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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

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 25, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1801 HD1 - RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.**

Hearing: February 26, 2026, 02:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 308 Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill and offers comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

This bill appropriates funds for DHS to contract with one or more organizations specializing in domestic violence to provide training and on-site staff in Child Welfare Services Branch offices to support all aspects of screening for and addressing domestic violence within a case.

DHS appreciates the additional resources to address domestic violence and the clarification on the scope of services the Legislature envisions that will be in addition to, or may enhance, the current array of Child Welfare Services Branch (CWSB) domestic violence training and contracted services. CWSB will need time to consult with the Department of the Attorney General and Branch offices on strategies to integrate additional services and to finalize protocols and administrative issues to facilitate on-site contractors across all Branch offices throughout the State.

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



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE**  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony on H.B. 1801 HD1**  
**RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

February 26, 2026, at 02:00 p.m.; Room Number: 308

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) supports the intention of H.B. 1801 HD1 Relating to Child Welfare Services and offers comments.

The mission of the OWR is to strengthen state systems and services by advancing hope-centered principles and supporting Hawai'i's transition toward becoming a trauma-informed state. As the state agency that administered the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group, our office had the privilege of working closely with individuals with lived experience and expertise in the child welfare system, as well as with state departments and community partners. The recommendations in the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Report center the voices and experiences of children and families most impacted by the system.

*Provide comprehensive, specialized support services.* H.B. 1801 HD1 aligns with Recommendation 3 of the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Report: "enhancing Child Welfare Services' (CWS) capacity to properly understand and respond to complex issues—including

domestic violence—through trauma-responsive and culturally informed practice.”<sup>1</sup> Child maltreatment and domestic abuse are distinct yet deeply traumatic experiences that significantly affect child and family well-being. Domestic violence cases are intense and complex, requiring careful, informed, and compassionate responses. Thus, throughout the Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group process, individuals with lived experience consistently called for a system in which CWS staff are trained to understand the dynamics of domestic violence so they can accurately assess safety, avoid further traumatizing families, and ensure that interventions do not inadvertently harm the protective parent more than the abusive partner.

*Collaboration consistent with federal ACF recommendations.* H.B. 1801 HD1 also aligns with guidance from the Children’s Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). In 2024, ACF issued an Information Memorandum on Child Welfare–Family Violence Partnerships, emphasizing the prevalence and impact of domestic violence on children, youth, and families.<sup>2</sup> The memorandum encourages Title IV-E and IV-B agencies to strengthen partnerships that improve outcomes for families affected by domestic violence. This bill supports Hawai‘i, a Title IV-E state, in moving toward those federal best-practice standards.

*Program implementation.* The OWR respectfully defers to Department of Human Services on all matters related to implementation (e.g., program design, operational planning, and the use of funds) as the lead agency best positioned to steward this work. We are, however, deeply committed to serving as a collaborative partner, and stand ready to offer our expertise in trauma-informed care training for CWS staff. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Tia L.R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA  
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience

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<sup>1</sup> Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group. (2024). *Mālama ‘ohana working group report to the legislature: Findings and recommendations of the Mālama ‘ohana working group*. State of Hawai‘i. Retrieved from [https://owr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/OWR-MOWG\\_2024Report\\_Combined.pdf](https://owr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/OWR-MOWG_2024Report_Combined.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cwla.org/information-memorandum-on-child-welfare-family-violence-partnerships/>



February 25, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB1801 HD1**, Relating to Child Welfare Services

**To:** Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Finance

**From:** Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

**Re:** Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB1801 HD1**, Relating to Child Welfare Services

Hearing: Thursday, February 26, 2026, 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women is dedicated to advancing the safety, well-being, and empowerment of women and girls in Hawaii. The Commission **supports HB1801 HD1**, as it **seeks to strengthen the capacity of Child Welfare Services (CWS) to recognize and respond to domestic violence**, an issue that disproportionately affects women, and has far-reaching impacts on families and communities.

By appropriating funds for specialized domestic violence training and on-site staff, this measure acknowledges the complex intersection between child welfare and domestic violence. Research and best practices indicate that **comprehensive, trauma-informed approaches are essential for effectively supporting survivors and preventing further harm**. Integrating domestic violence expertise within CWS offices will help ensure that staff are equipped to identify signs of abuse, respond appropriately, and connect families to needed resources, thereby improving outcomes for children, parents and survivors.

The Commission recognizes that collaboration with organizations specializing in domestic violence can bridge knowledge gaps and foster a more holistic approach to family safety. This initiative aligns with our longstanding advocacy for systemic improvements that prioritize survivor safety, child well-being, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

The Commission urges continued engagement with survivors, domestic violence service providers, and community stakeholders to inform program design and delivery. We appreciate the Legislature's commitment to advancing protections for survivors and families.

We respectfully **urge this Committee to pass HB1801 HD1**.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



February 26, 2026

Members of the House Committee on Finance:

Chair Chris Todd  
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi  
Rep. Daisy Hartsfield  
Rep. Daniel Holt  
Rep. Ikaika Hussey  
Rep. Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy  
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa  
Rep. Matthias Kusch  
Rep. Mike Lee  
Rep. Tyson K. Miyake  
Rep. Dee Morikawa  
Rep. Amy A. Perruso  
Rep. Shirley Ann Templo  
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita  
Rep. David Alcos III  
Rep. Joe Gedeon  
Rep. Julie Reyes Oda

Re: HB1801, HD1 Relating to Child Welfare Services

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) mission is to unite Hawai'i to end all forms of domestic violence. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 20 member programs, I respectfully submit testimony in **support of HB1801, HD1**, and applaud the legislature for addressing the experience of survivors of domestic violence who are involved in the Child Welfare System (CWS).

Domestic violence and child welfare involvement frequently intersect. Children's safety and survivor safety are interconnected and must be addressed together through informed, coordinated practice. However, without specialized training, child welfare professionals may unintentionally misinterpret survivor behavior or overlook indicators of escalating danger. This measure appropriately strengthens training for CWS staff. It is critical that training distinguish between screening for domestic violence and conducting evidence-based risk and lethality assessments. These are not the same.

Proper assessment and informed safety planning are essential to protecting both children and adult survivors.

Additionally, embedded advocates provide case consultation, strengthen survivor-centered engagement, improve safety planning, and enhance coordination between systems. Collaborative models have been shown to improve engagement and intervention strategies.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the blank appropriation must be funded to ensure meaningful implementation. Sustainable training and advocate co-location require dedicated resources. Without funding, the intended improvements to safety and system practice cannot be fully realized.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge passage of HB1801 HD1 with full funding. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> Casey Family Programs (2021). Child welfare and domestic violence collaboration: Cross-system partnerships to improve safety and well-being. <https://www.casey.org/child-welfare-domestic-violence-collaboration/>



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1801 HD1 RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

**TO:** Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, & Members,  
House Committee on Finance  
**FROM:** Trisha Kajimura, Vice-President of Strategy & External Affairs  
**DATE:** February 26, 2026 at 2:00 PM

**Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 1801 HD1**, which provides specialized training and on-site staff at the Child Welfare Services Branch of the Department of Human Services to support all aspects of screening for and addressing domestic violence within a case.

Founded by residents of Kuhio Park Terrace in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 18,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

PACT's Family Peace Center has been providing domestic violence counseling for over 25 years and offers a comprehensive community-based program that includes prevention and intervention services. Services on Oahu and Maui strive to bring peace to Hawaii families through a service array that promotes safety, support and accountability to offenders, survivors, and their children. We also operate three domestic violence shelters and have extensive experience with keeping survivors safe.

The dynamics of domestic violence requires a specialized lens to understand the nuances of coercive control and the specific risks to survivors. On-site DV specialists will allow for real-time consultation, ensuring that safety plans don't inadvertently penalize the non-offending parent. DV will be identified earlier and more accurately, CWS staff will be better supported, and family needs will be assessed more accurately.

Our programmatic experience shows us how interconnected domestic violence and child welfare system involvement are. This bill will better allow the "whole-family" perspective be applied within the state system to keep children safe while empowering survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact Trisha Kajimura at (808) 847-3285 or [tkajimura@pacthawaii.org](mailto:tkajimura@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.

To: House Committee on Finance  
Re: **HB1801 HD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services**  
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 26, 2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1801 HD1**. This bill would appropriate funds for the Department of Human Services to contract with one or more organizations specializing in domestic violence to provide training and on-site staff in Child Welfare Services Branch offices to support all aspects of screening for and addressing domestic violence within a case.

This bill reflects the recommendations of the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group and recognizes that domestic violence is a significant and complex factor in many child welfare cases in Hawai'i. High housing costs, geographic isolation, and service gaps — especially on neighbor islands — can make it difficult for survivors to access help without coordinated state support.

Working with domestic-violence specialists will strengthen Child Welfare Services' ability to assess risk, develop safety plans, and connect families to appropriate services. Improved tracking of domestic-violence cases will also allow the State to identify service gaps and invest resources more effectively.

This bill advances Hawai'i's shift toward a trauma-informed, family-centered child welfare system and supports prevention by helping families stabilize before crises escalate.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy

**Judith F. Clark**  
48-218 Kamehameha Highway  
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[Judithforceclark@gmail.com](mailto:Judithforceclark@gmail.com)  
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

February 26, 2026

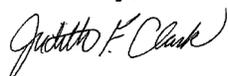
**Testimony in Support of HB 1801 HD 1 Relating to Child Welfare Services**

As a community advocate and the former Executive Director of Hawaii Youth Services Network, I strongly support HB 1801 HD 1.

This bill will enable Child Welfare Services to improve how it screens for and addresses domestic violence in cases involving children and families. This initiative stems from recommendations made by the Malama Ohana working Group, which identified the need to better support families experiencing domestic violence and to help child welfare workers distinguish between parents who cooperate with the system and those who might misuse it. The funding will support specialized training for child welfare staff on identifying and managing domestic violence cases and will also provide access to domestic violence specialists who can offer consultation and support directly within the child welfare offices, thereby enhancing the system's ability to investigate domestic violence and assist affected families.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH

**HB-1801-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 11:26:05 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

1801 HB RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.