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Date: February 6, 2018

To: The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair
The Honorable Jill Tokuda, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

The Honorable Clarence Nishihara, Chair
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs

From: Justin Murakami, Policy Research Associate
The Sex Abuse Treatment Center
A Program of Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children

RE: Testimony in Support of S.B. 2817
Relating to Crime Victim Compensation for Mental Health Services

Good morning Chairs Baker and Nishihara, Vice Chairs Tokuda and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health and on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs:

The Sex Abuse Treatment Center (SATC) supports S.B. 2817.

Violent crimes often cause deep and lasting harm to secondary victims in their wake. Secondary victims experience harm as a result of their relationship with the primary victim who was the direct focus of the violent crime, such as the child of a domestic violence victim who witnesses the crime, or the family of a murder victim.

The psychological impact experienced by children on witnessing domestic violence in their families, and the consequences of that trauma, are well established. Each year, an estimated 3 to 5 million American children witness domestic violence in their families. Such children can display similar effects as the primary victim of domestic violence, including anxiety, depression, psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches and stomachaches), manifesting violent behavior themselves, poor school performance, difficulty in relationships with others, and substance abuse disorders.

Similarly, the violent, unexpected death of a family member is, as noted by the federal Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, one of the most traumatic experiences a person can face. Survivors of homicide victims are at risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as extreme anxiety, fear, and sadness, with nightmares and intrusive thoughts remaining constant for weeks or months. Additional stressors can further contribute to psychological strain, including financial issues that result from the homicide, participation in the



investigation and criminal justice process, and news media coverage of the homicide.

Mental and behavioral health interventions, such as supportive counseling and therapy, are helpful in managing the overwhelming emotions encountered by secondary victims of crime. Unfortunately, Hawai'i's victim compensation statute does not currently authorize the use of Crime Victim Compensation Commission (CVCC) program funds for mental health counseling services for survivors of homicide victims or children who witness domestic violence in their families. This fails to recognize these people, whose lives have been indelibly affected by violent crimes, as legitimate victims, despite the very real suffering they experience, and creates a barrier to accessing necessary mental health services.

S.B. 2817 corrects this issue by authorizing the use of CVCC program funds for the coverage of mental health services that these victims of violent crimes need and deserve.