

HCR 37



HAWAII STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

TO: Senator Chun Oakland, Chair, Senator Ihara, Vice Chair and members of the Committee on Human Services

FROM: Carol Lee, Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: April 24, 2009, 9:30am

RE: HCR 37 REQUESTING RELIGIOUS AND FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO SERVE AS SAFE HAVENS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Aloha, my name is Ana Maring and I represent the Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV). HSCADV is a private non-profit agency which serves as a touchstone agency for the majority of domestic violence programs throughout the state. For many years HSCADV has worked with the Hawaii Legislature by serving as an educational resource and representing the many voices of domestic violence programs and survivors of domestic violence.

HSCADV supports HCR 37 with comments.

Violence against women is epidemic in our society. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in this country every day.

Victims of domestic violence frequently turn to their faith leaders to for counsel and support. Faith organizations can serve a vital role in helping victims of domestic violence and their children find safety.

As discussed in the recent Conference for *Communities of Faith: Response to Domestic Violence* held at the Hawaii State Capitol – we respectfully request that the language "safe environment" and "safe havens" be used consistently in the bill. This will clarify that "safe haven" means that victims will receive assistance, counseling (when faith leaders are appropriately trained) and referral services. We also request that the word "member" be removed from the last sentence in the bill as the Coalition does not have any faith based member organizations. The Coalition is happy to transmit this resolution to faith based organizations throughout the state to further encourage collaboration and training.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A JOINT LEGISLATIVE EFFORT

E-Mail: HMSstimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Regarding: Human Services Committee
Hearing on: April 24, 2009, 9:15 pm and Room 229

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Date: April 24, 2009

To: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Human Services Committee

From: Dennis Arakaki
Executive Director
Hawaii Family Forum / Hawaii Catholic Conference

Re: HCR 37, Response by Religious and Faith Based Organizations to
Domestic Violence

Honorable Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Human Services Committees, I am Dennis Arakaki, representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii.

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii, representing a network of over 250 Christian churches. The Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii.

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, I speak in strong support of HCR 37 and offer amendments to the resolution on domestic violence. The problem of domestic violence is growing like a plague across the state and expected to worsen as the economy continues to spiral downwards and place enormous stress upon families, especially young families.

Madam Chair, with the budget reductions to domestic violence services in our communities, I believe it is time for the faith community to step up and should stand in the gap, poised to respond to at different levels.

As you know, we had a very informative conference this past Saturday that will do much to initiate action on the part of the faith communities in Hawaii. I suggest we continue the dialogue and discussion to develop fundamental guidelines for those churches who wish to start a ministry or resources for those churches who would like to provide resource and referral services to the families in distress. Churches can also help in other ways, such as:

- 1) Churches need to lead the effort to prevent domestic violence by stressing the importance of developing relationships based on mutual respect and peaceful resolution of differences;

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- 2) The faith community needs to focus on strengthening marriages and provide counseling and workshops that precede marriage and focus on improving relationship skills, but the safety of the partner being abused or the children should never be compromised and placed at risk; and
- 3) Churches need to stand ready to provide "safe havens" for victims of domestic violence who are ready to leave violent relationships. Agencies that provide services to domestic violence victims need to provide training and orientation to recognize domestic violence and methods and techniques to provide a safe environment that domestic violence victims can escape to. They need to be made aware of the legal, ethical, liability and safety issues that may be involved when working with victims of domestic violence.
- 4) Even if faith communities are unable to provide facilities, personnel or services, churches can take collections to help with food, clothing and funds to help victims of violence escape violence and start a new life; and
- 5) Churches and faith communities should develop skill building, especially for youth and young adult on seeking peaceful resolutions to conflict in interpersonal relationships;

Senator Chun Oakland, it is my hope to challenge and bring together the network of Christian and Catholic churches and their leaders to be part of a coordinated effort to provide services and programs to these families in crisis. The response must be immediate as the number of families at risk continue to rise. I propose that we continue the task group we initiated so we may consider and plan more workshops and seminars on domestic violence for pastors, staff and/or church lay leaders. Information can be shared by agencies and organization that provide services and counseling to victims of domestic violence and by individuals and communities of faith who are already providing services in religious settings.

Finally, we cannot forget the children... . They are the innocent victims of domestic violence who become traumatized by witnessing the violence suffered by their mother by their father, step-father or other significant partner. They may also be victims of abuse and neglect and their plight needs to be heard and any safety net services for victims should include the children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this measure.