



**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE**

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TESTIMONY  
OF  
BONNIE KAHAKUI, ADMINISTRATOR  
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE

TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE  
ON  
HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS  
February 12, 2026, 10:30 a.m.

HOUSE BILL 2006  
RELATING TO CHILD WELL-BEING

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2006, which establishes a program to improve economic stability for families with young children.

**Comments**

The State Procurement Office (SPO) acknowledges the intent of this bill to contract with a third-party administrator to manage the Hawaii Rx Kids program. However, the SPO respectfully provides the following recommended language for Section 2, Page 2, lines 20 to 21 to Page 3, lines 1 to 2; and Section 2, Page 3, lines 6 to 8, which state that contracting services for the administration of payments shall be exempt from the requirements of Chapters 103D, Hawaii Public Procurement Code, and 103F, Purchases of Health and Human Services, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

**Recommendations**

The SPO recommends revisions to require that contracts are subject to both Chapters 103D and 103F, HRS.

**Section 2, Page 2, lines 20 to 21 to Page 3, lines 1-2:**

"§346- Hawaii Rx kids program; expectant mothers;  
households; payments.

(c) "The department [may] shall contract with a third-party administrator, pursuant to chapter 103D and 103F, to operate and manage the Hawaii Rx kids program; provided

that the cost of administering the program shall not exceed fifteen percent of the total program costs."

- **Section 2, Page 3, lines 6-8:**

**"§346- Hawaii Rx kids program; expectant mothers; households; payments.**

(d) Any plan for expenditure of temporary assistance for needy families funds developed pursuant to section 346-51.5(b)(1) shall be updated to account for expenditures for household payments. The expenditure of funds for the administration of household payments shall [~~be exempt from~~ **adhere to**] chapters 103D and 103F."

Contracts should comply with Chapter 103D and 103F, HRS, to ensure fairness, open competition, equality, and transparency in the procurement and contracting process, preventing favoritism, collusion, or fraud in awarding of contracts. This also ensures oversight and accountability, which is vital to good government.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.

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

TRISTA SPEER  
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

February 11, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2006 – RELATING TO CHILD WELL-BEING.**

Hearing: February 12, 2026, 10:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services appreciates the intent of the bill to utilize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to address economic instability with expecting parents, new families, and families with infants, and offers comments.

This bill proposes to establish the Hawaii Rx Kids Program within the Department of Human Services (DHS), supported by federal TANF funds, to provide direct one-time unconditional financial payments to all expectant mothers and monthly financial payments to infant children up to the age of twelve months, subject to available funds.

Pursuant to section 401, Title IV-A of the Social Security Act [42 U.S.C. 601], states may utilize federal TANF funds for benefits, programs, and services that meet one of the following purposes:

- (1) Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- (2) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- (3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
- (4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

The bill's proposed payments may qualify under TANF Purpose 1; therefore, "means testing" must be an eligibility criteria to receive federal TANF-funded payments.

For the committee's information, the monthly payments of \$500, beginning at the child's birth and continuing through age six months, with the potential extension of another six months, would be classified as "assistance" [45 C.F.R. 260.31]. There are additional federal requirements when a family receives federally funded "assistance," including cooperating to establish paternity and child support payments when there is an absent parent of a minor dependent child, and mandatory participation in the Department's TANF work program by the parents or caregiver relatives. Furthermore, the monthly payments may affect a family's eligibility for other means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child care subsidies, TANF, and the Housing Choice Voucher program (formerly Section 8), because these payments would be considered unearned income.

In addition, the proposed monthly payments will duplicate the Department's TANF financial assistance program, which already provides monthly benefits to families with dependent children, including expectant mothers in their ninth month of pregnancy who do not have a dependent child. A family of two (e.g., mother and infant child) may receive TANF financial assistance benefits up to \$627 per month, and an expectant mother with no dependent child may receive up to \$465 per month until her child is born, then benefits will be adjusted for a family of two. Families may receive TANF financial assistance benefits for up to five (5) years or 60 months within the family's lifetime.

Families who receive "assistance" payments must be reported to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The Department will need to modify the Hawaii Automated Network for Assistance (HANA) and the new Benefit Eligibility Solution (BES) systems to comply with federal data and fiscal reporting requirements. The BES system is currently in development and is scheduled to roll out to production in February 2027. Any modifications to the new system thereafter may take time to implement, as the system will require time to monitor its performance and for users and the public to adjust to it.

For payments to be considered “non-assistance”, the payments must be non-recurrent and short-term; may not extend beyond four months; and the payments are provided to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need and are not intended to meet the family’s recurrent or ongoing needs.

In accordance with 8 U.S.C. 1611(a), an individual who is not a qualified immigrant is not eligible for any federal public benefit as defined in 8 U.S.C. 1611(c). Therefore, expectant mothers must either be U.S. citizens, qualified immigrants according to the terms described in section 101(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act [8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.], or be qualified individuals lawfully residing in the U.S. in accordance with section 141 of the Compacts of Free Association. If the legislature intends the Hawaii Rx Kids Program to serve non-TANF-qualified expectant mothers and infants, state funds will be required.

Should this measure further proceed, DHS requests that the committee consider an extended effective date to allow time to amend or promulgate administrative rules; make system modifications to accommodate the proposed payments; and establish contracts with third-party service providers to administer the program on behalf of the Department. DHS will continue to update its resource needs as the bill progresses.

The Department respectfully requests that the proposed Hawaii Rx Kids Program and any appropriations not conflict with, reduce, or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

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

Date: February 12, 2026

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 2006, Relating to Child Well-Being

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Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

**ECAS supports House Bill 2006 which would require the State Department of Human Services to establish a Hawaii Rx Kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children through a one-time payment as well as several monthly payments.**

As it is noted in this measure's preamble, the periods of pregnancy and early childhood are among the most financially fragile moments in a family's life while also being among the most critical in a child's long-term development. This is especially apparent here in Hawai'i where the cost of living is especially high, and countless families experience economic instability.

ECAS feels strongly that providing economic support to local families in their most critical moments would have a positive impact on the experiences of both expectant mothers and their infants.

For this reason, ECAS supports House Bill 2006.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



## Protect Democracy Move Forward

[www.indivisiblehawaii.org](http://www.indivisiblehawaii.org)  
[info@indivisiblehawaii.org](mailto:info@indivisiblehawaii.org)

To: Hawai'i State House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of HB2006

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and the Members of Committee,

Members of Indivisible Hawai'i thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB2006 which would establish Hawai'i Rx Kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children who reside in Hawai'i through a one-time payment and several monthly payments.

Rx Kids implementation in Flint, Michigan improved health outcomes, an 18% drop in preterm births and a 27% reduction in low birthweight in its first year. These improvements resulted in approximately 29% reduction in NICU admissions, preventing nearly 60 costly hospitalizations annually and generating an estimated \$6.2 million in healthcare savings. (Source: [University of Michigan. Ford School of Public Policy](#))

Please pass this measure and bring this successful program to Hawai'i. Working families can use it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Younghee Overly  
Indivisible Hawai'i Working Families Team

*The mission of the 14-chapter Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN) is to protect Hawai'i and democracy by defending civil rights, communities and values, most importantly, Hawai'i's Constitutionally protected spirit of Aloha. In October 2025, IHSN with other partners turned out over 22,000 residents on all major islands to say No Dictators! and to stand up for democracy. This call-to-action was part of Indivisible national's mobilization of more than 7 million across the country as the voice of the people, committed to election integrity and to evolving as a place of equity, opportunity and peace.*

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
Re: **HB2006 – Relating to Child Well-Being**  
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 12, 2026, 10:30 AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB2006**. This bill requires the Department of Human Services to establish and administer a Hawai'i Rx kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children who reside in the State through a one-time payment and several monthly payments.

A growing body of research shows that cash assistance during pregnancy and early childhood improves health, stability, and long-term outcomes. Studies have found that the Rx Kids program in Michigan was associated with increased use of prenatal care,<sup>1</sup> reduced eviction risk, improved maternal mental health,<sup>2</sup> decreased child maltreatment reports,<sup>3</sup> and lower rates of preterm birth and low birthweight<sup>4</sup> among families receiving Rx Kids perinatal cash support.

International evidence similarly shows that child cash benefit programs are linked to better child health and survival outcomes. As of 2024, more than 140 countries have adopted large-scale, government-funded child cash transfer programs. In 2021, the United States briefly joined that list with the expanded federal Child Tax Credit, a near universal, unconditional child cash benefit, which led to a historic decline in child poverty.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, we have the funds to support this important program. As of 2023, Hawai'i has more than \$470 million in unspent Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reserve funds, which is nearly five times our annual TANF block grant. In fact, our state has the most unspent TANF funds in the nation as a share of the annual block grant.<sup>6</sup> This bill represents a smart way to invest some of those unspent funds in Hawai'i's future.

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

Thank you,

Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2840360>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2025.308244>

<sup>3</sup> <https://arxiv.org/abs/2511.19570>

<sup>4</sup> [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=5459276](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5459276)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)02366-3/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)02366-3/abstract)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/investing-tanf-dollars-in-basic-assistance-is-vital-for-families-to-meet>



# HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB 2006**.

Many of Hawai'i's families are struggling to get by, especially if they have young children. In fact, more than 41% of our population is in the ALICE category—meaning even though they are employed, they cannot afford all of their basic necessities. In considering the future of Hawai'i's keiki, we must look at the substantial research proving that direct, unconditional cash support during the prenatal and early infant stages is the most effective way to help families in need.

## **Proven success of RxKids**

The model for HB 2006 is based on the groundbreaking Rx Kids program in Flint, Michigan. Early data from 2024 reveals that this approach does not just provide a safety net—it boosts outcomes for children and their families in the long term:

- **Maternal Mental Health:** Program participants saw a 14-percentage-point reduction in screenings for postpartum depression and a significant decrease in generalized anxiety.
- **Housing & Food Security:** Research showed a 4.2-percentage-point reduction in the risk of eviction and a 12.5-percentage-point decline in families reporting they did not have enough food.
- **Improved Birth Outcomes:** The program is associated with increases in prenatal care visits and significant reductions in preterm births and low birth weights, which are primary drivers of infant mortality.
- Financial stability in the home results in healthy brain development.
  - **Increased Brain Activity:** in regions associated with language, memory, and executive function.
  - **Environmental Stability:** Reduced parental "cognitive load" and stress, allowing for more high-quality interaction between parent and child.

All of these points are in line with evidence from other assistance programs like the Child Tax Credit. During the 2021 expansion of the federal Child Tax Credit, the U.S. saw child poverty slashed to a historic low of 5.2%.

## **Investing in our future**

HB 2006 is a fiscally responsible investment that utilizes **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** funds to prevent high-cost social issues later.



# HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- **The 13-to-1 Return:** National economic analyses suggest that for every \$1 invested in early childhood (0–3), society sees a return of up to **\$13.00** through increased future earnings, better educational attainment, and reduced healthcare and criminal justice costs.
- **Civic Trust:** Recent data indicates that mothers enrolled in Rx Kids show a **5-percentage-point increase in voter turnout** and higher levels of trust in government, fostering a more engaged and stable community.

## Conclusion

The data is clear: cash benefits for mothers are an effective tool to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. HB 2006 allows Hawai'i to lead where the federal government has paused, ensuring our state is a place where local families can afford to stay and thrive.

I urge you to **pass HB 2006**. Mahalo for your commitment to our keiki.



## HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS  
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Hawaiian Research Office

Danette Wong Tomiyasu, MBA  
Retired, Hawai'i State Department of  
Health

## HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a  
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &  
Evaluation

Community Health  
Worker Initiatives

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Climate Change and Health  
Working Group

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Immunization Coalition

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &  
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: February 10, 2026

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

RE: Support for HB 2006, Relating To Child Well-Being

Hrg: Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 10:30 AM, Conference Room 329

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The Hawai'i Public Health Institute,<sup>1</sup> **supports HB 2006** relating to child well-being. This bill requires the Department of Human Services to establish and administer a Hawai'i Rx kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children.

### Early Childhood Health

The first year of life is a uniquely sensitive window for brain development and long-term well-being. This measure recognizes that economic stability is a public health concern by helping families afford essentials like food, diapers, prenatal and pediatric care, and stable housing during pregnancy and infancy.

Hawai'i's child poverty rate has increased sharply in recent years. New data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows the share of keiki living in poverty rose from 9% (2019–2021) to 12% (2022–2024), or nearly 37,000 children.<sup>2</sup> This matters for child wellness: poverty is strongly associated with worse nutrition, housing instability, and poor lifelong physical and mental health outcomes.

### A Pathway to Addressing Poverty

This proposal is modeled on Michigan's Rx Kids approach, the results of which are compelling. A population-wide study in Flint, Michigan reported an 18% reduction in preterm births and a 27% reduction in low birthweight births since the inception of the program, alongside an estimated 29% reduction in neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) admission. In preventing costly hospitalizations, the initiative generated approximately \$6.2 million in healthcare savings.<sup>3</sup> The University of Michigan's Poverty Solutions has also reported the program has reached thousands of families and delivered \$14.5 million in direct financial

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<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

<sup>2</sup> "[Measuring Access to Opportunity in the United States: A 10-Year Update](#)", Annie E. Casey Foundation, October 2025.

<sup>3</sup> "[Hardship and Hope: The Relationship Between Unconditional Prenatal and Infant Cash Transfers, Economic Stability, and Maternal Mental Health and Well-Being](#), *American Journal of Public Health*", November 2025.



assistance, reflecting feasibility at scale.<sup>4</sup> The success of Michigan's no-strings cash payments to pregnant families and infants provides a unique opportunity for our state to adopt a poverty reduction practice that has already demonstrated measurable benefits.

### **Improving Financial Stability**

By reducing financial shocks for working families, an Rx Kids program can improve access to care in two ways by ensuring families are better able to attend prenatal and pediatric appointments and meet basic needs that support healthy pregnancies and childhood development. Additionally the program would enable our health system to avoid preventable high-cost outcomes, including NICU admissions, freeing capacity and reducing strain on providers and hospitals.

As Michigan's evidence suggests, this kind of universal support can function as an effective public health strategy to intervene in poverty-driven health challenges. For these reasons, we urge your committee to pass this measure in support of Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kris Coffield'.

Policy and Advocacy Associate

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<sup>4</sup> [“New Research Shows Cash for Moms and Babies Improves Health, Stabilizes Families, and Saves Millions”](#)  
University of Michigan, September 2025.



## Protect Democracy Move Forward

[www.indivisiblehawaii.org](http://www.indivisiblehawaii.org)

[info@indivisiblehawaii.org](mailto:info@indivisiblehawaii.org)

To: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS  
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 10:30 AM  
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329  
Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT/SUPPORT of HB 2006

Dear Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair, Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Members of Indivisible Hawai'i thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of **HB 2006**, which would establish and administer a Hawaii Rx kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children

This bill would create an RxKids program, modeled on the huge success of the RxKids program in cities across Michigan. RxKids gives direct cash payments to pregnant mothers, and it provides them with additional support for a year after they give birth.

Supporting pregnant women and infants in their first year of life is an excellent investment for Hawai'i. We suggest the state work with FQHC Community Health Centers to develop and pilot and evaluate this program.

Sincerely,  
Indivisible Hawai'i Healthcare Team

*The mission of the 14-chapter Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN) is to protect Hawai'i and democracy by defending civil rights, communities and values, most importantly, Hawai'i's Constitutionally protected spirit of Aloha. In October 2025, IHSN with other partners turned out over 22,000 residents on all major islands to say No Dictators! and to stand up for democracy. This call-to-action was part of Indivisible national's mobilization of more than 7 million across the country as the voice of the people, committed to election integrity and to evolving as a place of equity, opportunity and peace.*



February 10, 2026

## **Testimony in Support of H.B. 2006 Relating to Child Well-being**

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee,

Aloha United Way stands in strong support of H.B. 2006, which establishes the Hawai'i Rx Kids Program to provide direct financial support to expectant mothers and families with infants.

For many working families in Hawai'i, pregnancy and a child's first year represent a period of heightened financial vulnerability. According to Aloha United Way's ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) data, nearly 40%<sup>1</sup> of households struggle to afford the basic cost of living, even while working. Households with young children are especially likely to fall into this group, facing increased expenses at a time when income may be reduced or less predictable.

Across the country, dozens of cash transfer pilots have demonstrated strong results, including improved financial stability, better mental health, and reduced household hardship. The RxKids<sup>2</sup> program in Michigan provides some of the most comprehensive data to date. Across program sites, 84% of participating families reported that the payments helped them make ends meet and feel more financially secure.

Families most often used the funds for essential needs such as baby supplies, housing and utilities, food, and transportation. The program has been associated with improved housing stability, better food access, and greater diaper security, reducing the stressful trade-offs families often face between basic necessities.

The benefits extend beyond financial stability. Research shows the program is linked to earlier prenatal care, healthier birth outcomes, and reduced smoking during pregnancy, along with lower likelihood of postpartum depression and reduced parenting stress. In addition, 32% fewer infant maltreatment investigations were observed among participating families, highlighting the program's role in strengthening family stability.

Additionally, the economic benefits have also been significant. In its first year in Flint, the program generated an estimated \$15-\$40 million in local income growth and supported up to 200 jobs, demonstrating that direct support to families also functions as an effective local economic stimulus.

Providing direct support during pregnancy and a child's first year is a practical, evidence-based strategy that helps families remain stable during this critical time. These early investments are associated with healthier mothers, stronger child development, and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.auw.org/about/alice-initiative/alice-reports/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rxkids.org/impact/>



reduced long-term costs across healthcare, child welfare, and education systems. In Hawai'i, where many households live paycheck to paycheck, predictable payments can help cover essential needs, prevent debt, and keep families stably housed. Supporting families early also helps the State avoid far more costly interventions later in areas such as homelessness, child welfare, and healthcare.

This program represents a proactive, prevention-focused approach that strengthens child well-being, family stability, and Hawai'i's long-term economic health.

Aloha United Way respectfully urges the Committee to pass H.B. 2006.

Mahalo,

Michelle Bartell  
President & CEO  
Aloha United Way



**LATE**

February 11, 2026

## O'ahu Youth Action Board

Est. 2017

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Efren Berrones

**Co-Chair**

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**Community Engagement**

**Officer**

Koda Daily

### **TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 2006 Relating to Child Well-Being**

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

FROM: Efren Berrones- Co-Chair of O'ahu Youth Action Board,  
Partners In Care (PIC)

Hearing: February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026 10:30 AM

Chair Martin, Vice Chair Olds,, and Members of the House  
Committees on Human Services and Homelessness

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of  
HB 2167, Relating to Youth Homelessness.

My name is Efren Berrones, and I serve as the Chair of the O'ahu Youth Action Board (OYAB). OYAB is a designated board composed of youth with lived experience of homelessness on O'ahu, advocating for policy changes that directly impact houseless young people. We firmly believe that any decisions affecting us must include our voices, perspectives, and lived experiences.

As costs rise, food becomes more expensive, and housing feels like a distant dream, our young people are living on the edge. One unexpected expense, one lost job, one eviction notice—and everything falls apart. The need to invest in prevention has never been greater, and the consequences of inaction have never been clearer.

Hawai'i is already facing a crisis. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, Hawaii had the third-highest rate of homeless youth staying in unsheltered locations. But the crisis extends far beyond one night in January. Research shows that half of adults experiencing chronic homelessness were first homeless before age 25. That means when we fail to intervene for young people, we are not just failing them today—we are setting them on a path toward long-term homelessness that will follow them into adulthood.

Now is the time for the state to invest in our communities, not pull away. Now is the time to be bold.

HB 2167 establishes a two-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to provide direct financial assistance to youth experiencing homelessness. This is not an experiment—it is a proven intervention. Programs like this have been piloted in seven other states with remarkable results. Nine out of ten young people who received direct financial assistance reported being stably housed one month later, and 85% of youth were still housed 6 months after receiving the intervention. In Oregon, 94% of participants were still housed by the end of two years, and the intervention was so successful that they are launching it statewide. Direct financial assistance works because it addresses the barrier that matters most: money. It gives young people the resources they need to stabilize before a crisis becomes homelessness.

The state has a choice. Invest now in prevention, or pay more later in emergency services, shelters, and the long-term costs of chronic homelessness. Our young people deserve better. They deserve a state that shows up for them when it matters most.

We urge you to pass HB 2167 and give Hawai'i's youth a real chance at housing stability.

Mahalo for your consideration and commitment to Hawai'i's youth.

With Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Efren Berrones". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Efren" and "Berrones" being capitalized and prominent.

**Efren Berrones**

Co-Chair, O'ahu Youth Action Board

[efrenb@partnersincareoahu.org](mailto:efrenb@partnersincareoahu.org)





**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:49:27 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB2006, which would establish the groundbreaking Hawai'i RxKids program. This initiative recognizes a fundamental truth: the earliest days of a child's life are the most critical for their lifelong health and development, and the economic security of their family is the most powerful predictor of positive outcomes.

In a state with one of the highest costs of living in the nation, this bill provides a direct, evidence-based, and compassionate solution to support our newest generation and their parents.

HB2006 would provide unconditional, direct cash payments to expectant mothers and families with infants: a \$1,500 payment during pregnancy, followed by \$500 monthly payments through the child's first six months, and potentially through the first year.

This is not a handout; it is a strategic investment in our collective future. Research on similar programs is clear: direct cash assistance to low- and middle-income families with young children dramatically improves maternal and child health, reduces family stress, and leads to better cognitive and educational outcomes for children.

The structure of RxKids is both practical and profound. By providing support *during pregnancy*, it helps cover the immense upfront costs of preparing for a baby—from prenatal care to securing safe housing and essentials.

The continued monthly support through infancy alleviates the relentless financial pressure that forces parents to choose between diapers, nutritious food, childcare, and medical bills. For many families, this modest but reliable infusion of cash can mean the difference between stability and crisis, allowing parents to focus on bonding with and nurturing their newborn.

This program also embodies a trust in families to know what they need most, freeing them from bureaucratic burdens. It is a fiscally responsible model, with an administrative cost cap of 15 percent, and it wisely leverages existing frameworks to serve families up to 300% of the federal poverty level—a necessary threshold in our high-cost state.

Supporting mothers and babies is the most fundamental act of community care we can undertake. The RxKids program will yield returns for decades to come in the form of healthier children,

stronger families, and reduced long-term social costs. I urge you to pass HB2006 and make this vital investment in Hawai'i's keiki and 'ohana.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Rep. Terez Amato (Maui)

Hearing:

Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 10:30 am

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 329

Hawai'i State Capitol

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT : HB 2006 - RELATING TO CHILD WELL-BEING.**

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, Rep. Amato of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I live in Wailuku, Maui. I write to you today in **strong support of HB 2006**, Relating to Child Well-Being, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and administer a Hawaii Rx kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children who reside in the State through a one-time payment and several monthly payments.

My daughter worked as a pharmacy tech at Walgreens during college. She learned a lot during her time there, but I think the thing that struck her the most was witnessing pregnant women not be able to pay for their prenatal vitamins. As an economics turned biology major, my daughter knew the science around why prenatal vitamins matter, and the heartbreaking economic disparity that would make a mother unable to afford to buy them. A mother making difficult choices like foregoing prenatal vitamins was something that you and HB 2006 could help solve.

Rx Kids is a landmark program, the first program in the country to provide universal, unconditional cash prescriptions to all pregnant moms and babies in a community. Rooted in science, dignity, and equity, it is a plug-and-play model that's already being replicated – and it can work in your city, county, or state. Rx Kids launched in Flint, Michigan, in January 2024, and is rapidly expanding to other communities thanks to a public-private partnership that utilizes TANF funding while protecting public benefits.

This unique program builds on the historic success of the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit that lifted millions of children out of poverty through a policy design that mirrored universal, unconditional child cash benefits used in nations all over the world. The expanded Child Tax Credit also improved the food security, financial security, and mental health of parents.

Why Rx Kids?

- Because we invest in roads and bridges – we must also invest in babies and families
- Because science shows that early cash improves health and opportunity for a lifetime
- Because parents are experts in their own lives
- Because poverty is a policy choice – and so is prevention
- Because the return on investment is enormous: better health, stronger families, and thriving communities

- Because this program is low overhead, high impact, and built to scale

HB 2006 is designed to implement the Prenatal + 6 Months Version of Rx Kids:

- \$1,500 lump sum during pregnancy (16+ weeks)
- \$500/month for 6 months after birth
- Total cost per family: \$4,500

Based on this domestic and international evidence, Rx Kids employs three critical dimensions of program design:

- Rx Kids is universal, serving all families with new infants within a very poor city (a form of targeted universalism). It does not utilize a lottery or impose an income test.
- Rx Kids is unconditional, meaning that the aid does not require families to fulfill obligations in order to receive support.
- Rx Kids benefits are predictable because everyone gets the same cash prescription amounts and virtually all public benefits are protected and not impacted by them.

It is important to note that TANF funding is used for Rx Kids through a mechanism referred to as “non-recurrent short-term benefits” (NRST) that can be used to deliver up to four months of cash payments to families experiencing an acute economic hardship. Building on research that finds the months surrounding childbirth to be when poverty hits an all-time high during the life course, Rx Kids defines the end of pregnancy and childbirth as a period of acute economic hardship for families.

NRST payments are not considered formal cash assistance by TANF, and do not trigger time limits or work requirements. They can be made concurrently with cash assistance and other benefits and can be given to non-TANF participants.

I refer you to the “Playbook for Replicating Rx Kids: Utilizing TANF and Protecting Public Benefits”<sup>1</sup> for more details about Rx Kids and how it can be implemented in Hawai‘i to benefit our youngest keiki and their families. I strongly support the implementation of Rx Kids and requestfully **request that you vote to support HB 2006.**

Mahalo for supporting Hawai‘i keiki and families,

Christine Andrews, J.D.  
Wailuku, Maui

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<sup>1</sup> Mona Hanna and H. Luke Shaefer, “Playbook for Replicating Rx Kids: Utilizing TANF and Protecting Public Benefits,” Updated Oct. 1, 2024.

[https://rxkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Rx\\_Kids\\_TANF\\_Playbook\\_Nov2024.pdf](https://rxkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Rx_Kids_TANF_Playbook_Nov2024.pdf)

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:43:18 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marguerite Koster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a resident of Kaka'ako and strongly support SUPPORT HB2006 - Hawaii Rx Kids Program.

Mahalo,

Marguerite Koster

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:53:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:58:36 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cheryl Bellamy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as a program to provide universal, unconditional cash prescriptions to all pregnant moms and babies in a community. I am a member of Indivisible

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:07:40 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this assist to health care for kids.

Judith White,

Kapaa

Member Kauai Indivisible

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:37:54 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

All children should have equal rights to health care.

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:28:44 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you!

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:44:53 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert Justice, M.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired physician and member Indivisible Hawaii, I strongly support this bill because it provides aid to programs that support children's health.

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:10:40 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jody Weidemann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kids are our future. healthy kids learn better and are less a drain on services as they age. Support Healthy Rx Kids.

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:43:11 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Zahava Zaidoff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Martin, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee,

My name is Zahava "Zee" Zaidoff and I am testifying in strong support of this bill. RX kids will do nothing short of change lives for our keiki and families in Hawaii.

I am the one who first learned about this program while at a Human Services conference in Philly last year. I came home to Hawaii and immediately met with my State Rep, Rep Kapela and facilitated introductions with the founder of this program, Dr Mona Hanna from Michigan.

She is a pediatrician and noticed immediately that financial stress was a huge indicator of child and family health in the first year of a child's life.

The statistics are mind blowing. More prenatal care, higher birth weight, less domestic violence, less depression etc etc etc

I know from my own story how needed this program is. During my child's first year of life, I skipped meals because I needed diapers. I was sleep deprived AND stressed beyond words.

You have an opportunity to pass a bill that will help ensure that the first year of a child's life can be filled with more love, more safety, more cuddling and kisses, and less stress and tears.

Mahalo for moving this forward!

Zahava Zaidoff

Ocean View, HI

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:08:51 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2006.

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:08:11 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of HB2006. I believe it is a compassionate and humane policy. Mahalo for your consideration.

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:38:34 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and committee members,

Please pass this bill.

Mahalo,

Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva

'Ohana Leadership Council

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:47:26 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Makaiwa kanui	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB2006

As a mother of two kids, and another baby on the way, I know first hand what it's like to struggle financially postpartum. This financial assistance would help so many mothers swim financially above water, especially for those who do not have a sufficient maternity leave or paternity leave. mahalo for considering this important bill.

me ke aloha,

Makaiwa Kanui

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:22:28 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Alimoot	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 2006.

I am deeply supportive of this bill because it makes a meaningful investment in our keiki and the families who love and raise them. Hawai‘i is a place where the cost of living is high and unexpected expenses can push families into hardship. Young families with infants and very young children are especially vulnerable because the earliest months of a child’s life are critical for development and long-term health.

H.B. 2006 creates the *Hawaii Rx Kids Program*, which recognizes these realities and responds with a proven strategy: direct financial support to families at the time when it matters most. Under this bill, the Department of Human Services would provide expectant mothers with a one-time payment during pregnancy and a series of monthly payments through the first year of the child’s life.

This kind of cash support has been shown in states and countries around the world to improve maternal health outcomes, support breastfeeding and nutrition, reduce stress, and give parents the flexibility to meet their child’s basic needs without choosing between rent, food, childcare, or transportation. It also acknowledges that no two families have the same needs, so providing flexible support can make a real difference in early childhood.

As a community, we know that a child’s first year is foundational. Giving families the stability and resources they need during that time helps ensure that Hawai‘i’s children can thrive physically, emotionally, and educationally. It also strengthens their parents’ ability to remain employed, pursue education, and build long-term economic security.

When families are supported early, the need for emergency services, healthcare interventions, and crisis responses later on is often reduced. We save taxpayer dollars over time by investing early in health, stability, and family well-being.

H.B. 2006 reflects what so many community advocates and experts understand: supporting our youngest residents and their caregivers is foundational to a thriving Hawai‘i.

I respectfully urge you to pass H.B. 2006.

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:05:03 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Leilani Kailiawa. I am a mother of 3 children. One of them has multiple disabilities. I reside on Hawaii Island and a community leader.

I am in very strong support of this bill.

The extra financial support would have been helpful for our family when I was pregnant with all my children, especially for my youngest son where I was on Oahu for 6 weeks before he was born because I was high risk. My son was hospitalized for 7 months at Kapiolani Medical Center NICU.

This financial support would have greatly helped us.

Please pass this bill.

Mahalo for allowing me to share.

With gratitude

Leilani Kailiawa

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:19:04 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kanani Kai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB2006.

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii

To: Hawaii State House Committee On Human Services & Homelessness

Hearing Date/Time: Monday February 12, 2026, 10:30am

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 329 & Videoconference

Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB2006 relating to Child Well-Being

Dear Chair Rep. Lisa Martin, Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Olds, and members of the Committees on Health and on Consumer Protection & Commerce

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB2006 which would look to create an RxKids program

This bill provides money to expectant mothers during pregnancy and monthly payments during the first six months of the child's life. Eligibility will be tied to families that have the greatest need by tying RxKids to Medicaid eligibility and a 300 percent federal poverty level income limit, with payments funded by Temporary Assistance of Needy Families (TANF).

Research from many other countries shows that giving families direct support in a child's first year improves child health, reduces stress for parents and can prevent long-term problems such as homelessness and poor development outcomes. Over 140 countries provide similar direct child benefits.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:43:42 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I am in strong support of this bill. Please help support our families and keiki by passing this measure. I am a mother of two and not planning on any more keiki, but I know this will have wide reaching positive impact for some of our most vulnerable community members.

Mahalo,

Shannon M.

Hawai'i Island Resident

**LATE**

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:12:37 PM  
Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

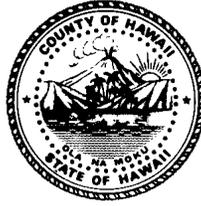
<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tina Even	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support hb2006

Tina Marie Even

**Jennifer Kagiwada**  
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272  
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

**LATE**

## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: February 11, 2026  
TO: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member  
Council District 2  
SUBJECT: HB 2006

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support of HB2006 with comments.**

The Hawai'i Rx Kids program would provide direct support to families, pregnant mothers and newborns, who need it most, helping give every child a fair start in life. Infancy and pregnancy are critical periods, and for keiki, poverty is more than just a lack of money, it is a lack of stability, opportunity, and hope. Cash support improves maternal and infant health, strengthens economic and mental wellbeing, and gives families the freedom to make choices that work best for them.

Three amendments to this bill will improve the policy and ensure successful outcomes:

1. Make the program universal, not income dependent. This would broaden its appeal and make it much simpler to administer, leading to more private funding and less paperwork. The Michigan program HB2006 is modeled after has found that including all mothers and babies in their state regardless of income has garnered support from Democrats and Republicans and eliminated any stigma associated with the program.
2. If funding is a concern, consider piloting the program in Hawai'i County, which has the highest poverty rates in the state. There are approximately 2,000 babies born in Hawai'i County each year which would make the total payment cost between \$9 and \$15 million, annually. Like the Michigan model, it is anticipated that some of this would be raised through private funders. Michigan Rx Kids started as a program in Flint, Michigan, and grew from there to cover the entire state.
3. Changing the name of our program from Rx Kids to Rx Keiki would make it our own and create a shared sense of kuleana.

Hundreds of studies show that unconditional cash transfers boost birth outcomes, early cognitive development, and long-term health, education, and lifetime earnings. Evidence from the 2021 Expanded Child Tax Credit also shows that putting money directly into families' hands reduces food insecurity, financial hardship, and child poverty, with benefits lasting well into adulthood.

This program is about more than money—it's about dignity, trust, and empowerment. Every child deserves a fair start, regardless of the economic status they are born into. These babies are the future of our communities, supporting these families is an investment in our children, our communities, and the future of Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenn Kagiwada', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jenn Kagiwada

**LATE**

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:23:40 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee -

I write in strong support of HB2006. Even as a community member without children, I know about the value of caring for expectant parents and newborns. Families should not be positioned in poverty in early life already. I hope that you passt this through your committee to help families cover essentials during a very financially vulnerable time in life.

Every child deserves a healthy start.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

**LATE**

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:55:07 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jodi Robinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the HSH Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of **HB2006**, which would establish the Hawai'i Rx Kids program to provide direct financial support to expectant mothers and families with very young children.

As a young person who has begun thinking seriously about family planning, affordability and the cost of living in Hawai'i are constant concerns for me, my husband, and many of our friends. Hawai'i is one of the most expensive places to raise a family, and the first months of a child's life, from pregnancy through infancy, are especially difficult for new parents and working families. The Hawai'i Rx Kids program would provide a meaningful financial cushion during pregnancy and early infancy, helping families cover essential and increasing the scope of support for parents and keiki across the islands.

Supporting women, families, and children should be a priority for our state. This bill not only acknowledges the harsh economic realities facing working families in Hawai'i today, but also charts a pathway for strengthening family stability and child well-being at the very start of life.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of HB2006.

**LATE**

**HB-2006**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 4:20:40 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/12/2026 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lily Troy MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support hawaii RX kids program

Testimony in Support of HB 2006 - Related to Child Well-Being - Submitted by Holli-Jae Macanas

**LATE**

To: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Holli-Jae Macanas

Date: Thursday February 12, 2026

Re: Relating to Child Well-Being

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness, my name is Holli-Jae Macanas. I am a mother, a member of the community and O'ahu Youth Action Board. I am here in support of House Bill 2006, which establishes a Hawai'i Rx Kids program to improve the economic stability of households with very young children through a one-time payment and monthly support.

Pregnancy and early childhood are critical stages of development. Many families in Hawai'i struggle with the high cost of housing, food, healthcare, and other necessities. Financial stress during pregnancy can directly impact maternal health and birth outcomes, making early support essential.

While pregnant with my now 10-month-old daughter, Hunny, I experienced severe nausea and struggled to keep food down. For much of my pregnancy, I relied on crackers, vegetables, poi, coconut water, and water. At four months pregnant, I fainted due to a lack of nutrients. I was living in a transitional home and was initially denied SNAP benefits due to paperwork issues before eventually being approved for WIC. At seven months pregnant, I needed a tooth extraction, and the required \$50 medication was not covered by insurance. I was fortunate that my parents were able to help cover that cost.

Expecting mothers should not have to worry about affording food or necessary medical care. Providing direct financial assistance beginning in pregnancy would help mothers meet basic needs and reduce stress during this critical time. Continued support after birth would promote stability and healthier outcomes for children.

I respectfully urge you to support and pass House Bill 2006. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.