

To: **Committee on Human Services**

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

1:25pm, Conference Room 016, State Capitol

From: **Brianne Lyn Nagamine**

Social Work Student at University of Hawaii at Manoa

President of The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition Leadership Board

Re: In Support of S.B. 2878, Relating To Youth Transitioning From Foster Care

Aloha Senator Chun-Oakland and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brianne Lyn Nagamine and I am a student at University of Hawaii at Manoa majoring in Social Work. I have been participating in the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition's leadership board for almost 6 years now. The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC) supports current and former foster youth ages 15-26 years old throughout their transitioning into adulthood. I entered into the foster care system when I was 13 years old. I was adopted by my paternal grandparents right before turning 17 years old. Throughout high school, I never thought I would have the opportunity to attend college but because of the higher education stipend I was able to move off the island of Kauai to attend college here on Oahu. I have been in college since August 2012 and I am very grateful that I am eligible to receive financial support from the higher education stipend. I am also grateful for my caseworkers who have supported me throughout my college career. I am excited to say that I will be graduating next year May 2017 with my Bachelors in Social Work.

I support S.B. 2878 because I understand that there are many barriers that foster youth face when transitioning into adulthood. I believe that foster youth have to wait later on in life to pursue their goals because they have a lot of independent living tasks to complete on their own. Research shows that only 50% of foster youth graduate from high school which means that the rest of them either don't have a diploma or they are working on obtaining a GED. For those who graduate, only 10% of them will pursue higher education but out of the 10% only 3% will graduate from college. In order to be eligible to apply for the higher education stipend you must be under the age of 22 years old but studies have shown that right after exiting out of the foster care system about 50% of foster youth will become homeless within the first two years. I kindly ask the committee to pass S.B. 2878 to extend the age requirement for the higher education stipend applications which will give former foster youth time to decide up until the age 26 years old whether or not they want to pursue higher education.

Mahalo,

Brianne Lyn Nagamine