to receive the necessary support they need to plan out their future. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Finance**

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Chardonnay Rosa-Arango, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873-Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act**

My name is Chardonnay Rosa-Arango and I am the President of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of HB 873 and its intent to provide the option of voluntary foster care up to age 21.

I am very fortunate to say that at the age of 16 my foster parents at the time took legal guardianship of me. They not only provided me with security but they assured me that I had a family I could always be a part of. Because I was given a stable home past the age of 18, I was able to transition into adulthood very efficiently. Knowing that I had support and stability in my life, I was able to live out my dream and go to Southwestern Assemblies of God University, a private Christian university, in Waxahachie, Texas. I attended school there for a year and a half and now, at the age of 19, I am at Kauai Community College living with my former foster parents. If I had been completely cut off at 18, I know that the choices I made would have been very different. I believe that if foster care is extended up to 21, many foster youth will be given the opportunity and support in order to transition into adulthood more efficiently.

Statistics show that former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness due to the fact that they don't have a place to stay after they age out of care and don't have supportive adult relationships. In closing, I would ask this committee to pass HB 873 and give foster youth the option to receive the continued support they need as they make the critical transition into adulthood. Thank you very much.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: **Michael Masulit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (Kauai)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative

Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My Name is Michael Jay Masulit and I am a Member of the Kaua'i HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 which supports voluntary foster care up to age 21 in Hawaii.

For those who age out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own because of the lack of support that they need to be a successful adult. I've seen many of my fellow board members who aged out of foster care deal with a lot in their lives. Many of them had very little or no support. I am one of the fortunate ones. When I aged out of foster care, I was able to complete a college degree in culinary arts with the help of an aunt. If it wasn't for this one caring adult who provided housing and college support, I don't know where I would be today.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important option for youth, and they should have the choice to remain in foster beyond 18, as long as they want to and are willing to meet the requirements of the program.

In closing, I would ask this committee to pass HB 873. Thank you.



To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol
From: **Nellieshy Mamuad, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (East Hawaii)**
Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative
Re: **Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, Relating to Foster Care**

My name is Nellieshy Mamuad and I am 24 years old. I entered foster care at the age of 12 and aged out at 18. I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit my testimony in support of HB 873, which would allow voluntary extension of foster care until age 21.

Foster youth are wards of the state, which simply means that the state is our parent. For our out-of-care peers the nurturing and support of their parents is not something that abruptly ends at the age of 18. Our foster youth deserve to be afforded this same nurturing and support by our parent, the state.

Many foster youth who age out of care at 18 are not fully prepared to enter the world on their own with what little to no resources we do have available. In East Hawaii, there is only 1 agency that I know of that has a specified program that offers continued supportive services for aged out foster youth.

Statistics show that 24% of young people aged out of foster care have been homeless at least once by the time they are 24 years old. Furthermore, former foster youth at the age of 24 are earning more than \$10,000 less per year than their peers in the general population. Adding the lack of supportive adults who can help them find housing, write a rental reference or even co-sign, our former foster youth are at a huge disadvantage in succeeding at obtaining stable housing. Sadly, housing is just one of the many basic-need areas that our young people must fight to navigate on their own once they have aged out of the system.

In closing, I would like to humbly ask that you support and pass HB 873, so that our foster youth can have the opportunity to be afforded the same continuance of nurturing and support beyond 18 that their out-of-care peers are. Thank you.





LEGAL AID
SOCIETY OF HAWAII

Telephone: (808) 536-4302 • Fax: (808) 527-8088
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 37375 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96837-0375
924 Bethel Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Calvin Pang, Esq.
President, Board of Directors

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Esq.
Executive Director

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
HB873 HD1 - RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT

Committee on Finance - Room 308

Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Nishimoto, Vice-Chair
Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice-Chair

February 27, 2013 at 11:30 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii submits testimony in support of HB873 HD1 – Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act. This bill would allow a foster child to voluntarily consent to continued foster care until age 21 in order to continue to receive support from the state. We strongly support this bill and the amendments that were made by the House Committee on Judiciary which added some clarifications and would provide counsel to youth agreeing to consent to continued foster care.

Legal Aid is the only statewide provider of guardian ad litem services to children in foster custody. Since 1996, we have looked out for the best interest of over 3,000 children in the foster care system. We have worked with youth of all ages from birth to eighteen. Some of the most difficult situations are those where youth have remained under the jurisdiction of the Department of Human Services and “age out” because they have reached “adulthood.” For many of these youth, they might be given their very few personal items in a garbage bag and shown the way out the door of the foster home they are living to find themselves homeless on the streets. Others who are more lucky, are able to continue to live with their foster parents, but only while they are going to school.

This program would help to provide a bridge for those leaving the foster care system by providing critical support between ages eighteen and twenty-one. We realize that this program will have some added cost, but is well worth those costs as they can help to prevent the need for these youth to access future social services.

We ask for your support in passing this bill to provide foster youth additional opportunities to succeed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina
Executive Director

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii (Legal Aid) is the only legal service provider with offices on every island in the state, and in 2012 provided legal assistance to almost 10,000 Hawai'i residents in the areas of consumer fraud, public assistance, family law, the prevention of homelessness, employment, protection from domestic violence, and immigration. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice through legal advocacy, outreach and education for those in need.

To: **Committee on Finance**
Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, Conference Room 308, State Capitol
From: **Arleen Kuwamura**, Hale 'Opio Kauai

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 873, Relating Foster Care**

My name is Arleen Kuwamura and I work for Hale 'Opio Kaua'i. I am the partner staff Kaua'i branch of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board of the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873 which supports extended jurisdiction for foster youth beyond age 18. I support the intent of this bill to have voluntary foster care extended up to age 21.

For some of those who have aged out of the system, they are often not ready to go out on their own or they lack the support and often times the necessary skills needed to be successful adults. I have worked with foster youth for 18 years and have watched many of these youth struggle to make it on their own, many of them have very little or no support when they age out of foster care. If we could extend care during this crucial time of growth when they need services most, I believe we will not only be supporting the individual young person increase their full potential and social capital it will also strengthen the communities they live, work and go to school in.

In Hawai'i, 33% of former foster youth in a recent poll, ages 18 to 23, reported having couch-surfed or moved from home to home because they did not have a place to stay. That is more than the national average of 24% of former foster youth who experience some form of homelessness by age 24.

I want to emphasize that I feel this is an important **option** for youth, and that they should have the choice to remain in foster care beyond 18, as long as they are willing and eligible.

In closing, I would ask this committee to support the intent of and pass House Bill 873.

Thank you very much.

HB873

Submitted on: 2/25/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ken Ordenstein	Olomea	Support	No

Comments: My name is Ken Ordenstein. I am executive director of Olomea, a non profit formed to provide all young people, particularly Native Hawaiians, leaving foster care the chance to become self sufficient, successful adults. There are substantial financial benefits for both young people transitioning from foster care and our community when foster care is extended to age 21. It doubles the percentage of foster youth who earn a college degree from 10.2 to 20.4 thereby increasing earning potential and tax revenue. Extended foster care also lowers the cost related to early childbearing because young women who remain in care are more likely to delay parenting.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Thursday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Pastor Brad and Esther McDaniel, Licensed Resource Caregivers (aka Foster Parents)
Harvest Family Life Ministries Hawaii

RE: HB 873 - Related to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 873 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

We have worked with teens since 1989 and since 1992 specifically teens who are at-risk and/or in custody of the foster care system. We have walked with many through their struggles to adulthood. Although at age 18 individuals are declared an adult, many teens in foster care do not have the family support, nurturing, stability, and positive adult relationships that many of us grew up with. In our experience most teens in foster care at age 18 are functioning at a level at least 4 years younger than their peers who are not in foster care. They have been neglected, traumatized, abused and the healthy stages of development have been disrupted causing delays physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

There is evidence that youth in foster care often need extra help and time with this critical transition period. National statistics show that youth in foster care are less likely to graduate with a high school diploma and more likely to have been arrested than their peers. We know they are less likely to be employed or employed at jobs that leave them living below the poverty rate and the girls are at higher risk for becoming pregnant. It is estimated that 65% leave foster care without a place to go and between 1/3 – 1/2 will become homeless.

House Bill 873 will provide these young people with additional time to organize their lives and prepare for productive adulthood. Extending state support to these young people can help them to get firmly established at work or school, and set them on a positive and productive path. We are committed to serving Hawaii's youth and their families and we hope you will join us in supporting HB873.

Thank you!

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Brad and Esther McDaniel – (808) 694-9900

TO: Finance Committee, Room 308

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013

FROM: MARILYN YAMAMOTO

RE: HB873 - RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support the bill.

The Administration for Children and Families clearly states that child removal is a traumatic event, even when the parents are unfit to care for them. That report states that these children are given psychotropic drugs at the rate of 3 times the number of children in family care. The news media in 2 states has recently reported that a staggering 30% of foster children were found to have been homeless, involved in prostitution and incarcerated after aging out of foster care. Regardless of the quality of foster care, child removal is a serious risk to a child's long-term prognosis for stability and emotional health. Voluntary participation in services until age 21 is a positive step for foster teens who can take advantage of the additional services.

I would like to address the valid concerns of previous testifiers that foster teens who age out prior to having achieved stable permanency have a poor prognosis for success as an adult. Following are suggestions to minimize the impact by **reducing out-of-home placement at the outset**.

1. I believe that making "reasonable efforts" to keep children in homes where there is no imminent danger from abuse or neglect could be greatly improved and streamlined, thereby avoiding the necessity of child removal to foster care and the associated costs of that care.
 - a. I have the information reported to the federal government, that less than 10 of every 100 children in foster care have no other alternative but out-of-home care due to the seriousness of a parent offense of abuse and neglect. In those cases, a police officer is the most likely to take the first call and makes the removal decision. Many others included in the remaining 90% could reasonably be left in their own homes with services to the family. (See National Coalition for Child Protection Reform research at NCCPR.org)
 - b. I have information and belief that children are too often removed from their homes based upon the "err on the side of the child" philosophy and not on factual evidence. That mindset is flawed in that child removal creates a lifetime trauma for the very children the agency seeks to protect, making the agency part of the problem. I would suggest that "to err on the side of family preservation" should replace that philosophy with the knowledge that credible statistics say that "child welfare workers are between 2 and 6 times more likely to wrongly label an innocent family guilty of child abuse".

- c. I believe that too much latitude to make removal decisions is placed in the hands of a few child welfare workers without comprehensive training, rather than a wider perspective of professional opinion. A CWS caseworker should be required to document, via photos and recordings, the assessment of at least 2 other professionals to include a police officer and/or medical/mental health professional before taking any steps to obtain a removal order in a non-emergency report. Since child neglect is the highest percentage of child welfare cases, I would suggest that clear and convincing evidence be present on the record. I would suggest that imminent danger be properly defined, as imminent means “now”, not within 90 days, per Hawaii Statute.
 - e. I have information that States may apply for a waiver of the Title-IV foster care funding to divert those funds to family preservation/in-home services. Although applying for a waiver will give more flexibility in spending, there needs to still be a plan in place so that the contracted services are more cost efficient.
 - f. A February 2013 article from Kern County, California states that, in the aftermath of a parent lawsuit for wrongful removal, the number of foster children has been reduced from 800 in 2011 to 400 in 2012, simply because child protective services implemented a mandate to demand a warrant for child removal. That requirement was always in place. Is Hawaii CWS in compliance with the 4th Amendment and state law that requires a warrant to enter a home for search and seizure?
2. **Case Planning** for parents whose children are in foster care has some flaws that unnecessarily prolong the time that children are in out-of-home care, thereby increasing the cost to the government.
- a. Every parent who is involved with a CWS case appears to have been assigned a cookie-cutter service plan in order to reunite with a child. I am suggesting that taking the time to assess cases individually will pare down services to only those needed. Is it reasonable to order a parent into couples counseling when there’s a restraining order in place and the victim parent has left the abuser? Is it OK to order a 5 month parenting class when a parent has been accused of neglect due to failure to pay an electric bill? Payment of the electric bill and enrollment in a budgeting class would have cost less than one month’s foster care bill. Unnecessary service plan requirements prolong a child’s out-of-home stay and can drag a case on for literally years when review hearings are held only once every six months.
 - b. Caseplanning is described in the parent handbook and federal guidelines as a joint effort between caseworkers and parents. Hawaii CFSR and State assessment reports indicate that parents feel this does not happen often. Planning is done by the agency, and handed to the parents without any input from the parents.
 - c. When a case plan is devised, referrals to contract providers should be issued within 5 days to expedite correction of the issues that need to be addressed. When all services have been completed, a court hearing needs to be scheduled immediately to close the case and return the children to the family.
 - d. When families with CWS cases are handled with a one-size fits all criteria, caseworkers procrastinate on case progress, foster care costs remain steady and prolonged and the children suffer needless harm due to separation from their family. This causes a backlog in needed services,

and an inflated demand, causing a high cost.

3. False allegations via the child abuse hotline cost wasted man hours in investigation with no productive results.
 - a. More than twice the number of calls received in Hawaii are unsubstantiated for abuse and neglect. The hotline is well-known to be an avenue for harassment by vindictive parties.
 - b. The child abuse hotline should eliminate the anonymous reporting and substitute confidential reporting. All reporters should be required to give their names with the understanding that if the report is found to be deliberately false, the victim family will be notified and the agency will pursue prosecution. The voice message on the hotline should include a warning that knowingly false allegations will have consequences, and repayment will be sought.

Implementation of the suggestions for reasonable efforts, case planning and the child abuse hotline would cut costs that could be diverted to an increase in the foster care payments while at the same time reduce the number of “resource families” needed to care for Hawaii’s keikis. **Those children who have NO OTHER CHOICE but to live in foster care should have the option of extended services until the age of 21.**

The National Coalition for Child Protection Reform has, for over 20 years, researched the aspects of the child welfare system and has published credible evidence that foster placement should be a last resort only solution to families with child care challenges. See NCCPR.org and its reports on favorable outcomes as a result of leaving children at home with services.

I SUPPORT THIS BILL TO PROVIDE VOLUNTARY SERVICES UNTIL THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE, BUT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO AGE OUT OF FOSTER CARE IS INFLATED DUE TO UNNECESSARY CHILD REMOVAL.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Yamamoto

Aloha, Representative Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 873 to increase the maximum age for foster care from 18 to 21 to provide additional support to youths who are preparing to leave the foster care system.

Those of us who have worked with teenagers in foster care have seen how some of them struggle to find a foothold in the adult world. Everyone faces challenges growing up, but youth who have been in foster care for prolonged periods usually haven't had the stability, family support and positive adult mentoring that is so important to guide young people from childhood to successful adulthood.

The research data documents what all of us have seen, which is that foster youth often need extra help with this critical transition period. We know that foster youths are less likely to have a high school diploma and more likely to have been arrested than their peers. We know they are less likely to be employed, and the girls are at higher risk for becoming pregnant.

In many cases, foster youths have experienced extremely chaotic lives through no fault of their own. A teenager who has spent years moving from house to house within the foster care system likely has spent little time making realistic plans for the future. He or she may not be ready at age 18 to survive alone in the adult world, but may not have anywhere to go.

House Bill 873 will provide these youths with additional time to organize their lives and prepare for productive adulthood. Extending state support to these youths for just a little longer can help them get firmly established at work or school, and set them on a positive path.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Kevin Dayton, foster parent

90 S. Wilder Road

Hilo, Hawaii

To: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair, Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair, Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, and members of the Committee on Finance

Hearing: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30am, House Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: Margaret Hank

Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill 873, HD1 -Relating to the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

Representative Sylvia Luke Chair, Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto Vice Chair, Representative Aaron Ling Johanson Vice Chair, and members the Committee on Finance, my name is Margaret Hank. I am a MSW student at the University of Hawaii Manoa and my practicum is with EPIC 'Ohana E Makua Ana Youth Circle Program.

I would like to submit testimony in support of House Bill 873, HD 1, which extends voluntary foster care until the age of 21.

Foster youth face various challenges and are vulnerable to such risk factors as homelessness, criminal involvement, unemployment, and early pregnancy. They often face these challenges without the positive support of others and the necessary resources to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Extending foster care until the age of 21 will allow youth to mature and become more self-sufficient while continuing to have the support of their foster family and access to independent living services.

Allowing foster youth to remain in foster care until the age of 21 will give youth the opportunity to be more successful in finding stable housing, earning a steady income, and continuing their education. Current studies have found that youth who remain in care until the age of 21 are twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21 and are more likely to access independent living services.

I believe youth should be given the option to stay in foster care beyond the age of 18. I strongly urge this committee to pass HB 873, HD1. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 25, 2013 10:00 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: tabraham08@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB873 on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM

HB873

Submitted on: 2/25/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Troy Abraham	Individual	Support	No

Comments: i support and authorize urgent passage of the bill

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Justin McCoy

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER
CARE ACT

I strongly support this bill.

My parents fostered children when I was a teen. As a foster brother, I have seen firsthand the hardships that foster youth experience while in foster care and when they age out of care.

All of my foster brothers had a strong desire to be reunited with their birth mothers. Unfortunately, because of the drug ice, none of them were able to do so. Try to image being 18 and not having a family to fall back on. I don't even want to think of how that must feel.

Recently the National Center for Youth Law published these statistics:

- Over 25% of children formerly in foster care experience homelessness
- Approximately 25% spend time incarcerated
- About 33% receive public assistance
- Unemployment rates top 50%

HB 873 would help prevent these kinds of outcomes for youth who need and want the stability of a nurturing relationship past their 18th birthday. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Joanne McCoy

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY
FOSTER CARE ACT

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support this bill.

According to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief, outcomes are much better for young people who stay in care to age 21.

- Those required to leave care at age 18 were 2.7 times more likely to have been homeless;
- Remaining in care more than doubled the odds that young people would be working or in school at age 19;
- Those remaining in care were twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 21;
- Young women remaining in care experienced a 38% reduction in the incidence of pregnancy before age 20;
- Those remaining in care were more likely to access independent living services.

I hope that you will take a stand for the State of Hawaii's youth and give them the support that will help our entire state enjoy a better future.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to testify.

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Jamie McOuat

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY
FOSTER CARE ACT

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I strongly support this bill.

The facts and statistics are well-known. Foster youth who have endured frequent trauma, abuse or neglect, separation from their birth families, and later, often repeated separations from a succession of foster families, turn 18, and left to fend for themselves. Whether they leave by choice as their first display of independence from the system or are simply rendered homeless by caregivers who can no longer afford to keep them, we know the majority have no place to go and have very little life skills in order to obtain employment. A ¼ have not even graduated from high school. Those who are lucky enough to secure a job, earn below the poverty level and this in the most expensive state in the nation. These children (and yes they are still children psychologically, even if not deemed so legally) are 4 times more likely to become a single parents themselves, thereby putting an even greater burden on the state and continuing the “welfare” cycle. A correctional facility or a prison is most likely their next home and how much more will that cost the state? I urge you to allow these vulnerable children to experience the only secure environment they may have ever had in their for a few more years to achieve far superior outcomes both for themselves and society as a whole. Please consider the long term effects with a little funding now rather than a lot of funding later and support this bill.

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

Hearing: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 a.m.
Conference Room 308

From: Sherri & Jr Andrade

RE: HB873-Relating to the young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act

My husband and I have been resource caregivers for over 10 yrs. We have taken in our home over 41 teenagers through the years. Seeing the youth turn 18, so many decide to leave and do not have the support to help them be successful in their journey. Majority of them do not graduate and do not receive their high school diplomas to be able to find work, or even extend their education to go to college. The females become pregnant at such a young age, they lose their support and eventually their own children become another statistic in the child welfare system. If they find a job, it is well below poverty level to even be able to feed their mouths. You see a majority eventually become homeless living on the beaches or under a bridge. Such a sad sight to see everyday, or the males will become incarcerated down the road. Allowing the youth to extend until 21, they will be able to receive support, and this bill will bring better outcomes for the youth. Remaining in care will double the odds that the youth would be working or going to school at age 19, and become more likely to access the independent living resources. Changes do really need to be made for the youth to be able to survive in society today. We strongly support this bill HB873.

Thank you for this opportunity,

Sherri Andrade

Jr Andrade

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Kelly Nashiro-Yoshida, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for Foster Children/VGAL

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE ACT

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. As a Family Court appointed (volunteer) advocate for foster children, I strongly support this bill.

Born and raised in Hawaii, in a single-parent home; I faced difficult challenges and lived a life very different from that of my childhood friends. Foster children and youth endure far more than I did and it's painful to know this. The challenges and resulting trauma placed upon them, due to neglect or abuse, separation from their parents and/or movement to and from foster or group homes, are immense, especially for a child. Their whole world is turned upside-down.

Before becoming a CASA, I was unaware of the impact and increasing numbers of neglect and abuse to children in our community. Foster youth are in "the system" for no reason or fault of their own and WE have a responsibility to do our very best to care for and "foster" them as they enter adulthood.

WE continue to live with the devastating effects and the detrimental, continuous cycle that plagues foster youth who "age out" of foster care at age 18. Without this bill, foster youth are again, set apart from their peers, to become adults without a family unit or a proper support system to help them make important life decisions. I, myself, could not have made a successful transition without my father and extended family, beyond age 18.

The bottom line is that foster youth and young adults need guidance at an early age to give them the best opportunities for success. With this bill, WE have a chance to reach foster youth at a critical point in their lives and provide them with a supported transition plan, including a roadmap for their continued success. If WE don't take this major step now and invest in their future, our foster youth will enter adulthood WITHOUT the very things that so many are working to provide them: **a safe home, basic needs and the right to thrive**. Foster youth need and deserve this support as they transition into adulthood, as any other youth in Hawaii.

Please give foster youth a chance for a better future. It is with hope and faith in our State that I strongly support this bill, HB 873. Thank you for your consideration.

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

HEARING: Wednesday, February 27, 2013
11:30 am
Conference Room 308

FROM: Elvina Nartatez

RE: HB 873 – RELATING TO THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER
CARE ACT

I strongly support this bill.

Recently the National Center for Youth Law published these statistics:

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HB 873 would help prevent these kinds of outcomes for youth who need and want the stability of a nurturing relationship past their 18th birthday. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.