



The House of Representatives
STATE OF HAWAII

NEWS RELEASE

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Keiki Health Measures Advance at the Legislature

HONOLULU. Several bills pertaining to children's healthcare introduced by freshman legislator Rep. John Mizuno (District 30 - Kamehameha Heights, Kalihi Valley, Fort Shafter) are advancing in the state legislature.

"Our keiki are our most precious resource and we need to ensure that we can meet their basic healthcare needs," said Rep. Mizuno, who serves as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Health. "These bills address pressing healthcare issues faced by our youngest citizens. I'm encouraged by the discussions they have generated and the support they have received."

A summary of each bill follows:

HB56, Universal Health Care, establishes the Hawaii Health Commission and requires it to develop a plan for health care for all individuals in the state and submit its recommendations to the legislature before the convening of the regular session of 2009.

HB55, Relating to Youth Suicide Prevention, establishes a statewide youth suicide early intervention and prevention program and appropriates money to the Department of Health to implement the program. In Hawaii, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year-olds. Following the example of many states which have already developed comprehensive statewide youth suicide and early intervention and prevention strategies, the measure will address this crisis by providing effective early intervention and prevention services.

HB525, Relating to Foster Children's Transition to Adulthood, requires the State to provide independent living programs to foster children beginning at age 14. Former foster youth are at greater risk than the general population of becoming homeless or suffering other deprivations as adults. The purpose of this Act is to ensure that foster youth are given opportunities to learn basic life skills at a young age.

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**Page 2 – Keiki Health Measures Advance at the Legislature
February 16, 2007**

HB1830, Relating to Child Protection, provides immunity from prosecution for leaving unharmed newborns at certain safe havens within 72 hours of birth and provides immunity from liability for personnel at the safe havens for receiving the newborn. The bill follows the example of 47 other states which have already enacted safe surrender laws to protect newborn infants who might otherwise be abandoned in unsafe environments.

Rep. Mizuno has also introduced several bills which were revealed in January as part of a comprehensive Keiki Care Package. Summaries of several of these bills are as follows:

HB524, Relating to Child Welfare, provides notice of permanent plan hearings to a child who has reached the age of 14. The purpose of the Act is to ensure that foster youth who are subject to a permanent plan are provided notice and the opportunity to participate in hearings that affect their future.

HB527, Relating to Tobacco, prohibits the sale and distribution of flavored tobacco products which are often targeted at youth.

HB528, Relating to Minors, allows a minor who is not under the care, supervision, or control of a parent, custodian, or legal guardian to consent to the provision of primary medical care and services.

HB531, Relating to Children, amends early intervention services law to be consistent with the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004.

HB534, Relating to Child Passenger Safety, provides funds to educate the public about the child passenger restraint law and to help subsidize the cost of child booster car seats for low-income families.

HB537, Relating to Perinatal Care, appropriates funds to continue the pilot perinatal clinic for women with a history of substance abuse on Oahu.

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