



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

March 29, 2015

TO: The Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Rachael Wong, Director

SUBJECT: SCR 169/SR 105: REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONSULT THE NA KUPUNA TRIBUNAL TO FORM A WORKING GROUP TO DETERMINE HOW THE NA KUPUNA TRIBUNAL CAN BEST ASSIST THE COURTS AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN IN MATTERS RELATING TO CHILD CUSTODY AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES.

Hearing: Monday, March 30, 2015; 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Senate Concurrent Resolution is to request the Department of Human Services (DHS) consult with the Na Kupuna Tribunal to form a working group to determine how the Na Kupuna Tribunal can best assist the courts and Native Hawaiian children in matters relating to child custody and native Hawaiian children who have been removed from their homes.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the measure and offers the following comments. The DHS respectfully requests that the Legislature convene the working group, either through the Keiki Caucus or as a

joint committee, as the complexity of factors that contribute to the persistent percentage of child welfare cases that involve native Hawaiian children are beyond DHS Child Welfare Services' (CWS) mandated purview. Further, the DHS CWS does not have the additional administrative personnel or budget to lead this effort.

The DHS acknowledges that although the number of children placed in foster care has decreased since State Fiscal Year 2004, there remains a high percentage of child welfare cases that involve native Hawaiian children and their families. A working group that may include the groups identified in the resolution, as well as other interested community members including other public and private agencies, would inform and assist the DHS to improve long term outcomes for native Hawaiian children and families involved in the child welfare system, and potentially lead to efforts to prevent entry into the child welfare system as well.

For more than a decade, the DHS launched a number of different initiatives to engage the native Hawaiian community and the community at large in developing and planning of practices and programs to increase relative placements, family involvement in decision making, identifying and engaging with birth family members, recruitment of native Hawaiian resource caregivers, and other activities designed to improve outcomes for native Hawaiian and other children involved in child welfare system. Currently, DHS, in conjunction with the Casey Family Programs, is engaged in a number of projects in different communities throughout the state that address issues in the Native Hawaiian community that relate to child welfare.

The DHS would appreciate the Legislature's leadership to convene the working group to determine how the Native Hawaiian community may continue to assist the DHS in meeting its mandated responsibilities and achieve the shared goals of reducing the number of Native Hawaiian and other children requiring involvement with the child welfare system, and improving the outcomes and well-being of children who require the State's protective intervention.

The DHS defers to the Judiciary with regard to references in the resolution to the court system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs

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JOINT SENATE COMMITTEES OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS And HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING

SR 105/SCR169 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONSULT THE NA KUPUNA TRIBUNAL TO FORM A WORKING GROUP TO DETERMINE HOW THE NA KUPUNA TRIBUNAL CAN BEST ASSIST THE COURTS AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN IN MATTERS RELATING TO CHILD CUSTODY AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES

Monday, 3/30/15; 2:00 pm; Room 224

Aloha Madam Chair Shimabukuro of the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs and Madam Chair Chun-Oakland of the Committee on Human Services and Housing and members of the joint committees. The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs supports this measure and agrees to become a Na Kupuna Tribunal partner on behalf of Native Hawaiian children.

We are painfully aware of the multitude of problems that beset our Native Hawaiian families. We are aware too, that we are singularly set up to access cultural, genealogical, and non-profit as well as governmental support for native-based experiences. It is time for early intervention, which is available because of Hawaiian Homes, QLCC, Queen Emma Clinics, as well as community connections. It is time to identify families with issues....related to drugs, alcohol, poverty, or other issues that cause harm or endanger our children. We want to join in the formation of a working group that can begin to intervene in matters that have impact on our Native Hawaiian children, on their families, and on the remedies that some may identify.

We look forward to participating when the working group is convened by the Department of Human Services, working in concert with the organizations named in the resolution and others that may be included later.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

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