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**Cc:** hlusk@chowproject.org  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for HB844 on Apr 3, 2017 13:35PM\*

**LATE**

**HB844**

Submitted on: 4/3/2017

Testimony for WAM on Apr 3, 2017 13:35PM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Heather Lusk	The CHOW Project	Support	No

Comments:

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To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair

**LATE**

From: Lauren Higa

Aloha,

Thank you for hearing HB 844 HD1: Relating to Youth. My name is Lauren Higa, and I am a graduate student in the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a case manager working with youth in foster care. I am in support of HB 844 HD1 which requires the Office of Youth Services to develop a two-year pilot program for Safe Places for Youth.

From my experiences working with at-risk youth, many face stressors such as abuse, neglect, homelessness, substance abuse, among many other unstable or harmful situations. With these adverse experiences and instability, runaway or at-risk youth are at higher risk of assault, rape, commercial exploitation, mental health issues, among many other issues while on the streets with limited support and resources.

Youth may not always be aware of or ready to participate in services, but many seek people and places that provide support and the fulfillment of their basic needs. The Safe Places Program will provide safe havens and resources in communities during times of crises which will be essential for youth's safety and well-being. Implementing the Safe Place Program here in Hawaii will assist our youth in obtaining their needs, support, and referrals to programs that may further equip them with the skills to thrive and have a safe place to go.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.