



**LATE**

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/23/2018

**Time:** 11:00 AM

**Location:** 211

**Committee:** Senate Ways and Means

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SB 2368, SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the department of education to establish and implement a program to educate public school students on sexual abuse prevention through age appropriate curricula; provide relevant training to school teachers and staff; and inform parents about important child sexual abuse topics. Requires the board of education to adopt board of education policies to effectuate the sexual abuse prevention education program and to be implemented by the department of education. Requires reports to the legislature on the status of implementation. Makes an appropriation. (SD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (Department) recognizes the important role of public education in child sexual abuse prevention. The Department is actively seeking input from a broad array of school administrators regarding the programmatic implementation and resource requirements mandated by this proposal.

The Department remains open to working with stakeholders to review other states' implementation and cost implications, and to report recommendations to the 2019 Legislature.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2368, SD1.

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at [www.hawaiipublicschools.org](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org).

**LATE**

February 23, 2018

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Keith-Agaran and members of the committee:

My name is Melisse Malone. I am co-founder of Safe Keiki Project, a non-profit foundation to help educate and protect Maui County children from sexual abuse, providing a voice for child victims and support for victims' healing and healing for their families.

I am testifying in support of SB2368, Erin's Law.

I know every child in the State of Hawaii will benefit from Erin's Law, as sexual abuse prevention education must be ongoing from pre-school to 12th grade because sexual abuse is an ongoing threat. Preventative knowledge on the subject of sex abuse is not to be feared. When there are no secrets, innocence is preserved and children are empowered to trust their ability to know right from wrong.

The following narrative is difficult to share, but I am sharing my voice because my granddaughter is not able to at this time. In the summer of 2014, my 5 and a half-year-old granddaughter, who I had been raising with my 25 year-old daughter, told me that her mother's boyfriend, a wealthy older bachelor, had touched her between her legs. She also told me that the first time he had done this was on her 4th birthday and that it had happened many times since. I tried to remain calm, but in my heart my whole world silently disintegrated. I ached for reasons why she had never told me before. I had failed her and failed to protect her, my pure, innocent granddaughter.

Not having a clue as to what to do, I asked her to repeat what she had told me to video her disclosure. I called Child Welfare Services the next morning and gave them the video disclosure and the first words out of the agent's mouth was that I had "coached" my granddaughter. In more shock, I had no idea what in his mind "coaching" was. In my mind, I only knew what my granddaughter had told me and to infer that I had made her say such a thing was another added horror.

When I walked out of the CWS office that day it was as if a very black cloud had descended and it only got worse from there as my granddaughter continued for 2 more months to reveal that she had been tied up and gave me descriptions of how he sexually assaulted her including threats with a gun that he would shoot her if she told anyone.

Then came June, 2016, and a Maui Family Court Judge awarded my daughter's now ex-boyfriend full custody of my granddaughter, a man who has no biological relation to her and a man who admitted in court to have regularly practiced S&M bondage.

Over two years have gone by since I last saw my granddaughter who is nine years old now. It's too late for me to wish that I had talked to her about sexual abuse prevention, but when I read about Erin's Law I could see it as a light shining on a dark place that could make things light again...when the word sex didn't have the word "abuse" or "assault" attached to it.

The conversation about sexual abuse needs to be brought out in the open, talked about like any other subject matter of importance to understanding life. Homes can and will

hide secrets, but school is for learning and inspiration and community and should not have any secrets.

Because I have no contact with my granddaughter, I pray she goes to school one day and hears a teacher discuss what is touch that is appropriate and what is inappropriate touch, so that she will see she has another option, that there is someone else she can tell, an “unbiased” teacher. I repeat that there is so much shame and silence and disbelief around sexual assault that the conversation, the education, and the training must be ongoing, consistent and repeated every year because sexual abuse is an ongoing threat. Education on sexual abuse might lessen the behavior of predators because their targeted victims will no longer be vulnerable and because they will have learned what to do in school. They will have tools and confidence and awareness.

I truly do not wish any parent or child in the State of Hawaii to experience the pain that my granddaughter experienced made worse by my lack of knowledge which was passed down from my own parents who never spoke about sex. We have a new generation of little girls and little boys that need adults to look out for them and to take this chance now to educate, heal and protect the keiki of Hawaii.

What can I do to reach out to my granddaughter? I can support Erin’s Law.

What can all the parents, educators, courts and legislators do for Hawaii’s keiki? They can support SB2368 Erin’s Law.

Thank you for this opportunity to try and make something positive out of a tragedy.

Melisse Malone

Safe Keiki Project

Maui, Hawaii



February 23, 2018

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilber Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

**LATE**

RE: SB 2368 SD1 Relating to Education  
Hearing: Friday, February 23, 2018, 11:00 a.m., Room 211

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus writes in support of sb 2368 SD1 Relating to Education. Given the high incidence of sexual abuse perpetrated against minors, it is important that children and young people be taught the knowledge and skills necessary to protect themselves against sexual violence and obtain help to end abuse as quickly as possible. Moreover, it is critical that those who interact the most with children and young people, including parents, other guardians, educators and school staff, receive sufficient training to understand issues of sexual violence and respond appropriately.

Laws requiring that public school systems implement a program of regular, consistent sexual abuse prevention education for students, teacher and staff training, and parental involvement, have passed in 31 states and the Territory of Guam, and have been introduced in the legislatures of 17 others.

These laws and the programs they would create represent a national trend in safety, health and wellbeing education, and are collectively referred to as "Erin's Law" after Erin Merryn, an Illinois survivor of child sexual abuse who has led the national movement for required programs for child sexual abuse prevention and education.

Especially with our current knowledge of numerous elite athletes being sexually abused as children, it is clear that Hawai'i must ensure that every student in a State school receives the education needed to prevent sexual violence and to protect themselves, and to engage parents, guardians, teachers and school staff in building a system for appropriately responding to sexual violence.

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus is a catalyst for progressive, social, economic, and political change through action on critical issues facing Hawaii's women and girls. We ask the committee to pass this bill and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.