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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
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TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 8, 2026

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3204 – RELATING TO FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM.**

Hearing: Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:05 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of the bill to further utilize federal funds to support families who may be at risk of entering the child welfare system, offers comments, and requests clarification. DHS defers to the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR).

This bill proposes to establish a one-year family resilience pilot program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience and to appropriate Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to support the pilot.

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 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 peer support resource navigator services described in Section 2, paragraphs (1), (2), and (3), may be classified under Purpose 1; therefore, "means testing" for TANF eligibility is required.

For the committee's information, expending 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.

The Department requests clarification on Section 2, paragraph (4), which proposes that the pilot program establish monthly parenting classes or cultural family strengthening services. The Department will need a description of the parenting classes or cultural family strengthening services to determine whether both may be classified under a TANF purpose.

The Department's Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division, which administers the TANF program, will continue to engage with OWR to assess resource needs to implement the proposed family resilience 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.

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



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OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
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Testimony on S.B. 3204
RELATING TO FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

February 9, 2026, at 1:05 p.m.; Room Number: 225

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) **SUPPORTS** S.B. 3204, Relating to Family Resilience Pilot Program and offers comments.

Diverting families away from child welfare system through primary prevention and universal supports

In the Report submitted to the 2025 Hawai'i State Legislature, the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group underscores the cascading impact of poverty and the urgent need for concrete supports that prevent families from entering the child welfare system. Youth and families with lived experience consistently shared that most families who come to the system's attention require support services—not protective intervention—to remain safe and stable.

A central element of S.B. 3204 is the integration of trained, trauma-informed peer support navigators with lived experience. These navigators are uniquely equipped to help families access community based services and resources. Peer support is especially powerful because it connects families with individuals who understand their challenges firsthand. For children, parents, and caregivers, engaging with someone from their own community who has walked a similar path builds trust and strengthens the connection between families and the services

intended to help them. This trust increases the likelihood that families will engage with and benefit from available interventions.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility

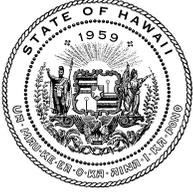
The OWR is engaged in ongoing discussions with the Department of Human Services's (DHS) Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division (BESSD) regarding the potential use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. OWR defers to DHS and TANF administrators on the eligibility of the proposed measure to utilize TANF resources.

Amendment request

The OWR respectfully requests that the committee consider extending the duration of the pilot program from one year to three years. A three-year period would allow adequate time to develop policies and procedures, issue a request for information, and collect meaningful outcome data to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

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

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



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 13, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: **SB 3204 -- RELATING TO FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM**

HEARING: Friday, February 13, 2026 @ 1:00 pm; Conference Room 225

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA supports SB 3204, with comments.

This SHPDA strongly supports the one-year Family Resilience Pilot Project within the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) to reduce preventable child abuse and neglect. The OWR program will hire and train 5 trauma-informed peer support resource navigators to reach out to 80 families who are eligible for TANF temporary assistance for needy families) funding. The navigators will provide family support and parenting classes and other support services to the families. There are other details, goals, and parameters included in the proposal, but we believe this pilot is achievable, scalable when proven successful, and critically important to reducing child abuse and neglect among families in need.

Thanks for the hearing this bill, and for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Network Membership

Access to Independence
Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i
Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC `Ohana, Inc.
Friends of the Children's Justice
Center of Maui
Get Ready Hawai`i
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale `Opio Kaua`i, Inc.
Hawai`i Children's Action
Network
Hawai`i Health & Harm
Reduction Center
Hawaii Island Community`
Health Center
Ho`ola Na Pua
Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i
Ka Hale Pomaika`i
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Kaua`i Planning and Action
Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu`uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED
Piha Wellness and Healing
Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

February 6, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
And members of the Committee on Health and Human
Services

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3204 RELATING TO FAMILY
RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 3204 Relating to Family Resilience Pilot Program.

I served as a member of the Hawaii Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Over the past 3 years, the task force has developed a plan and strategies that will incorporate trauma-informed approaches to services provided to children, youth, and families.

This Family Resilience Pilot Program will utilize peer navigators, an evidence-informed practice, to help families identify needs and access services. It will provide material assistance to support basic needs. By strengthening families, it will reduce the overload of the Child Welfare System.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



Date: February 9, 2026

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Senate Bill 3204, Relating to a Family Resilience Pilot Program

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 Senate Bill 3204 which relates to a Family Resilience Pilot Program.

Our organization is a strong supporter of the efforts of the State Office of Wellness & Resilience’s Mālama ‘Ohana working group and its recommendations to create transformative change within the State’s child welfare system, especially those which relate to the diversion of children from entry into the child welfare system or to the provision of trauma-informed care.

ECAS strongly agrees with the working group’s findings that there is a distinct shortage of resources specifically dedicated to preventing children and families’ involvement with child welfare services. And support the recommendation for the establishment of primary prevention and universal support programs which are trauma-informed and culturally responsive.

We feel that the pilot program laid out in SB3204 will ultimately demonstrate efficacy in building family resilience and providing comprehensive, specialized support services to local families.

For this reason, ECAS supports Senate Bill 3204.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3204
RELATING TO FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM**

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:05 PM; CR 225 or via videoconference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Catholic Charities Hawaii strongly supports SB 3204, which establishes and appropriates funds for a one-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This initiative is a critical investment in strengthening families across Hawaii by providing targeted support to address the challenges that threaten family stability and well-being.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax-exempt, community-based organization that has been providing social services in Hawaii for 78 years. Catholic Charities Hawaii serves individuals and families across the state who are experiencing poverty, housing instability, trauma, and crisis.

As a community-based organization dedicated to serving Hawaii's most vulnerable individuals and families, Catholic Charities Hawaii recognizes that economic hardship, trauma, and systemic barriers often place significant stress on families. By implementing a family resilience program, the state can take a proactive approach to reducing these stressors, promoting mental and emotional well-being, and ultimately preventing crises that may lead to family separation, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare system.

This pilot program offers an opportunity to develop and refine evidence-based strategies that strengthen family units, foster positive parenting, and enhance access to critical services. A dedicated investment in family resilience will not only improve outcomes for individual families but also contribute to stronger, healthier communities across the state.

We urge the committee to pass this measure and ensure adequate funding to support its successful implementation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 3204. If you have any questions, please contact our Vice President of Mission, Shellie Niles at (808) 527-4813.



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CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3204 RELATING TO FAMILY RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: Friday, 2/13/2026, 1:00 PM; CR 225 or via videoconference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **strongly supports SB 3204**, which establishes and appropriates funds for a one-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This initiative represents a meaningful and strategic investment in strengthening Hawai'i's families by providing targeted, trauma-informed supports that help prevent crises before they escalate.

For 78 years, CCH has served individuals and families statewide who face poverty, housing instability, trauma, and other life-altering challenges. Every day, our staff witness how economic stress, behavioral health needs, and systemic inequities can overwhelm families—often leading to outcomes such as homelessness, family separation, or deeper involvement with the child welfare system.

By launching a Family Resilience Pilot Program, the State can take a proactive and preventive approach to family well-being. This program has the potential to:

- Strengthen protective factors within families
- Promote positive parenting and family stability
- Improve access to essential behavioral health and social services
- Reduce long-term public costs associated with crisis response

This pilot also creates an opportunity to test and refine evidence-based, culturally responsive strategies that honor Hawai'i's diverse communities and promote resilience across generations. Investing in family well-being today leads to healthier keiki, stronger 'ohana, and more stable communities statewide.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i respectfully urges the committee to pass SB 3204 and ensure sufficient resources to support its successful implementation. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure. If you have any questions, please contact Shellie Niles at (808) 527-4813.



To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
RE: **SB3204 – Relating to Family Resilience Pilot Program**
Hawaii State Capitol & Videoconference
February 9, 2026, 1:05 PM

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am submitting this testimony in **SUPPORT of SB3204**, which establishes a one-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) and appropriates funding from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.

In Hawai'i, the well-being of our people has long been understood through the strength of 'ohana. Native Hawaiian values recognize that individual wellness is inseparable from family and community well-being. Concepts such as lōkahi, the balance of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health, and kuleana, our shared responsibility to care for one another, remain foundational to resilient communities.

Families across our State continue to experience complex and interconnected challenges, including economic strain, mental health stressors, housing instability, and the cumulative impacts of recent public health emergencies and natural disasters. These conditions underscore the need for coordinated, prevention-focused strategies that strengthen families before crises escalate.

This bill takes a thoughtful and pono approach by situating the family resilience pilot program within the OWR. This placement promotes alignment across systems and emphasizes culturally responsive, community-informed practices established within the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Final Report¹.

Establishing a pilot program allows the State to evaluate outcomes, identify best practices, and ensure that future efforts are both effective and accountable. The program shall also train trauma informed peer support navigators and assist families to identify goals and connect them to community resources and cultural family strengthening services. This bill provides our most vulnerable community members what they need in their times of need.

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

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Final Report (URL: <https://www.malamaohana.net/mowg-final-report>)



Aloha,

My name is Patricia “Patty” Chin, and I serve as the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative Manager at EPIC ‘Ohana. Our statewide initiative partners with youth ages 14 to 26 who have experienced foster care, and we work closely with families, community organizations, and systems leaders to strengthen pathways to stability, connection, and well-being.

I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB3204, which establishes a one-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. This bill reflects what decades of research and lived experience have shown: the most effective way to keep children safe is to strengthen families before they reach a crisis point.

National research consistently demonstrates the impact of early, community-based support:

- Casey Family Programs reports that when families receive concrete support and navigation help early, they are 20-50% less likely to become involved with the child welfare system.
- The U.S. Children’s Bureau highlights that strengthening protective factors – such as parental resilience, social connections, and concrete supports – significantly reduces the likelihood of abuse or neglect.
- The Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework (Center for the Study of Social Policy) shows that increasing these protective factors improves family stability and reduces maltreatment risk.
- SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) has found that peer support models increase engagement, reduce stigma, and improve outcomes for families navigating complex systems.

These findings align with the recommendations of the Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group, which emphasized the urgent need for primary prevention and universal support in Hawai‘i. Too many families' facing housing instability, economic hardship, or mental health challenges do not know

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where to turn until their situation becomes a crisis. By then, the system is responding to harm rather than preventing it. SB3204 addresses this gap directly by:

- Hiring and training trauma informed peer support resource navigators-informed peer support resource navigators
- Connecting families to public benefits, housing, education, and employment
- Offering parenting classes and culturally grounded family strengthening services-strengthening services
- Providing support in safe, accessible, community-based settings-based settings

These are exactly the types of support that help families stabilize, build resilience, and stay safely together.

As someone who works closely with youth who have experienced foster care – and as a former foster youth myself – I know how deeply family stress, isolation, and lack of support can shape a young person’s life. Many of the challenges youth face in care could have been prevented if their families had access to the right resources at the right time. SB3204 invests in that prevention, in that stability, and in the belief that families can thrive when we meet them with compassion, connection, and culturally grounded support.

For these reasons, the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative strongly supports SB3204 and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this bill. Mahalo, for your time and for your commitment to strengthening Hawai‘i’s families.

Patricia “Patty” Chin

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Mareva Nopuente, MSW Student

RE: Support for SB3204 - Relating to Family Resilience Pilot Program

HEARING: Friday, February 13, 2026 at 1:00pm; Conference Room 225

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mareva Nopuente. I am an MSW student and future social worker writing in support of SB3204, which establishes the Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

Through my education and professional experience working with children and families, I have observed that many families who are struggling are not lacking motivation or care for their children — they are lacking accessible information, guidance, and support to navigate available resources. Families often are not aware of supports that exist or how to access them before challenges within their family dynamics and circumstances escalate.

SB3204 thoughtfully addresses this gap by emphasizing early, preventive support through trauma-informed peer navigation. This approach recognizes the importance of meeting families where they are and connecting them to services in a way that is supportive, culturally responsive, and non-punitive. Guiding families in connecting them to housing, employment, benefits, and parenting supports early has the capacity to help reduce stress, strengthen stability, and prevent more costly and potentially harmful system involvement.

While this bill is limited in scope as a pilot program, it represents an opportunity to test a prevention-focused approach to strengthening family resilience. In addition, this bill further supports a growing understanding that family resilience is built through access and connection that is culturally responsive and not solely through crisis intervention. By investing in families before they reach a breaking point, Hawai‘i can take a meaningful step toward strengthening ‘ohana and reducing long-term reliance on child welfare and other emergency systems.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support SB3204 and allow this pilot program the opportunity to demonstrate its value for families across our state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Mareva Nopuente

LATE

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: SB3204 – Relating to Family Resilience Pilot Program

POSITION: Support of SB3204

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair McKelvey,

My name is Stepfenie Keohokalole, and I am a social worker on O’ahu. I am writing to express my support for SB3204. The Family Resilience Pilot Program provides an opportunity for early intervention, contributing to the potential long-term family success by strengthening protective factors, promoting stability, and empowering families to thrive.

SB 3204 offers supportive options for families by:

Preventing:

- Unnecessary involvement in the child welfare system through proactive, trauma-informed relationship-based intervention.
- Escalation of family stressors by addressing economic hardship and access barriers before a crisis occurs.
- Child abuse and neglect risk by strengthening protective factors such as parental resilience, social connections, and knowledge of child development.
- System involvement by connecting families to TANF benefits, housing, employment, education, and parenting supports at earlier signs of need.

Expanding:

- Access to trained, trauma-informed peer support resource navigators who work one-on-one with families.
- Relationship-based services grounded in trust, shared experience, and cultural responsiveness.
- Individualized goal setting to promote meaningful, self-directed change.
- Hands-on assistance navigating complex systems, rather than simply referring families to services.

I urge you to consider the value of peer-driven, preventative strategies that strengthen families before a crisis occurs. Investing in one-on-one, trauma-informed support promotes measurable progress, builds resilience, and reduces the long-term need for costly system intervention.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your support of our keiki and ‘ohana of Hawai‘i.

Sincerely,

Stepfenie Keohokalole

s.keohokalole@gmail.com