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March 30, 2026

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony in Support of HB 1801 HD 1 SD 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 SD 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



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1801 HD1 SD1 RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

TO: Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, & Members,
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Vice-President of Strategy & External Affairs
DATE: April 1, 2026 at 10:03 AM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 1801 HD1 SD1, 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 if you have any questions.



April 1, 2026

Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means:

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki
Rep. Lynn DeCoite
Rep. Brandon J.C. Elefante
Rep. Troy N. Hashimoto
Rep. Lorraine R. Inouye
Rep. Dru Mamo Kanuha
Rep. Michelle N. Kidani
Rep. Donna Mercado Kim
Rep. Chris Lee
Rep. Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III
Rep. Glenn Wakai
Rep. Kurt Fevella

Re: HB1801 HD1 SD1 Relating to Child Welfare Services

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means:

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 strong support of HB1801 HD1 that addresses the experience of survivors of domestic violence who are involved in the Child Welfare System (CWS) by:

1. providing training for all child welfare services branch staff, including evidence-based risk assessments to assess lethality factors and the risk of serious fatal harm;
2. creating a tracking system that would monitor identified domestic violence cases and report on the numbers, what specialized services were offered and used, and the dispositions of the cases; and
3. co-locating a domestic violence specialist at one of the child welfare services branch offices.

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, as this bill attempts to do.

However, the blank appropriation must be funded to ensure meaningful implementation. Sustainable training, data tracking, and staff co-location require dedicated resources. Without funding, the intended improvements to safety and system practice cannot be fully realized, and child welfare professionals may unintentionally misinterpret survivor behavior or overlook indicators of escalating danger.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge passage of HB1801 HD1 SD1 with full funding. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

HB-1801-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 6:58:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2026 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marilyn Yamamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair DelaCruz and committee,

My daughter took her 9-month old son to CWS for a voluntary placement while she would find a way to get away from abuse by the child's father. CWS put both parents into couples counseling and after 5 years of his failure to show standards of safety for the child, she left the state with an open case. Her explanation to the judge was that CWS would not protect her from stalking and harrassment by the father. **This assessment of DV and treatment of the victims were unacceptable.**

Please fund this bill to get qualified DV experts into a department where data shows that at least 40% of all child welfare cases have some degree of domestic abuse.



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Re: **HB1801 HD1 SD1 – Relating to Child Welfare Services**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
April 1, 2026; 10:03 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1801 HD1 SD1**. 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.

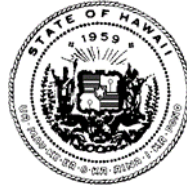
This bill advances Hawai'i's shift toward a trauma-informed, family-centered child welfare system and supports prevention by helping families stabilize before crises escalate.

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

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
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

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 31, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1801 HD1 SD1 - RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.**

Hearing: April 1, 2026, 10:03 a.m.
Conference Room 211 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.



March 31, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB1801 HD1 SD1**, Relating to Child Welfare Services

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1801 HD1 SD1, Relating to Child Welfare Services

Hearing: Wednesday, April 1, 2026, 10:03 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women **supports HB1801 HD1 SD1**, as it **seeks to strengthen the capacity of Child Welfare Services (CWS) to recognize and respond to domestic violence** and appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to contract with organizations specializing in domestic violence for training and on-site staff in CWS Branch offices.

As a statewide feminist government body dedicated to advancing equity, safety, and well-being for women and girls, the Commission recognizes the critical intersection between domestic violence and child welfare. This bill matters deeply to our mission because it addresses the urgent need for trauma-informed, gender-responsive approaches within systems that serve vulnerable families, particularly women and children who are disproportionately affected by domestic violence. This initiative also aligns with our longstanding advocacy for systemic improvements that prioritize survivor safety, child well-being, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Providing specialized training and on-site expertise will help **ensure that CWS staff are equipped to identify, screen for, and respond to domestic violence in a manner that prioritizes survivor safety and supports family stability**. Research and best practices indicate that integrating domestic violence expertise into child welfare improves outcomes for both children and non-offending parents, reduces the risk of further harm, and supports more equitable interventions.

The Commission urges continued engagement with survivors, domestic violence service providers, and community stakeholders to inform program design and delivery. The Commission recognizes that collaboration with organizations specializing in domestic violence can bridge knowledge gaps and foster a more holistic approach to family safety.

The Commission is committed to serving as a collaborative partner and technical assistance resource, as needed and appropriate, and respectfully defers to the Department of Human Services on all matters related to implementation as the lead agency best positioned to steward this effort. We respectfully urge this Committee to **pass HB1801 HD1 SD1**, advancing protections for survivors and families.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.