

LATE



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

HEARING: Tuesday, February 3, 2015
1:45 pm
Conference Room 016

FROM: Judith Wilhoite
Family Advocate
It Takes An `Ohana

RE: SB 979 - RELATING TO YOUTH

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the Family Advocate for Family Program Hawaii's It Takes An `Ohana (ITAO) program and a resource caregiver, formerly referred to as foster parent. I, along with my Advisory Committee, strongly support SB 979.

In my position, I have regular contact with current and former foster youth. I have had youth call to ask for help when trying to find a safe harbor when running from a living situation that is not working for them. I have had little resources to offer them. If this bill were to pass, I would be able to direct them to a Safe Place where they are able to sign themselves in, without their parents' permission, to receive support. This allows youth to stay safe while the issues in the youth's life are sorted out.

I thank both the Legislature and all those who have worked on this issue for youth for this opportunity to share strong support for SB 979.

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Family Programs Hawaii -Youth Empowerment and Success
250 Vineyard Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 (808) 462-2144

Testimony from Melody F. Rolnick, Program Coordinator
IN SUPPORT OF HI SB979, A SAFE PLACE FOR YOUTH PILOT PROGRAM
February 3, 2015

Aloha and thank you for hearing my testimony,

My name is Melody Rolnick. I am a graduate of UH Manoa, supervise a statewide program for youth, and am an active member of my community. I am also a former foster youth who aged out of the system at 18 in Kihei, Maui. I am in support of HI SB979 which would provide a safe place for youth in crisis.

As a former foster youth, and someone who went through the UH system alone, I found that having support from programs within the community supplemented the support from family and friends and aided in my graduation, employment, and independent living skills. These programs provided support when I needed help writing a resume and finding a job, when I needed a counselor to talk to because I was overwhelmed at school, or when I needed somewhere to do my homework. These groups and safe places helped me write essays for scholarships, provided me with leadership and volunteer opportunities, and gave me a sense of connectedness and purpose.

I strongly support the pilot program for a safe place for youth in crisis. This support can mean the difference between homelessness and having the resources and knowledge to secure housing. This support can mean the difference between choosing drugs, violence and the streets or choosing to persevere through college. These kinds of programs can also help to prevent suicide! The key to resiliency for youth in crisis is having a safe place where someone believes in you. Please pass this bill and give youth in crisis the opportunity to get the support they need to reach their goals.

Thank you for hearing my testimony,

Melody F. Rolnick

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
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Cc: kalawaiag@hotmail.com
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SB979

Submitted on: 2/3/2015

Testimony for HSH on Feb 3, 2015 13:45PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kalawai'a Goo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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