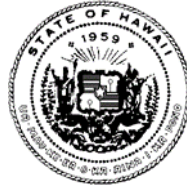


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

April 6, 2026

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2861 SD2 HD1 – RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE.**

Hearing: April 7, 2026, 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of the bill, offers comments, and proposes amendments. DHS defers to the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR).

This bill proposes to require OWR to develop a comprehensive plan for the establishment of a Kakou Pilot Program to support families and children in need. In addition, the bill proposes to utilize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for the purposes of a new Kakou Pilot Program.

For the committee's information, in reference to current encumbrances of TANF funds referred to in Section 1 of the measure, these include the Maui TANF Relief Fund for families with a dependent child who survived the Maui Wildfires, and during the 2025 federal government shutdown, DHS launched the Hawaii Relief Program to assist families with a dependent child with assistance with rent or mortgage, and utilities, and the Hawaii Emergency Food Assistance Program that provided additional food assistance to 27,406 eligible households with a dependent child. Currently, in response to the March Kona Low flooding events, DHS is

drafting administrative rules for the Hawaii Relief Program to assist families with a dependent child who suffered a financial impact due to the storms.

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 proposed distribution of food boxes to eligible families described in section 2, subsection (b), paragraph (2), may be classified under TANF Purpose 1; therefore, “means testing” for TANF eligibility is required.

Additionally, 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, children and families who receive benefits or services through the Kakou Pilot Program must be either 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 qualified individuals lawfully residing in the U.S. accordance with the Compacts of Free Association.

If the legislature is interested in services being available regardless of citizenship, a general fund appropriation would be required for children and families who are not considered eligible qualified immigrants. Additionally, once the plan is developed, DHS anticipates requiring additional legislation and requests for appropriations.

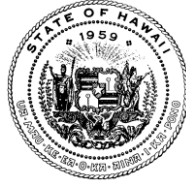
For the committee’s information, DHS is the specified grantee with the federal grants management and the authorized state agency to receive the federal TANF block grant and any reserve funds remaining from any grant year; therefore, the federal TANF funds may not be appropriated directly to other state agencies or entities. Consequently, DHS agrees with the amendment to change the expending agency from OWR to DHS. In addition, expending federal TANF funds must comply with the requirements and provisions of 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

Respectfully, DHS respectfully proposes the highlighted amendments to Section 3, "SECTION 3. Beginning July 1, 2028, the department of human services, pursuant to Section 2(d), is authorized and may expend temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) funds for the purposes of the kakou pilot program, including \$130,000 per year for an external evaluator to conduct data collection and to assess whether the kakou pilot program meets at least one of the purposes of the temporary assistance for needy families program and whether the kakou pilot program effectively addresses that purpose."

The Department's Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division, which administers the TANF program, will continue to work with OWR to assess resource needs to implement the proposed family Kakou Pilot Program and will seek policy clarification from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, regarding the bill's proposed use of TANF funds.

DHS respectfully requests that the proposed pilot program and any appropriation not conflict with, reduce, or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

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



STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE  
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony on S.B. 2861 SD2 HD1  
RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE**

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

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.; Room Number: 308

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) supports S.B. 2861 SD2 HD1.

S.B. 2861 SD2 HD1 requires the OWR to develop a comprehensive plan for the establishment of a kakou pilot program to support families and children in need. Given the State's current fiscal climate, in which resources must be carefully stewarded, the OWR appreciates the bill's intent to leverage available federal funds to support Hawai'i's families and keiki. The OWR respectfully defers to DHS's Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division (BESSD) regarding the eligible use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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



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

Apr 7, 2026

#### MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roxanne U. Bolden

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The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair  
House Committee on Finance  
The Thirty-Third Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**SUBJECT: Support for SB2861 SD2 HD1** – Relating to the Office of Wellness and Resilience

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a Center for Independent Living serving disabled people and their families statewide. SB2861 SD2 HD1 directs the Office of Wellness and Resilience, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, to develop a comprehensive plan for a Kakou Pilot Program to support families and children in need, with services such as child wellness visits, food distribution, counseling, and trauma-informed care. Many of the families who would qualify for this program include children with disabilities and parents with disabilities, for whom early, community-based supports are essential to staying safely together at home and avoiding more restrictive, higher-cost systems.

From a Finance perspective, this bill stewards existing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) resources more strategically by planning how to use an estimated hundreds of millions in unspent TANF funds to meet federal purposes through upstream, prevention-focused services. Authorizing TANF funds for a Kakou Pilot Program—including a modest evaluation component—can help reduce later costs in child welfare, institutional care, and crisis responses by stabilizing families earlier in their own communities.

We respectfully urge the Committee on Finance to pass SB2861 SD2 HD1 and support a well-designed Kakou Pilot Program that centers



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Jennifer Hartssock

community-based, disability-inclusive supports for families and children in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden

Executive Director

**SB-2861-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 4:40:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marilyn Yamamoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Todd and committee,

This bill was amended to remove specific groups of families in need of assistance but did not go far enough. Per my previous testimony, I called attention to the Constitutional rights of citizens to be free from intrusion by the government in the 4th amendment. The bill, even as written to create a plan to assist families who may be at risk of intervention by CWS, needs clarification that services are voluntary.

Please amend this revision “amending the intended recipients of the various services to be created under the comprehensive plan” to read **“the published services available for families to request on a voluntary basis under the comprehensive plan”**