

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96808

March 12, 2018

TO: The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2790 SD2 - Relating to Rights of Children in Foster Care**

Hearing: February 27, 2018, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 16, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration bill; DHS requests that the committee pass this measure as it is currently the remaining vehicle. HB2527 HD1 was consistent with this measure, however, it did not cross to the Senate.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to amend the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), by deleting the existing section 587A-3, Guiding Principles for children in foster care, and replacing it with a new section 587A- , Rights of children in foster care. This aligns with Federal Public Law 113-183 which requires that the rights of children age 14 and older regarding education, health, visitation, and court participation to be documented in the child's case plan, as well as a signed acknowledgement of the provision of these rights.

The Senate Committee on Human Services made technical amendments, and the Senate Committee on the Judiciary amended the measure as follows:

- (1) Requiring that a child in foster care who is seventeen years of age be provided with personal records and other specified documentation;
- (2) Specifying that a child's rights in foster care apply whenever possible;
- (3) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2035, to encourage further discussion; and

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

See Standing Committee Report No. 2667.

Similar Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care have been enacted in 14 states and Puerto Rico. Many of these rights are included as Guiding Principles for Children in Foster Care, in statute, 587A, HRS. Some of the new rights include culturally responsive services, requests for an attorney, and transportation to attend the school of origin.

This administration measure is a collaboration developed with youth formerly in foster care, partners, and stakeholders, and especially honors the voice of the young people we serve. Increased support and guidance for the care of children and youth in foster care will facilitate the young person's continued development, well-being, and permanency options. Positive outcomes, such as an increase in educational achievement and employment stability, will contribute to the social and economic well-being of the youth, as well as the well-being of the State. Studies show that with increased support and guidance children and youth in foster care have additional positive outcomes, which include decreases in homelessness, dependency on public welfare benefits, and drug dependency, and incarceration.

With regard to obtaining immigration documentation as requested by the Judiciary, as the Department assesses the process of obtaining immigration documentation for minors, DHS may be required to request that the effective date for this section of the measure be delayed.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/13/2018
Time: 08:30 AM
Location: 329
Committee: House Health and Human
Services

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2790, SD2 RELATING TO THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.

Purpose of Bill: Amends the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by repealing the existing section, guiding principles for children in foster care, and inserting a new section, rights of children in foster care. Effective 7/1/2035. (SD2)

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2790, SD2. This proposed measure recognizes the unique needs of children in foster care by codifying children rights, increasing educational stability, and improving educational outcomes for these youth.

Further, SB 2790, SD2 better aligns to Hawaii statute to key elements of the foster care provision under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including but not limited to: dispute resolution process, transportation procedures and immediate enrollment and records transfer, as well as identifying key points of contact at each school.

The Department, in collaboration with Hawaii Department of Human Services, has also worked to develop guidelines for implementation of statewide guidance that will provide information about the significance of educational stability in the life of a foster child.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2790, SD2.

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

Testimony to the House Committee on Health and Human Services

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at 8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

By
Catherine H. Remigio
Deputy Chief Judge, Senior Family Judge
Family Court of the First Circuit

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 2790, S.D.2, Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care.

Purpose: Amends the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, by repealing the existing section, guiding principles for children in foster care, and inserting a new section, rights of children in foster care. Effective 7/1/2035.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary writes in strong support of this bill because it expresses the Legislature’s strong support of foster children—their welfare and their independence.

This bill codifies best practices; practices that were developed with significant input from foster children and former foster children. In our own state, these practices have been discussed at annual gatherings among foster youth, former foster youth, the family court, and child serving public and private agencies. These practices garnered strong consensus among all of the participants.

Whenever possible, the Family Court applies best practices that are within our control. For example, at page 5, from line 15, the bill affords a foster child the right to “meet with and speak to the presiding judge in the child’s case.” For years, the Family Court of the First Circuit has required that foster children be informed of the court’s invitation to them to come to court.



Senate Bill No. 2790, SD2, Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care---
House Committee on Health and Human Services
Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at 8:30 am
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When the system first began, we had very few “takers.” However, as the entire system became accustomed to this requirement, more and more children and youth came to court to talk to “their” judge. Just recently, in one morning calendar for one judge, 22 children claimed this right and each individually spoke to “their” judge.

We wish to acknowledge that Senate Draft 2 made an important change to the original senate bill. At page 4, from line 15, the original bill recognized the importance of equipping the aging out youth with basic documents that we all take for granted, including, certified birth certificates and social security cards. However, as it was originally drafted, there was not sufficient time for the documents to be gathered before the youth’s “aging out.” Further, it appeared that the primary task of navigating different and sometimes labyrinthine bureaucracies rested on the youth. Senate Draft 2 improved upon the original bill by expanding the time period as well as clearly placing the primary responsibility for gathering the documents on the department.

We commend the Legislature for its care and support of one of the most vulnerable populations in our community. These children have very few family resources and are ill equipped to move toward adulthood. And yet, in our courtrooms, we are consistently moved and impressed by the resilience and grace shown by these children. On their behalf, we respectfully urge passage of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Delia Ulma, EPIC 'OHANA
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Delia Ulma, I am a Statewide Initiative Manager for the HI HOPES Initiative at EPIC 'Ohana and I would like to testify in strong support of SB 2790-relating to the rights of youth and children in foster care.

I oversee the statewide work of the HI HOPES youth boards. These boards are made up of current and former foster youth who advocate for changes in the systems and support for young people impacted by foster care. I have worked in this field for several years, listening to and assisting young people in their advocacy efforts to transform child welfare and speak on behalf of other foster youth.

This bill conveniently codifies in one place the several federal, state and department policies that already exist to support foster youth while in care. It updates an existing statute to reflect current law and the current needs of young people in care. It is both practical and essential in that it outlines for adult supporters and key people in positions of authority like a judge, social worker or GAL-the provisions afforded foster youth. These rights are a foundation for empowerment and success for foster youth. Knowing that they have the right to attend their court hearing, play a sport, stay in the same school, see their siblings, and more, are just basic things we can provide for these young people who suffer loss, separation, trauma and are moved around and disempowered in so many ways. Having a bill of rights is the legal, ethical and sensible thing to do so we can provide a path for well-being and success for Hawaii's most vulnerable keiki.

I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 904 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

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

Rick Collins, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Bay Clinic

Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Hawaii

Bobby Benson Center

Child and Family Service

Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii

Domestic Violence Action Center

EPIC, Inc.

Family Programs Hawaii

Family Support Hawaii

Friends of the Children of
West Hawaii

Hale Kipa, Inc.

Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.

Hawaii Children's Action
Network

Hawaii Student Television

Ho'ola Na Pua

Kahi Mohala

Kokua Kalihi Valley

Maui Youth and Family Services

P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.

Parents and Children Together
(PACT)

Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest and
Hawaiian Islands

PHOCUSED

Salvation Army Family

Intervention Services

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Susannah Wesley Community
Center

The Catalyst Group

March 11, 2018

To: Representative John Mizuno, Chair
And members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2790 SD 2 RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 2790 SD 2 Relating to Rights of Children in Foster Care.

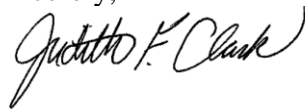
Some of the rights specified in the bill ensure that basic health and safety needs are met. Others enable and empower children and youth in foster care to participate in planning for their own futures. Efforts to keep foster children in their home schools help them to maintain their natural support systems.

Children and youth in foster care often feel that their lives are out of their control. They often feel that their voices are not heard.

This bill of rights will protect children from harm while in care, enable them to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and is likely to lead to better outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2790, SD2: Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care

TO: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair, Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Terrence L. Walsh, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer

Hearing: Tuesday, 3/13/18; 3:30 AM; CR 329

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Members, Committee on Health & Human Services::

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of SB 2790, SD2, which amends the Child Protective Services Act re the rights of children in foster care. I am Terry Walsh, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 60 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, developmentally disabled, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Children in the foster care system are particularly vulnerable. We need to do all we can to ensure that appropriate family connections are maintained and children feel that they have rights, vs. being helpless in this complex system.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i supports this bill since it would bring Hawai'i's law into compliance with federal guidelines on the rights of children who end up in the foster care system.

We believe that every child has inherent dignity and deserves to grow in a safe environment. This bill would enhance the Department of Human Services current rights for children/youth in foster care to ensure safety and quality of life in a nurturing environment.

Children who end up in foster care have already suffered much trauma. When it is safe, they should have the right to see or contact their siblings and parents. In fact older siblings may often have taken over the parenting role in a family with smaller children. Keeping family connections and other provisions of this bill would enhance children's ability to grow and develop their potential in a nurturing environment.

We urge you to pass this measure. Please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at 373-0356, or at bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org, if you have any questions.





1130 N. NIMITZ HWY, SUITE C-210, HONOLULU, HI 96817
PHONE: (808) 838-7752 TOLL FREE: (866) 636-1644 FAX: (808) 838-1653

I am writing in support of SB2790 Rights of Foster Children. When the State of Hawai'i steps into a family to protect children, children who have experienced abuse and neglect become OUR children. Children in foster care are among the most vulnerable children in Hawai'i. EPIC 'Ohana is a non-profit organization that works with families and young people to strengthen families and young people. Part of our work is the HI HOPES Initiative. HI HOPES Board members are foster youth and former foster youth on all islands who advocate, educate and collaborate on behalf of their foster brothers and sisters. Please listen to their voices.

The HI HOPES leadership has worked tirelessly for three years to bring this matter to the legislature. When the 2014 federal law that requires all young people, who are old enough to understand, must be given a statement of their rights, and have those rights explained to them, the young people on the HI HOPES boards quickly understood the importance of fully implementing this requirement in Hawai'i. In the annual summit of young leaders, the HI HOPES board members discussed what the rights should be, studied the rights of young people in other states, looked at the current "guiding principles" and shared stories about their experiences.

Subsequently, they conducted surveys of more than 100 young people in care, they conducted numerous workshops, and they convened a meeting of stakeholders. We learned that many young people have experienced times when their rights were denied, and few young people knew about the guiding principles. We heard stories of foster parents (resource caregivers using their foster children as maids and babysitters and not treating them as members of their family. We heard stories of corporal punishment and isolation. At the same time, there were also many stories of foster parents who did treat them as a part of their family, and who did love them.

We can do better. We MUST do better. Passing this bill of rights will provide a clear and strong statement about HOW we can do better. Thank you so much for your support.

Aloha

Laurie Arial Tochiki JD, PhD
President & CEO,
EPIC 'Ohana



March 13, 2018

To: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health & Human Services

From: Mandy Finlay, Director of Public Policy
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **SB 2790 SD2 – Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329, March 13, 2018, 8:30 AM

On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing to support SB 2790, SD2 – Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care.

Children and youth in foster care represent one of our State's most vulnerable communities. Entering foster care can be a traumatic experience in which a child has their entire world turned upside-down. This can leave foster children with feelings of uncertainty about when or whether they will see their siblings or friends again, or even whether their new foster family will provide them with food to eat. Additionally, the State has a special legal relationship with foster youth and a duty to ensure that they are protected while in foster care. Establishing the "Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Youth" in statute is necessary to ensure that foster youth are aware of their rights, such as the right to be free from emotional abuse, and know to speak up if these rights are not being respected. SB 2790 would update the existing *Guiding Principles for Children and Youth in Foster Care* by renaming the section and including a more comprehensive list of rights, including rights for LGBTQ youth, clarification around vital documents, and references to case planning and educational stability.

For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests the Committee to support this measure.

HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education.

March 12, 2018

Greetings Representative Mizuno,

My name is Keith Kuboyama. I am the President and CEO of Family Programs Hawaii, a non-profit organization that has been working with children and families in the foster care system for over 30 years. FPH was formerly known as Casey Family Programs. We support Senate Bill 2790.

Children in our foster care system have experienced neglect, threatened harm, physical abuse, sexual abuse, medical neglect or psychological abuse. When children are removed from fractured families and sent to foster care, they often lose touch with one another. As a result, children suffer not only the loss of their parents, but also the loss of their brothers and sisters, which may be the toughest part of foster care.

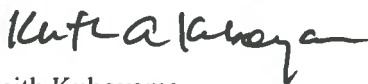
In July 2014, Child Trends, a research center that studies children at all stages of development, reported that “just under half of children (birth – 17 years) in Hawaii (44%) have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE). Nearly one in ten children in the state (9%) experienced three or more ACE’s.” A growing body of research has sought to quantify the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences and illuminate their connection with negative behavioral and health outcomes, such as obesity, alcoholism, and depression, later in life. These findings have important implications for Oahu’s children’s health and well-being, especially since many of the children who enter foster care have experienced three or more adverse childhood experiences. (State of Hawai’i: Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Book 2013).

We believe Senate Bill 2790 is a no-cost bill that will ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. This bill will promote a sense of stability and hope that will result in a greater sense of well-being for children who have experienced tremendous loss, allow them to better handle the challenges of foster care.

“Every child deserves to build (positive) childhood memories We only get one childhood; we don’t get a do-over. If we don’t address these issues now, we will be paying for them later.” (Pat Brown, 2009)

We encourage you to pass Senate Bill 2790. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for all the work you’ve done to support Hawaii’s foster children and youth.

Sincerely,



Keith Kuboyama
President & CEO
Family Programs Hawaii



We help kids



SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 8:15:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	OCC Legislative Priorities Committee, Democratic Party of Hawai'i	Support	No

Comments:

To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Krystal Chavez, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Krystal Chavez, I am 17 years old and I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care. Many of the youth in foster care are in their prime growing years. They should be able to play sports, get a job or even start driving. After all, good driving habits start when you're young and the world could use a lot more safe drivers. Frankly, many of them are not able to because their legal documents are sadly "unobtainable."

When I was 16, a little over a year ago before I was in care, I had planned my life out. Everything had a "due" date and had to be done right away. All of that was stopped when I was taken into the system, along with my two younger siblings. I could no longer drive, get a job or even open a savings account all because we could not access my documents.

Less than 5% of today's youth currently own a savings account. That is a small percentage of the huge number of youth. More than 43% of foster parents have claimed that their foster child's documents were unobtainable. My family is a part of that 43%. Wouldn't you want your children to be able to have a bright and certain future? I feel it is safe to assume you would give your children the same opportunities.

This bill gives foster youth the right to engage in age-appropriate activities and access to vital documents that will help them with education, housing, transportation and employment so that they can have a head start on a successful life.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Lyu Burdette, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Lyu Burdette and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

All young people in foster care have a right to maintain contact with their siblings / parents. When I was in foster care, I was not allowed to speak to my mother. When I exited out of foster care, 17 year-old my sister was not allowed to maintain contact with me.

In 2013, there were 23,346 young people who aged out of foster care without a permanent legal connection to a parent, family member, or adoptive parent. Young people with supportive adults in their lives are more likely to report being able to cover their expenses and have a savings and less likely to incur debt in adulthood.

By encouraging youth to exercise their rights or not be afraid to speak up when violated or prevented from contacting their family members. Also, those young people should be informed of their rights.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Melissa Mayo, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Melissa Mayo and I am 18 years old. I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care. Included in this bill are supports for foster youth to receive a timely notice and encouragement to attend court hearings. Imperatively, foster youth should have the basic right of being involved in the planning for their lives and engaging in the direction of their lives. In particular, being informed of their court hearings in a timely manner and having the right to attend these court hearings. Foster youth already enter care without the stability and the knowledge of what their future holds. Therefore, foster youth should be able to have the choice to be present at court hearings that plan the direction of their lives. Along with being able to self-advocate for themselves and their future. For foster youth being able to be a part of the direction of their own life at court hearings gives the opportunity to advocate for other basic rights all foster youth should be granted. Such as, medical, employment, housing and education. Relating to education, only 4% of foster youth attain a four year degree compared to 36% of the general population. I was fortunate enough to attend, participate in many of my court hearings, and have a voice in my permanent plan and housing. I was given the support to be able to advocate to go to college and reside in the dorms while still in foster care.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Patricia Duh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Patricia Duh. I am 22 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB 2790 which asks to amend the current 587A – Rights of children in foster care to ensure that a child in foster care and resource caregivers understand a foster youth's rights to the fullest extent possible.

Many young people are not aware of the current bill of rights and even those who are aware of their rights do not fully understand what it means due to the wording being too vague or to complicated. Why are foster youth being asked to sign the current 587A when they may not fully understand what they are signing? Youth in foster care miss out on many opportunities to enhance their personal development due to not fully understanding that they have a right to obtain a job, practice their own religious beliefs, or even have family visitations.

Currently, only 16-25% of 24 year-olds who experiences foster care work consistently. While I was in foster care, I always wanted to obtain a job and gain some work experience. I never had the chance to do this because I was not aware of my rights and was always told no when wanting to do something that I thought would enhance my personal development. Upon exiting foster care, I did not know the necessary skills and had a difficult time in obtaining a job as well. If I was aware of my rights and fully understood them, I would have advocated more for myself and would have gain more knowledge in the employment area. Having the knowledge of fully understanding your rights as a foster youth will allow youth to feel more comfortable in advocating for what they believe is right for themselves.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Tuan Giang, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Tuan Giang. I am 22 years old and I am a Board Member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB 2790 which asks to amend the current 587A – Rights of children in foster care to ensure that a child in foster care and resource caregivers understand a foster youth's rights to the fullest extent possible.

The Foster Youth Bill of Rights can help many youth find self-empowerment to speak for themselves about what they want to do.

For the duration of time that I was in foster care, I went to two different middle schools and three high schools. The unpredictable timetable of changing school as a young person in foster care makes it hard to develop friendships. But, like any other young people in schools, I wanted friends to hang out with. When I was a junior in high school, I asked my foster parents if I could join a sport and then I joined the Cross Country high school team. It was there that I met my best friend Cri and Daniel. The three of us ran Cross Country together after school.

Although we would eventually go separate ways after high school, I went to college in Hilo, Cri in California, and Daniel in Texas, we would often meet each back in the summer and winter on Oahu. We do not run Cross Country together anymore but we have crossed countries when the three of us took a backpacking trip through Italy, Germany, and France in summer 2016.

For me, the right to participate in an extra-curricular activity means more than just running three miles as fast as you can. It means to meet people that want to run the three miles with you and maybe run together for a memory of a lifetime.

I'm grateful that my foster parents supported and encouraged my decision to pursue extra-curricular activities. Unfortunately, not all young people in care have the same opportunity that I did or know that they have the right to pursue extra-curricular activities. This is why SB 2790 is important. In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Tiffany Darragh, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Tiffany Darragh, I am 23 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care. When young people are placed into foster care, they sometimes feel lost and confused as to what is happening and feel that their whole life is going to be planned for them from now on. All youth in foster care should be informed of their rights.

I entered care at the age of 13. I was never informed of any of my court hearings. I never met my guardian ad litem until after my first hearing. I felt like my opinion on how my life was going to be was irrelevant. When I heard that my brother and I were going to be placed into legal guardianship with my grandparents, I was happy that I wouldn't have to move homes again. My guardian ad litem asked if I was okay with guardianship but never told me I could go to my hearings. If I would have been given the opportunity to be involved in my case plan and my court hearings, I would have felt more comfortable having someone speak on my behalf in regards to my "Best interest". Currently, there are 23, 346 young people who aged out of foster care without a permanent legal connective to a parent, family member, or adoptive parent. If youth were informed they can go to those hearings that impact their lives, we could impact those numbers dramatically. Having a voice for yourself and your case plan is empowering and so crucial for the youth.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto and I am the board advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. I am an employee of EPIC Ohana. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stake holders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I have been working with youth in foster care for almost ten years. During this time, I have seen many youth enter and exit the foster care system without the adequate support and resources needed for all young adults to prepare for the challenges they will face in adulthood. Many foster youth are unaware of their rights in foster care, which has led to the severance of their sources of social capital. They are taken from their homes, and told they cannot keep their job, go to the same school, participate in extracurricular activities, or even see their siblings when their siblings are placed in another foster home. A lot of these young adults are unaware that they can have access to their vital documents to get things like a driver's permit and a job.

By passing SB 2790, youth in foster care will gain more information about how they can take an active role in case planning with their social worker, they will be able to learn how to advocate for themselves, but most of all, they will be able to learn the skills necessary to become successful adults.

I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Samantha U'u, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Samantha U'u. I am 24 years old and I am the vice-president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Young people who experienced foster care have higher rates of physical and mental health issues. We did not ask to be physically and mentally ill due to the limited amount of information to gain opportunities that were crucial to our health and well-being. The majority of young people in foster care experience trauma in some form as a result of maltreatment and foster placement. Between 25 and 60% of youth in foster care have at least one chronic or acute health condition.

When I was 15, my vision was getting worse while I was in care. I had no glasses to help me see better, and I was not able to get annual exams with my eye doctor. It wasn't until I turned 18, and aged out of foster care that I was able to see an eye doctor on my own. If I knew that I had a right to ask my social worker to take me to the eye doctor because I was guaranteed medical exams, it would have made things much easier for me and helpful in school and in my life.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Rachel Burke, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Rachel Burke. I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

For youth in care it is very important for them to know about their rights and how to effectively advocate for themselves. I've witnessed and experienced first-hand too many times where youth were not aware of their rights.

I entered care at the age of 14 and I wanted to know and be a part of everything going on with my case. However, with all of my attempts to be part of my case planning, all I got was, "You're just a kid. You don't know what you want or what is best for you."

Getting to be part of your case planning teaches you about decision-making, which is something you will have to do after you turn 18. I wish I would have been able to be part of where I wanted my life to go and it would have given me more confidence to make healthy decisions after I aged out of foster care.

Our goal is to help youth successfully transition into adulthood. By knowing their rights, and being able to advocate for themselves while in foster care, youth can start practicing making decisions while they have a safety net and a network of support to work towards their goals.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Alison Kilpatrick, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Alison Kilpatrick, I am 16 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Young people are placed in foster care and are usually separated from their parents and siblings. I feel like it's an issue for a lot of the foster youth because family is a major complement in a young person's life. SB No. 2790 supports the foster youth's right to have supervised or unsupervised visits with family.

Studies show that strong, positive connection with families and communities are associated with lower levels of unhealthy risk-taking and the development of caring, confident, and competent young person. Only 70% claim that they have family members to help achieve their life goals.

To me this is a problem because some foster families don't allow or like youth visiting their biological families. For me, I have a hard time seeing my family and it's very important to me because family means everything to me and I also have a 9-month old baby brother and another one on the way, and I would like to be part of their lives. Not only are these rights important and important for me to know while in care but the adults need to know so that our rights are honored and we can feel whole and happy in care and have family when we become adults.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Deza-Rae Desa, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Deza-Rae Desa. I am the secretary of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

To have basic necessities and basic rights to all foster youth is critical. To me, this means knowing that there are rights here to protect us, when no one else really can. For example, being told that I'm not allowed to visit my brother because he's at on the West Side of O'ahu and associating that side with being a "bad influence" was hurtful and depressing.

To quote the words of my fellow board member, Noy, she said that, "For children entering foster care, it is a time of loss. Loss of familiarity, family, friends, community, and school. But the greatest loss is of siblings. Separating siblings / severing permanent life-long connections while in foster care inflicts further trauma. About 70% off children in foster care have one sibling and more than half are separated." If I knew that I had a right to see my siblings, I would have advocated with my social worker, GAL and judge to see my siblings and would have been less depressed and happier in care. When I became an adult, I reconnected with them but it would have meant the world to me if that was done while I was in care. It would have helped with my mental and emotional well-being.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Anastasia Neumann, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Anastasia Neumann and I am 17 years old. I am a member of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB No. 2790, which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Foster youth should have rights that give us the same opportunities as other children. Young people will have the right to access their vital documents such as a birth certificate, social security card, and even obtain a driver's license, which in turn helps me to obtain employment while in foster care and as I exit foster care.

This is particularly important to me because I want a stable, productive future. Unlike my father who had to work two jobs and still struggled to keep food on the table.

Through a Jim Casey Initiative study, I've learned that 22% of employed young people who experienced foster care do not earn enough to rise out of poverty, and 71% earn less than \$25,000 a year. Having a right that ensures we receive our vital documents while in care and as we exit care to adulthood is important for us to get a job, housing and go to school.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Ehukai Goias-Medeiros, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Ehukai Goias-Medeiros, I am 16 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPEs Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Youth in foster care don't know they have rights, but those who do, don't think it is being enforced and taken seriously by Child Welfare Services.

Noticing more support is needed from social workers to be serious about the Bill of Rights for youth in foster care. Social Workers and other community members should give all kids an equal chance to prove themselves. The only way that would happen is if the social workers include them in their case planning.

Data says that only 26% of youth in foster care say they receive support from Child Welfare professionals. I feel that more youth should receive support from their social workers because they play a huge role in making decisions in the lives of foster youth.

In my experience, I know that I have Rights, but I didn't feel that they were enforced, and I wasn't given the chance to have a monthly meeting with my social workers. I also wasn't given an opportunity to be involved in case planning for my case. Rights are the first step but enforcing these rights so young people are successful and empowered and happy are critical.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Aponi Boyer, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (MAUI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Aponi Boyer, I am 17 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on MAUI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

All youth in foster care deserve to know, advocate, and practice their rights.

Being in foster care, I have been in and out of different homes. I have been worried about moving to new schools, making new friends, and building new social capital. But with the right to attend school and to remain in the child's school of origin that helps foster youth to stay in the same school with friends, counselors, teachers and coaches they know and have social capital with. Living in a different town that is far away from my school, I take the city bus down from where I live to the mall, then walk to school from there. It means a lot to be able to stay in the same school even if it is far.

Just over half of young people with foster care experience graduating high school by the age of 19 compared to 87% if all young people.

The bill of rights protects young people to stay in their school of origin even if they move foster homes and this makes a huge difference with their education and college and employment.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Elizabeth Rodriguez, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (KAUAI)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Elizabeth Rodriguez, I am 19 years old and I am on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board on KAUAI. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Many foster youth don't realize the laws that are available for them. My rights were followed, therefore, I was able to go to school, work, etc. and to me it means I was able to proceed life as a normal teen instead of feeling different because I was in foster care. I was able to work 30 hours a week. I was able to go to the same school even though it isn't in the same district.

The data supporting my statement is 8% achieve a post-secondary degree. Compared to 46% of the general population. Also, 34% reported that they were employed either full- or part-time by the time they were 19.

Because of the adults in my life that knew I had rights and supported my rights, I have a head start on life and lead a pretty normal teenage life, despite being in foster care. I am fortunate compared to so many youth. All youth need rights and adults to enforce those rights so we can be healthy, happy and thrive.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Kapua Brock-Kuanoni, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (WEST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Kapua Brock-Kuanoni, I am 24 years old and I am the vice-president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in WEST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Many youth in care are unaware of the rights they possess while in foster care. I was fortunate enough to have a social worker who knew about these rights and told me about them. Because of her, I began going to my court hearings where I was able to advocate for myself instead of having a room full of adults speak about, and make decisions for me.

Unfortunately, most social workers today, and even some Guardian ad Litem are unaware of our rights, or they don't promote them. With this bill, it would provide awareness for all that are unaware, and help inform youth of their rights.

In closing, I ask that you support this bill so that foster youth may properly advocate for themselves and have a sense of ownership in their lives and I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Kekoa Abellera., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Kekoa Abellera. I am 17 years old and I am the historian of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Every child should have the right to "Live in a safe and healthy home free from physical, psychological, sexual, and other abuse." As a former foster youth, I often believe the main focus is on "physical" abuse. When in reality it may be the least. Being alone and going through the system, foster youth suffer through a lot of mental and emotional abuse. We are not at fault for being in those circumstances, so I feel entitled to a safe house free from all abuse.

"Young adults who experienced foster care as teens are more than twice as likely to have a mental health problem as their non-foster care peers." Many kids go into the system as teens, which is a crucial time for young adults. From figuring out what they want to do in life, to building important relationships. Going into the system will disrupt your thought process you've been building for years. Having rights for foster youth will help them know they should expect to live in a safe home, free from physical and mental/emotional abuse and that they have rights for so many other things that will help them thrive.

I thank you for your time and consideration of my written testimony. We hope that you support SB 2790, let's move forward with creating more safe foster homes free from all abuse. Thank you very much for your time.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Jade Perreira, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

My name is Jade Perreira. I am 25 years old and I the secretary on the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

Foster youth who come from bigger families are more likely to be placed into separate homes during their time in care. This being the situation for me, visitation with them was the light that kept me sane in a situation that was less than ideal. Allowing visitation for foster youth is essential for a positive transition through care and is a right that would be afforded to our peers who live with their biological families, and should not be denied to youth in the foster care system.

70% of foster youth receive support from their family members to help them achieve their life goals vs. the 26% of youth who claim child welfare service professionals do the same. Your 'ohana are the first line of social capital we encounter in our lives + losing that connection could be detrimental to foster youth not only being not only behaviorally but mentally + social which will show its negative effects well into adulthood.

Keeping foster youth connected to their family members and allowing that positive influence will potentially help to create a person who feels stable and confident in themselves and is able to carry on wholeheartedly and make positive decisions in their lives. Rights to see siblings and family is just one right that is in this bill of rights and it is critical for the health and well-being of foster youth.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Glenn Perreira Jr., HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (EAST HAWAII)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Glenn Perreira Jr. I am 24 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in EAST HAWAII. 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES Initiative. Our work includes identifying needs of transitioning foster youth, educating stakeholders and advocating for public will and policy changes.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2790 which promotes the rights of children in foster care.

I know first-hand that this law will set a strong foundation for the up and coming youth in foster care. I entered the foster care system when I was 15 years old. I attended my mom's court hearing and when she was sentenced to jail time, I found myself completely alone and so I walked across the street in Hilo from the courthouse to Child Welfare Services to turn myself in.

When I entered foster care, my social worker asked me if I had a place/people that could take me in and I identified hanai family and I was allowed to live with them. This made a huge difference in my life because I was cared for and learned how to fix cars and was given money to follow my dreams and goals. Today I am an auto mechanic with a certificate and I support my family this way.

The bill of rights supports foster youth in living in stable and safe homes, having the opportunity to be a part of their case plan, make decisions that affect their lives and the chance to pursue extra-curricular activities, dreams and goals to have a successful life as a young adult.

Young people have a right to go to court and if they knew they could go to court and talk to the judge about their lives and ask for help, they could be empowered and be a part of their decisions and have the chance to thrive. The more young people can be a part of their case, involve their judge and social worker and foster parents and be part of activities that promote social capital, they can follow their dreams and reach their goals.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you support the well-being and empowerment of foster youth in Hawaii by passing Senate Bill 2790. Thank you very much.



March 12, 2018

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: S.B. 2790 S.D.2 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care

Hearing: Tuesday, March 13, 2018, 8:30 a.m.

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Stephanie Batzer. I am the Chair of the Board of Directors for Family Programs Hawaii, a Child Law attorney, and I have been a Court Appointed Special Advocate Volunteer Guardian ad Litem (CASA VGAL) for nearly six years. I am submitting testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of S.B.2790 S.D.2** Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care. This **no cost** measure amends the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by repealing the existing section "Guiding Principles for Children in Foster Care," and inserting a new section "Rights of Children in Foster Care," which will update current policies and law to meet existing federal laws, as well as the needs of foster youth in care.

Children are Hawaii's most valuable resource. They are our future. Family Programs Hawaii is a unique non-profit agency that provides quality care to the children of Hawaii. Our goal is that every child in Hawaii has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. We help foster children and children at risk with three areas of service: prevention, transition, and support.

The federal Foster Children Bill of Rights is designed to inform foster children of their rights within the child welfare system. Part of this helps inform the children why they are in foster care, how the process will proceed, their right to participate in extracurricular activities, to have educational stability, to have access to Guardians ad Litem, access to mental, behavioral and physical health care, access to siblings and family members. It also requires that foster parents adopt a reasonable and prudent parenting standard, particularly when making decisions regarding extracurricular and other activities. Very importantly, the Foster Children Bill of Rights empowers children of age fourteen and older to be an active part of the development of or revision to his or her case plan. Foster Children Bills of Rights have been enacted in fifteen states and Puerto Rico thus far.

I have worked with three teenagers as a CASA VGAL and ensured that their voices were heard. The knowledge that the Judge will listen and take their participation seriously is very empowering.

Hawaii's proposed Foster Children Bill of Rights will keep our keiki in foster care safe, informed, empowered, and thriving. For this reason, I ask that you pass SB 2790, and support our foster children and youth.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Stephanie W. Batzer, Esq., MSW



We help kids



To: House Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Noy Worachit, HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board (OAHU)
Re: **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2790,**
RELATING TO RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

My name is Noy Worachit. I am 25 years old and I am the president of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board 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 Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services and the HI HOPES 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 SB 2790 which asks to amend the current 587A – Rights of children in foster care to ensure that a child in foster care and resource caregivers understand a foster youth’s rights to the fullest extent possible.

Foster youth should be afforded rights that keep us safe and help us to thrive. Young people lose everything when placed into foster care and the only thing certain is uncertainty. We never know where we are going to live, when we are going to see our siblings or parents again, or if we are ever going back home. Nothing is ever guaranteed. With these Bill of Rights, we should be guaranteed the basic human necessities like: a safe place to live that is free from any type of abuse, nutritious food, access to medical care, as well as the right to see our families. And other rights that ensure normalcy, social capital, and healthy brain development that helps us to be successful and contributing members of our communities.

Hawai’i is leading the nation in child welfare reform and is considered “best practice.” In 2011, 95% of 17 year olds in foster care in Hawaii reported having a current connection to an adult or social capital. This is looking at the quantity and quality of social relationships and the kind of value it adds to the lives of young people. Having this social capital was crucial for me when transitioning out of the foster care system as a young mother. If it were not for these lifelong supportive relationships that I have made, I would not be here today - in the military, working for the Judiciary, advocating for foster youth, and parenting my own children (because our children are twice as likely to end up in the child welfare system.) It truly takes a village.

I humbly ask that you continue to do right by my fellow foster brothers and sisters by supporting and passing SB 2790. Mahalo for your time.



To: The Honorable Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Members of the Health & Human Service Committee

From: Brianne Lyn Nagamine

Re: Testimony in Support of S.B. 2790 SD 2, Rights of Children in Foster Care

Hrg: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 8:30 AM State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, & Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of S.B. 2790 SD2 which amends the Child Protective Act, chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by replacing section 587A-3 “Guiding Principles for Children in Foster Care” with a new section 587A- “Rights of Children in Foster Care”. Bill of Rights for Foster Youth have been enacted in 15 states in the U.S including Hawaii. However, the state of Hawaii is the only state that refers to it as the “Guiding Principles”. Certain states like California, Florida, and Texas have similar laws in place that are referred to as “rights” of youth in foster care¹.

It important to make the necessary updates and provide specific details within the “Bill of Rights for Foster Youth” so that youth in the foster care system are able to understand it clearly. The Bill of Rights for Foster Youth provides young people with empowerment and a voice to advocate for themselves while in the foster care system. There are many things that have been added to the new section which I think are extremely important. I appreciate the line added to section (5) in regards to visitation rights. Which states that “withholding visitation should not be used as a punishment”. As an Alumni of the State of Hawaii’s Foster Care system, I understand how not being able to see or have contact with loved ones can feel like a punishment. Going forward, I think it’s important that foster youth are informed about the specific reason(s) why visitation was not granted or arranged.

It should be required that service providers working directly with youth in the foster care system post visibly and/or provide information about these rights for foster youth. I believe foster youth in the state of Hawaii will benefit greatly, if the recommended updates to the existing statute are made. This is why I strongly ask the committee to pass S.B. 2790 SD2.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2790 SD2.

Sincerely,



Brianne Lyn Nagamine

¹ <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/foster-care-bill-of-rights.aspx>

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2018 5:06:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Joseph OConnell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services
Hearing on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, in CR 329 at 8:30 a.m.

Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: S.B. 2790, SD2 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care

Testimony of Josephine Chang, in strong support of S.B. 2790, SD2

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of S.B. 2790, SD2 Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care, that seeks to update the Child Protective Act by incorporating the existing guiding principles of children in foster care currently set forth in section 587-3, HRS, of the Child Protective Act, into a replacement section that provides rights for children in foster care, also strengthens protections, and gives clearer guidance for the care of children and youth in foster care. The amendments in this bill also makes clear that culturally diverse children and youth in foster care, who are among the most vulnerable and often fall through the cracks in the “system”, also have rights and protections. These strengthening provisions will help to assure that all foster children and youth in the State’s care will be supported towards healthy and positive outcomes. Enacting rights for children in foster care is in keeping with federal law and with an increasing number of states across the nation, as reported by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Hawaii, too, should provide the strongest support possible for our foster children.

I respectfully ask all of you for your support for S.B. 2790, SD2.

Mahalo,

Josephine L. Chang, Esq. (Ret.)
LGBTQ Consultant and Trainer,
Community Resource and Parent Support

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 10:51:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jenaiah Banasihan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

"Aloha, my name is Jenaiah Banasihan. I am writing today to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. The current statute existing in Hawai'i, in which provides guidance around what can and should be afforded to foster youth in care is in need of being updated, strengthened and designed to reflect current federal and state policies and law. As a result, SB 2790 is a bill that updates and strengthens the current statute and provides foster youth rights for children and youth in care. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth."

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services, March 12th, 2018

From: KEOLA LIMKIN

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT OF SB 2790 SD2

Hello and aloha Chair and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Keola Limkin, I am 26 years old, and I am in strong support of SB 2790. I am a former member of the HI HOPES Youth Leadership Board, a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and am currently employed with EPIC 'Ohana. I am submitting this testimony as an individual and not as a representative of EPIC 'Ohana.

I spent three years growing up in foster care in Hilo up until I graduated from high school. As I spent time with my foster dad growing up, I was not notified or encouraged to go to my court hearings. In result, I was filled with negative images of my family court judge without truly understanding their role. According to a survey taken by a convient sample of Hawai'i foster youth in 2016, seven out of 43 youth did not know they had a right to attend their court hearings. Any youth that do not know is unacceptable.

Lastly, I feel blessed to have been involved with my high school's Leo club and judo team. It meant the world to me when my foster dad came to watch my judo matches. These activities and positive relationships definitely helped my brain to rewire past trauma. Now, I serve on the National Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Policy Council and I possess the social knowledge to work collaboratively with others.

These proposed rights of children in foster care upholds the vision for these youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. I ask that we move forward to create a stronger collective community in our Island chain, ka pae 'āina Hawai'i, and pass Senate Bill 2790 SD2. Thank you very much for your time.

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:23:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rddiaz	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha my name is Ruthie Diaz. I am writing today to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790, Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Older foster youths should be given the rights to become involved with decisions that will affect them. This will empower them to become decision-makers, problem-solvers, critical-thinkers and gain life management skills that are essential to adapt to adulthood.

Thank you for considering this request an thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster Children and youth.

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 11:52:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mari Ono	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing today to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Mahalo nui loa for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth.

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 1:11:16 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
aimee sutherlin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a Social Worker in the community who has worked for programs providing services for foster children, I write today to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered, and thriving. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth.

Mahalo

Aimee Chung, MSW

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 2:40:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Alexa St Martin	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Aloha Representative John Mizuno,

RE: SB2790 SD2

Hearing scheduled for 3/13/2018 at 8:30 am.

My name is Alexa St. Martin, and I am a Masters of Social Work candidate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in support of SB2790 relating to foster youth. I am writing today to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving.

Foster youth are a highly at-risk population that have often faced great adversity already in their young lives. This bill will ensure that they have basic rights such as the right to a safe home free from abuse, the right to receive adequate food and shelter, and the right to medical care. Foster youth, like all children, have the right to these basic necessities. Let us fight for the rights of these at-risk children and ensure that they have access to the future they deserve.

Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth,

Alexa St. Martin

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 2:52:40 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Anne-marie Cline	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

To whom it may concern:**SB2790, Relating to the rights of children in foster care.**

"Aloha, my name is Anne-marie Cline. I am writing today to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth."

I am in support of the amendments to the Child Protective Act. All children deserve to live in a safe, healthy, supportive and protected environment where they are safe to be themselves and free of any and all discrimination. All children also deserve the right to adequate medical care, including mental health services, and have the right to visits with their biological family and siblings if it is deemed safe for the child.

Children in foster care and especially vulnerable to victimization and often go unheard when their needs are not met. In order to further protect these children and acknowledge their rights, we need the amendments made to the Child Protective Act. Without these amendments we risk having the child's rights and needs go unmet, which would result in a significant disservice to the child, their parents and the Child Welfare System overall. We need to work on not only keeping our youth safe but to also empower them and provide them the chance to have their voices heard.

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 3:09:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Tiffany Peek	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-2790-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2018 6:31:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shanelle Acain	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Testimony of Shanelle Acain

Chair: John M. Mizuno & Vice Chair: Bertrand Kobayashi

House Committee on Health & Human Services

Senate Bill 2790

Relating to Foster Youth Rights

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at 8:30 a.m.

Conference Room 329

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

My name is Shanelle Acain and I am in support of SB 2790.

Aloha, my name is Shanelle Acain. I am writing testifying to encourage Representative Mizuno to pass Senate Bill 2790. This is a no-cost bill to ensure that foster youth are provided rights in foster care that will keep them safe, informed, empowered and thriving. Thank you for considering this request and thank you for supporting Hawaii's foster children and youth.

Again, my name is Shanelle and I am in strong support of SB 2790.

Shanelle Acain/sacain@hawaii.edu

Robert J. Bidwell, MD
6264 Keokea Pl., Honolulu, Hi. 96825 Tel. 808-428-4545

Date: March 13, 2018
Conference Room 329 (8:30 AM)
State Capitol

To: Rep. John Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Robert J. Bidwell, M.D.

Re: SB 2790, SD 2 “Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care”

Position: Strong Support

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice-Chair Kobayashi, and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am presenting this testimony in **strong support of SB 2790, SD 2 “Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care”**

Over the past 30 years, through my faculty positions as a pediatrician and adolescent medicine specialist at the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine, I have provided medical care and counseling to many of Hawai‘i’s most vulnerable children and youth, including a significant percentage who have spent a portion of their young lives in foster care, often separated from siblings, friends, classmates, mentors and others who we would hope could provide a protective web of continuity and support in a young person’s life. Child welfare and other systems of care overall have become much more understanding and responsive to the needs of children and youth in foster care. And yet no system is perfect, and many children caught up in “the system” feel that their voices are not heard and that their needs are not met. This proposed legislation is vitally important because it will inform children that they have specific rights within “a system of care” that to them often seems, and too often is, capricious, impersonal and opaque. Just as importantly, this specific “bill of rights” will help define a standard of care that can be referred to by child welfare professionals and resource families in measuring how mindful they are of the rights of individual children and youth under their care while at the same time they address the many difficult therapeutic and bureaucratic challenges involved in keeping these children keeping safe, healthy, and eventually prepared to move into a happy and productive adulthood.

It is for the above reasons that **I respectfully urge you to support SB 2790, SD 2 “Relating to the Rights of Children in Foster Care.”**

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my testimony with you.

Respectfully yours,

Robert J. Bidwell, MD