

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

January 28, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [SB 295](#) – RELATING TO THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

Hearing: January 30, 2023, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, provides comments, defers to the Office of Wellness & Resilience, and requests an amendment.

PURPOSE: This bill establishes within the Office of Wellness and Resilience, the Malama Ohana Working Group to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the State's existing child welfare system. Allows the Office of Wellness and Resilience to contract with an administrative facilitator to provide necessary support for the Malama Ohana Working Group in carrying out its duties. Requires the Malama Ohana Working Group to report to the Legislature prior to the Regular Session of 2025 and be dissolved upon the adjournment thereof. Appropriates funds.

DHS supports the Legislature's and community's efforts to strengthen the child welfare system of care. The system of care involves community advocates, service providers, national and local subject matter experts, DHS, DOH, the Department of Education, the Judiciary, and

law enforcement. DHS also works with those we serve; those with lived experience; former foster youth, birth parents, relatives, and resource caregivers.

DHS is a member of the Trauma-Informed Task Force and actively participates in EPIC 'Ohana Inc.'s Nā Kama a Hāloa network. Alongside community partners, DHS has partnered with community stakeholders to drive this initiative. DHS supports the network and community partner's preference to establish the Malama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Importantly, given such a large membership and the existing relationships between members, to facilitate the work of the Malama 'Ohana Working Group DHS respectfully requests an amendment exempting the working group from part I of chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Also, through our 'Ohana Nui multigenerational framework to end poverty, DHS is working to improve access to community services and our online capabilities. For example, DHS is working to establish a network of family resource centers, including one at Waiawa Correctional Center, that will serve as a community based one-stop for families to seek services and assistance. As a result, communities with family resource centers have lower rates of child abuse and neglect reports.

We look forward to continuing to innovate with the Office of Wellness & Resilience and the Malama 'Ohana Working Group to address the root causes of child abuse and neglect.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Monday, January 30, 2023, 1:00PM
Conference Room 225
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino & committee members:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB295.

The Office of Wellness & Resilience (OWR) is tasked with addressing and implementing trauma informed-care from keiki to kupuna. With this charge, partnerships and community collaborations will be essential to build effective models that promote wellness and resilience.

The establishment of a working group in the OWR to develop recommendations specifically for the child welfare system will help build a collaborative approach with our system partners and community-based organizations who are dedicated to assisting families with lived experience in the child welfare system. I support the purpose of this bill and appreciate the request for appropriations to provide necessary support for the working group to carry out its duties.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony for this bill and am available for any questions.

Mahalo,

Tia L R Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Executive Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/29/2023 1:03:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Lelle	Testifying for Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a well written Bill that is inclusive of the Native Hawaiian Population as well as all children in the CWS system. It is inclusive of the community as a whole system of support for parents, children and other community providers involved. We SUPPORT SB295!



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2114: RELATING TO THE
CHILDREN'S JUSTICE PROGRAM**

TO: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

**Hearing: Monday 01/30/2023; 1:00 PM;
State Capitol Conf Rm 225 & via videoconference**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members, Committee on Health and Human Services

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 295**, which establishes the Malama Ohana Working Group under the Office of Wellness and Resilience. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii has a long history of providing services for the child welfare system.

The problems that our children and families face need all of us to work together. Child Welfare Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness. Catholic Charities Hawaii supports this bill to establish and provide funding for the Malama Ohana Working Group. This group would provide an avenue for collaboration amongst community partners as well as people with lived experience.

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports the Office of Wellness and Resilience and their efforts to improve the child welfare system and the outcomes for the children and families in Hawaii. The collective efforts from all stakeholders will provide robust and meaningful recommendations for the child welfare system.

We urge your support for this bill and ask for your assistance in its passing during this legislative session.

Please contact our Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Shellie Niles at (808) 527-4813 or shellie.niles@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808) 527-4813 • shellie.niles@catholiccharitieshawaii.org



Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 295. I am Laurie Arial Tochiki and I am the Executive Director of EPIC 'Ohana. EPIC 'Ohana is the backbone organization for Nā Kama a Hāloa. I have been working in the child welfare system for 40 years. First as an attorney representing parents and children in child welfare cases, then as an employee of the Judiciary where I helped to establish programs relating to families and children, including Kids First. In 1996 I was blessed to serve as one of the founders of 'Ohana Conferencing. There are many valid concerns about how the child welfare system works.

The system is much more than the Child Welfare Services offices within the Department of Human Services. The system includes all of the organizations that serve the families and children, it includes the Department of Health and the Department of Education, and it includes our communities and those with lived experience in the system. The Mālama 'Ohana proposal will bring together those directly impacted by the child welfare system in a collective impact process that is desperately needed. Our network asks the legislature to hear the voices of the community for the urgent need for all of us to work collaboratively to protect the children in and out of the child welfare system. And we as a community must also do more than protect, we also need to care for the wellbeing of the children involved in the system.

We ask that the legislature make a commitment to not only listen to the voices of the families and children, but also enable the joint collective problem solving that this crisis needs. Yes, some of the voices are angry. We collectively grieve for the pain that so many children, parents, foster parents and 'ohana feel not only for the poverty, domestic violence, mental health concerns and substance use disorder issues that make our children vulnerable, but also for the workers in the child welfare system that we believe is in crisis. The only solution is to collaborate.

In January, our HI HOPES leadership boards, made up of current and former foster youth who advocate, educate and collaborate for their brothers and sisters in care, met in Kohala, Hawai'i to strengthen their voices and their leadership for the coming year. A 22 year old young man who aged out of the foster care system said that foster care is like being a broken object, placed on a shelf and forgotten. He shared that he burned his way through seven foster homes before he finally received treatment for trauma. Today he is a solid young man and a leader.

Since 2018, Nā Kama a Hāloa, a network of more than 30 organizations and individuals with lived experiences has worked collaboratively to improve the lives of native Hawaiian children and families in the child welfare system. We started with a conversation about the intersection between child welfare and caring for native Hawaiian children who are over represented in the child welfare system. Leaders from child welfare services, Lili'uokalani Trust, Kamehameha Schools, Casey Family Programs and Annie E. Casey Foundation met and affirmed their shared kuleana for the wellbeing of these children. Since then, our network has implemented several projects to try to shift aspects of the child welfare system so that it can work better. We have developed a training for new hires to CWS and resource caregivers. We have advocated for keeping siblings

together, and we have worked on projects to help resource caregivers and birth parents communicate better so that the children are less traumatized. An especially powerful project was to form a small cadre of parents who have lived experience in the child welfare system and have successfully navigated the system. They share experiences of substance use disorder, they are all survivors of domestic violence, and some were formerly incarcerated. Now they walk alongside other parents in the system, and they speak about their experiences to help improve child welfare.

These are the voices we will bring to the table in Mālama ‘Ohana. There is the grandfather who desperately fears for the safety of his grandchildren, but doesn’t feel that his grief and worry are taken seriously. There is the grandmother who felt hopeless as her grandchildren were traumatized in foster care. There is the parent whose children have been removed who feels only judgment and not help. She responds with anger and this makes help even harder to receive. It is the parent who desperately needs services, but those services have a long waitlist and time is ticking away. It is the child who is separated from their siblings, their friends, their extended family, and feels forgotten on a dusty shelf. It is the foster parent, or resource caregiver who opens her doors in the middle of the night to take in a child, but then also feels forgotten. She worries about the child she is caring for. It is the community-based organization that depends upon government contracts but hasn’t had a contract increase in ten years and fears retaliation if they complain. It is the social worker whose unit is so short staffed that there is no human way to adequately assure the safety of the children he is responsible for.

The system is complicated and solutions are not simple. But there is wisdom and genius in these voices, and we ask the legislature to listen. We are deeply committed to this project.

Finally, here is some background about our network and our proposal.

What is the Mālama ‘Ohana working group?

We are proposing a working group through the Hawai‘i Office of Wellness and Resilience to hold listening sessions through out the state and have community partners work together to improve and transform the child welfare system. This is a lofty goal but it comes from four years of work in the network Nā Kama a Hāloa, a network of more than 30 individuals and organizations working to improve outcomes for native Hawaiian children in the child welfare system. This work is badly needed to find ways to collaborate better between state and community at a time when Child Welfare Services is under intense criticism.

Why a working group?

The Mālama ‘Ohana proposal will bring together those directly impacted by the child welfare system in a collective impact process that is desperately needed. Our network asks the legislature to hear the voices of the community for the urgent need for all of us to work collaboratively to protect the children in and out of the child welfare system. We hear a lot of criticism of Child Welfare Services, and we know there is a lack of accountability and transparency. We also know that only with COLLABORATION CAN we find solutions. The working group will be primarily composed of community

members with lived experience and community based organizations dedicated to the wellbeing of children in Hawai'i.

What is Nā Kama a Hāloa and what has it done?

Nā Kama a Hāloa is a community-based network that first came together in September 2018. Our efforts improve outcomes for Native Hawaiian children and families involved in the child welfare system. We work to weave Native Hawaiian wisdom and perspective into the Hawai'i foster care system. We strive to share power among participants who include people from institutions and organizations that work in child welfare, serve the Native Hawaiian population, and have lived experience in child welfare.

Current Partners in Nā Kama a Hāloa:

- Child Welfare Services, Department of Human Services
- Lili'uokalani Trust
- Kamehameha Schools
- EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.
- Partners in Development Foundation, Project Pilina
- Office of Hawaiian Affairs
- Family Court CASA program
- Catholic Charities Hawai'i
- Family Programs Hawai'i
- Hale Kipa
- Neighborhood Place of Wai'anae
- Pū'ā Foundation
- Friends of the Children's Justice Center Maui
- Ho'oikaika Partnership
- Geist Foundation
- Hawai'i Community Foundation
- Young people who experienced foster care
- Birth parents who experienced child welfare involvement
- Resource caregivers (foster parents)
- Annie E Casey Foundation
- Casey Family Programs
- CoCreative™

How we are making a difference:

- Parents with previous child welfare involvement are creating an advisory council to improve child welfare. Six parent partners are now available as peer support to parents currently in the system and pregnant women experiencing substance use disorder.
- Child Welfare Services has incorporated into its new hire training a Native Hawaiian history and cultural training module developed by Nā Kama members.
- CWS and partners are making practice changes to better support sibling connections for children in foster care.
- A video and other efforts including a pilot project to connect birth parents and resource caregivers early in a case are helping to create stronger shared parenting.

<https://www.epicohana.org/nakama>

Parent Resources: <https://www.epicohana.org/parentpartners>

Resource Caregiver Resources: <http://rcg.hawaii.gov>

Foster Youth and Young Adult Resources: <https://www.epicohana.org/youth-circle>

Where does the idea for Mālama ‘Ohana come from?

In the April 2022 convening of Nā Kama a Hāloa we focused on the need for collaboration and transformation of the child welfare system and the idea of a workgroup, expanding our Nā Kama a Hāloa work was formed and prototyped. We presented the idea to the legislature at the end of the session and it was incorporated into HB2424 which was vetoed by Governor Ige. The veto was not related to the working group. We asked that the working group be resubmitted this year, along with an appropriation for facilitation, administration and report writing.

Why is this important?

The families and children in the child welfare system are the most vulnerable.

Key data points from SFY2021 Annual Databook:

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/DHS-Databook-20212.pdf>

- 5,280 child abuse and neglect reports were received. 759 families were accepted for investigation and there was a determination of abuse/neglect. This resulted in 1,331 children who were confirmed as victims of at least one abuse type.
- 44.5% of confirmed victims were ages 0 -5; 29.4% were ages 6 – 11; 25.1% were ages 12-17.
- During SFY2021, a total of 2,566 children were in foster care, with an average of 1,555 in care each month.
- Of the children in care, 44.6% were Hawaiian/Part Hawaiian; 19.4% were White; 9.7% were Pacific Islander (Samoan, Micronesian, Other, Marshallese, Tongan); 9.0% were mixed; and 5.7% were Filipino.
- 1,192 children exited foster care during the year to reunification (51.6%), adoption (20.8%), guardianship (19.3%), and emancipation (7.4%).

Why is it important to incorporate lived experience?

“Lived experience refers to an individual’s experiences in and with the child welfare system that, when engaged, add to the understanding of systemic challenges and can facilitate system change efforts in child welfare. People with lived experience or lived experts in child welfare are individuals impacted by the child welfare system who can bring the resulting insights to inform and enhance systems, research, policies, practices and programs that address child welfare challenges.” 2022 ASPE Research Brief, Skelton-Wilson, et al.

Why the Office of Wellness and Resilience?

The issues of trauma and being trauma effective are at the core of the issues faced by the families and children in the child welfare system, and in many ways the workers in the system. The newly formed Office of Wellness and Resilience has been discussing the

models needed for promoting wellness and resilience, and is charged with finding public and private collaborations to promote wellness and resilience in the state of Hawai'i. We presented the Mālama 'Ohana proposal to the Task Force at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 29, 2022.

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To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Aquina, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: SB295, relating to Child Welfare Services
1:00 p.m., Jan. 30, 2023

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and committee members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to **testify in STRONG SUPPORT of Senate Bill 295, relating to child welfare services.**

HCAN Speaks! strongly supports the creation of the Mālama 'Ohana working group. We believe that this working group will allow the legislature and the State to hear the voices of the community as they share the urgent need to transform the child welfare system through collaboration, transparency, accountability and reconciliation. This group would bring together invested partners as well as gather the voices of lived experiences that have been impacted by the child welfare system here in Hawai'i.

Since much of this work will include hearing from community and understanding the lived experiences of those impacted by child abuse and neglect and the child welfare system, we believe the organization tasked with bringing the working group to fruition must be steadfast in carrying it out with trauma-informed practices with the appropriate staffing to do it justice. **We believe that the Office of Wellness and Resilience would be best suited to make this working group a reality.**

We prefer the language of this bill, SB295, over that of Senate Bill 294.

Mahalo,

Ke'ōpū Reelitz
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/27/2023 2:48:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Delia Ulima	Testifying for EPIC Ohana, Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Delia Ulima and I am the HI HOPES Initiative Manager at EPIC ‘Ohana. I am also a part of the Na Kama a Haloa network. I have worked with HI HOPES youth boards from Oahu, Maui, Kauai and West and East Hawaii for 13 years and they have worked with Child Welfare and the community to pass legislative bills that have improved the well-being of children and youth impacted by foster care. That took a great deal of collaboration and alignment, led by the voices of those with lived experience in the foster care system. Malama ‘Ohana, as outlined in SB 295, uplifts the voices of lived experience, along with community voice and close collaboration with DHS-CWS. We are at a critical time where dialogue, facilitation, planning and action are needed to support and improve our foster care system and the children and ‘ohana impacted. Please support SB 295. Mahalo!

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/28/2023 2:31:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marilyn Yamamoto	Testifying for Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee members,

The Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform strongly supports SB295.

We are anticipating collaboration with the working group to provide feedback and suggestions while encouraging our members to attend listening sessions around the state.

Mahalo for the efforts and insight by the CEO of Epic Ohana on the same topics that our Coalition has on priorities to protect and serve our Hawaii Keiki.

January 28, 2023

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 295 Relating to the Child Welfare Services

Aloha Honorable members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Chassidy Shinno and I have been a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network. I am writing as an individual, and as a Senior Manager at EPIC `Ohana. I support the establishment of the Mālama `Ohana working group as outlined in SB 295.

In my work at EPIC `Ohana, I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with parent peer supporters who draw on their own personal experiences navigating the CWS system to walk alongside other parents in their CWS journey. I have seen, first-hand, how this powerful engagement impacts families and is beginning to change the hearts and minds of those who provide critical services to these families and their children.

While I strongly believe the work of parent and youth peer support are part of the transformation we seek, there is more that we all need to do as a larger community. Existing services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. In addition to more services and resources, we need a collaborative movement as a State to better understand the experiences of CWS-involved families and children. We must find ways to address domestic violence, poverty, substance use, homelessness with an approach that is sensitive to our unique demographic. Western methods do not always fit a community whose people are as culturally diverse as we are in Hawai`i.

The Mālama `Ohana Working Group will engage and uplift the voices of those with lived experience-- birth parents, youth, resource caregivers (aka foster parents) and family members -- bringing a much needed awareness and understanding to others in the community. The Mālama `Ohana Working Group is comprised of dedicated community partners and CWS staff who are ready to formulate transformative solutions.

I ask for your collective support of this game-changing initiative. It is like nothing the State has ever seen before. It is time for those with lived experiences in CWS, with the support of their community, to convene courageous and necessary conversations. This is the only way we can protect our keiki now and in the future. With strong commitment and a genuine love for my community, I ask for you to be a part of this incredible movement. Please support HB 295 and the establishment of the Mālama `Ohana Working Group.

Aloha,



Chassidy Shinno



HALE KIPA

Executive Staff

Venus K. Rosete-Medeiros,
President & CEO
Gwen Okamoto, CFO
Tracy Janowicz, COO
Dori Tyau, CAO
Michelle Jenkins, CPO
Laura Brucia Hamm, CQ/O

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Aloha United Way
Kaua'i United Way
Hawai'i Island United Way



Aloha, my name Honorable Senate President Ron Kouchi and State Senators,

Aloha, my name is Venus Rosete-Medeiros and I have been a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network from the very beginning in 2018. I am writing as an individual, and I am also the President & CEO of Hale Kipa. I completely support the establishment of the Mālama 'Ohana working group.

I am concerned about the families and children in child welfare. Services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness. The problems that our children and families face need all of us to work together. We cannot rely on the state government alone. As a member of Nā Kama a Hāloa Network I have witnessed the power of this kind of community collaboration. I served on the Kauhale committee that was able to produce cultural humility and cultural awareness trainings and presentations for CWS workers. We also developed cultural trainings for resource caregivers to help them understand the importance of supporting cultural connections and connecting children under their care to culturally relevant activities and opportunities.

Malama 'Ohana Working group will engage the voices of those with lived experience as birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members both listen to the experiences of others in the community and come together with community partners and CWS staff to formulate solutions. Having the Mālama 'Ohana workgroup would be able to engage stakeholders, partners and those with lived experiences from across the State. In order to improve the CWS system, we must make every effort to provide convenient gathering sessions to ensure all voice have a chance to be heard.

The child welfare system is extremely complex and our CWS staff is often pulled in many directions. We have experienced how helpful and innovative community collaboration can be to improving outcomes for children and families.

Hale Kipa is committed to continue the work within Nā Kama A Hāloa, Kauhale, and the Mālama 'Ohana Committee. Please vote in support of SB 295. This workgroup will only help our State to refine, correct and enhance the services in partnership with our State Department of Child Welfare Services.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

Venus Kau'iokawēkiu Rosete-Medeiros
President & CEO

From: [Joshua Franklin](#)
To: [webmaster](#)
Subject: SB295
Date: Sunday, January 29, 2023 11:43:38 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Aloha Kakou~

I am writing to express my full support for SB295. This proposal has significant value and should be approved. The goal of SB295 is to make our community more inclusive of the Native Hawaiian culture and, therefore its people and others. This Bill is eloquently crafted and outlines a comprehensive understanding of the Native Hawaiian population's needs and deeply ingrained cultural customs in our society.

Before Western colonization, customs like Hanai were typical in our culture. Following colonization, Western principles such as imposed religion, western norms, ideas of sexuality, and shame was imposed on Kanaka; this carried on to shape our modern disposition. Native Hawaiians remain the largest demographic affected by the DHS Child Welfare Department and other social service programs. Our system is broken as Hawaiian Culture and customs are still not supported, this Bill moves to give the people what it needs, and that's support for our beautiful culture and identity. The Department of Human Services and the Child Welfare System continue to remove our children without a warrant or court order unlawfully. They continue to ignore our ability to handle our family issues in-house and by and through our Lahui values.

Finally, SB295 will establish inclusivity for our identity. I ask that you support our culture and our identity as natives. I can testify to the attitudes of case workers as I am a family advocate on Hawaii Island and see the need for more cultural competency. There is a negative judgment by many caseworkers as they do not work towards reunification or give proper strengthening services. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please pass SH295.

Mahalo,
Joshua Franklin
Family Advocate
Hawaii Family Advocacy Group

LATE



HAWAII STATE
**COALITION AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

January 30, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino

Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki

Sen. Maile S.L. Shimabukuro

Sen. Brenton Awa

Re: SB295 Relating to the Child Welfare Services

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 28 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **support of SB295**. The child welfare system in Hawai'i affects many community partners and system participants who are concerned about child welfare and advocate for victims of domestic violence. Collaboration amongst these partners and the Department of Human services child welfare branch imperative to successfully addressing the shortcomings of the child welfare system. We believe in the potential and promise of the Malama 'Ohana working group and support this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/28/2023 5:25:19 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nonohe Botelho	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB295. This measure has strong merit and should be passed.

The intent of SB295 is to be more *inclusive* of the Native Hawaiian population as well as others in our community. This measure is beautifully written and shows clear articulate knowledge of the needs of the Native Hawaiian population and the cultural practices that are so deeply ingrained in our culture.

Practices like Hanai have been part of our culture for generations (prior to pre-colonization). Post colonization Western ideologies intervened giving the government, such as the Department of Human Services and the Child Welfare Services, the power to illegally remove our Keiki without a warrant or court order. Government overreach has devastated our Native Hawaiian Community with a severe impact on our families. This must stop.

Finally, SB295 will provide for a working group that is *inclusive* (rather than exclusive) of community members, stakeholders, and families that have been negatively and profoundly affected when their Keiki are removed from their Ohana and their Lahui.

Please pass SH295. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Nonohe Botelho

Independent Consultant/ Victim Advocate

Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/27/2023 2:51:33 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeanne Hamilton	Testifying for SB295	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB295. Malama ‘Ohana provides a valuable opportunity for community members and the state to work together to benefit the keiki and ‘ohana of our state.

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/28/2023 7:22:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in SUPPORT & applaud the incorporation of Native Hawaiian practices which contains much wisdom. Please include domestic violence community representation.

TO: Senate, Committee on Health and Human Services

HEARING: Monday, January 30, 2023
1:00 PM
Conference Room 225

FROM: Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

RE: In SUPPORT of SB 295 - Relating to Child Welfare Services

My name is Sharla-Ann Fujimoto. I am a resource caregiver and a Board Advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i. The HI H.O.P.E.S. Board works locally to create more opportunities for foster youth and support tasks that help lead to successful outcomes for foster youth transitioning out (also known as "aging out") of the foster care system.

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 295 and its intent to establish the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the State's existing Child Welfare System within the Department of Human Services.

Foster youth are amongst the nation's most vulnerable population. They come into the system by no fault of their own, and they are left without the much-needed support and social capital, which leads them to face poorer outcomes as adults such as homelessness, incarceration, and pregnant or parenting at early ages. Many of these negative outcomes can be avoided starting with providing adequate support to foster youth and their parents when their Child Welfare cases are still open.

Birth parents, resource caregivers, and foster youth are left to navigate complex situations on their own because of their inability to reach their social worker, high staff turnover / low staffing in offices, inadequate Administrative support, and minimal funding provided to all Child Welfare Services offices statewide. Birth parents, foster youth, and resource caregivers haven't seen nor heard from their social worker in months and have no idea what is happening with the case. Many community members, myself included, have lodged complaints to Section Administrators because social workers cannot be reached, leaving issues and concerns unresolved or making us feel like we have to resolve these issues and concerns on our own.

As a resource caregiver, my job is to provide a safe and stable home for the youth in foster care. To continue to do this, social workers must connect with us and the children in our homes. Sometimes the children in foster care have needs greater than what resource caregivers are able to provide. Resource caregivers need the extra support and resources from the social worker to sustain these placements and keep the resource caregivers from experiencing burn out as well. It is frustrating as caregiver when you reach out to the social worker a month in advance to approve something, but don't get any return phone

calls or e-mails. It's also frustrating when you are reaching out for support from the social worker to help the foster youth, only to have your calls and text messages unreturned. The main ones that suffer is the foster youth.

I have been working in the field for over ten years. In that time, I have seen horrific amounts of injustice and harm done to our extremely vulnerable foster youth. I have worked with many foster youth that have been in care for over a year, and they report seeing their worker only once or twice since their removal from their family. Many of these youth have had to fend for themselves to get the things they need, or they just settle to "go without," which is something that no young person should have to experience. Other youth have been horribly mistreated in their resource homes, and when the youth was calling and calling to reach out for help, the only thing they could do was leave a voicemail on an already overloaded answering machine. The point of this is not to place blame, but it is to make one thing very clear: foster youth need the support of their social worker.

I understand that the role of the Child Welfare Services Social Worker is not an easy one—they are expected to be ever present for everyone and connect to the many individuals and systems involved in the case. I've seen the social workers in West Hawai'i do the best that they can with each case, but the truth is that they just don't have enough time to see parents and children when they have over 150 people they have to see face-to-face each month. Some workers are too busy that they don't get to check their voicemail for over a month because they're out in the field or because there's so many other things that have to get done that they don't want to deal with it. The high demands and stress of this job leaves our social workers vulnerable to burn out.

As a professional that works with current and former foster youth and as a resource caregiver of several foster children, I believe that this bill supports the federal mandate to ensure that children do not "linger" in the foster care system. By allowing the necessary resources and support to create the Mālama 'Ohana work group, I wholeheartedly believe that they will be able to help support Child Welfare and help them connect to their surrounding communities to increase staff and staff support. My hope is that this will ultimately reduce the harm against foster youth, promote reunification when safe and appropriate, timely responses to all involved with the foster youth, retain the workers we have, and lessen the amount of burn out these workers have faced from carrying high and unmanageable caseloads.

My hope is that the success of this project will inspire the citizens of State of Hawai'i to fight for this much needed change in our State's Child Welfare System. We have to do better for the keiki (children) of our 'āina (land). In closing, I strongly encourage this committee to support the passage of SB295.

With my sincerest gratitude,

Sharla-Ann Fujimoto

LATE

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/29/2023 3:37:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a society we have agreed that child welfare and safety are of paramount importance. Unfortunately many times the “help” received by a child is less than helpful due to over action by the state. There is no perfect system where all children will be protected from all harm, all of the time. What is vitally important, is that the agency tasked with protecting children, isn’t harming them in the process. The moment that a child is removed from their home, their life is forever changed, and not for the better, unless they happen to be in the 12% of removals that are for physical abuse or the 4% that are removed for sexual abuse. If the intervention is more harmful than the harm you are attempting to avert, you can not consider that “child protection” anymore. Harming children, even if done inadvertently, can not be tolerated especially not from the organization tasked with protecting them.

From: [Lise Vaughan-Sekona](#)
To: [webmaster](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of SB295
Date: Sunday, January 29, 2023 11:01:03 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Aloha.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB295.

My name is LISE VAUGHAN-SEKONA and I am a participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network. I am writing as an individual, and as the program development manager at Epic `Ohana.

I **support SB295.**

The establishment of the Mālama `Ohana working group is an important component to facilitate positive change in the child welfare system. The working group will bring together community members with vision and purpose to better the system that supports our keiki and their `ohana. Please support this bill for the following reasons:

1. I am concerned that the **NEEDS** of families and keiki in child welfare are not being met. The child welfare system is extremely complex. As a result, our CWS staff is often pulled in many directions. Especially on the neighbor islands where services and resources are stretched. In addition, services and resources extend beyond the capacity of CWS to address domestic violence, substance use, mental health, poverty and homelessness.
2. **COLLABORATION** is important. The problems that our keiki and families are facing require a concerted effort by us all. This burden cannot be born by the state agencies alone. As a member of Nā Kama a Hāloa Network, I have witnessed the power of community collaboration and thinking outside of the constraints of the system to focus on needs rather than system capacity.
3. The voices of **LIVED EXPERIENCE** birth parents, youth, resource caregivers and family members are a vital component in this process. They are our why. Their insight to the needs this bill seeks to address are immeasurable. Bringing together their voices with community partners and CWS to tackle the problems head on is key.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of collaborative community support for CWS. Community support and innovation has improved the outcome for keiki and families. We look forward to supporting CWS and the families they serve. We can be the positive change that our families need by doing this good work together.

Mahalo!

SB-295

Submitted on: 1/28/2023 5:43:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/30/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl B.	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Comment:

This idea and the reformation of the State's system is long overdue. Offering comments only because I wonder how many more children will end up in serious situations or dead while we wait for another committee/working group to look at the situation and make recommendations. The intent is positive. I just don't think we can wait so much longer.

LATE

SB 295

Malama Ohana

Program 2

CARES

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RESEARCH EDUCATION SERVICES

to.

the Senate
Committees

HHS

The Hawaii State
Legislature

Aloha Chair, Vice chair & the Committee of HHS,

CARES is in strong support of Sb 295. Establishing a working group designed to bring transformative changes to CWS will provide additional support to the foster families in the system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

from

Zhizi Xiong

(Angela

Melody

Young)

Creator

Blessings,

ANGELA MELODY YOUNG

Zhizi Xiong

808-724-0047

alohadivinedesign@gmail.com



LATE

January 28, 2023

RE: SB 295

Aloha House and Senate Members,

My name is Keith Kuboyama, and I have been an active participant in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Network. I am writing as in support of SB 295 on behalf of Family Programs Hawaii, a partner organization in the Network, and as its President and CEO.

I support the establishment of the Mālama ‘Ohana working group. Under a contract with the Department of Human Services, our organization provides Psychological Evaluations to assess the strengths and needs of parents involved with CWS. As a result, we see families struggling with mental health issues, housing and financial stress, anxiety, substance abuse, domestic violence and overwhelmed families working with a child with a disability. We are concerned about the families and children in child welfare. While CWS is doing a lot to help these families, services and resources are stretched, especially on the neighbor islands. Services and resources are needed to deal with issues of domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental health issues, poverty and houselessness.

We do not expect CWS and DOH to find and fund all the solutions. The problems that our children and families face need all of us to work together – requiring a broad community effort. As a member of Nā Kama a Hāloa Network, I have witnessed the power of this kind of community collaboration. Ka Pili Ohana is a culturally-grounded program that sought to explore new ways of supporting Hawaiian kamali‘i (children) and ‘ohana in the foster care system. This program was designed through a collaborative planning process with Lili‘uokalani Trust; the State of Hawaii, Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Branch; Family Programs Hawaii, Catholic Charities Hawai‘i; Child Family Service; EPIC `Ohana; and the State of Hawaii, Judiciary. Many families benefitted from this program.

We also know that we can only find solutions with collaboration. Community members with lived experience and community-based organizations dedicated to the wellbeing of children in Hawai‘i will lead the working group. SB 295 is proposing to create a working group (Malama ‘Ohana) through the state Office of Wellness and Resilience to hold listening sessions throughout the state and bring community partners together to improve and transform the child welfare system. We believe in the merits of SB 295 and seek your assistance and support.

Sincerely,

Keith Kuboyama



We help kids

