

Melissa K. Gibo

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TO: Rep. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Health

Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Tom Brower, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

**LATE
Testimony**

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of HB 893 – RELATING TO HEALTH

HEARING: Thursday, February 12, 2009
10:00 a.m., Room 329

Chair Yamane and Chair Mizuno and Members of the House Committees of Health and Human Services, my name is Melissa Gibo and I am a MSW student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I am testifying in support of HB 893, appropriating funds to the DOH to provide continued respite services for family caregivers.

Respite services have significant benefits for families and caregivers of individuals with developmental disabilities. Such services help families and caregivers cope with the daily stress of providing home based care, thereby alleviating caregiver burnout, strengthening the family unit, and preventing institutional or other community placement.

Although some may feel that respite is not a "necessary" service and we can afford to eliminate the program, our current economic situation calls for us to see beyond the immediate budget saving. At a time when other services are being reduced for individuals with developmental disabilities, it is more critical that respite services are available to families and caregivers who are being asked to do more for their loved ones as other supports are dwindled down.

With no respite services available, families may be forced to reduce work hours to provide care placing additional financial burden on the family. Financial and emotional strain on caregivers will grow and there will be no resources to prevent caregiver burnout. Increasing caregiving responsibilities of families while decreasing supports that provide "breaks" from the daily stressors of providing care may potentially lead to increased risk for abuse and neglect for individuals with disabilities.

I support HB 893 and urge you and your Committee to support Hawai'i's caregivers of individuals with disabilities and special needs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.