



THE 2022 LEGISLATURE: LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

The Kukui Center houses a variety of programs that provide a continuum of services to vulnerable children and families. In the following pages, they share the impact of some of the measures that were passed this session.

This was a good year at the Legislature for health and human services. With unprecedented funds available, helping our most vulnerable citizens was among the priorities. A significant amount was provided to support individual programs through Grants in Aid, including three in the Kukui Center.

In addition to giving a shout out to the Legislature, it's also important to note that there are other and equally important sources of funds that support our children and families. Most Kukui Center programs are relatively small and without dedicated fund development staff. The Executive Directors must work with their boards of directors to bring in badly needed funds. So mahalo nui loa to private donors who spread their support among many organizations in the community, including those in the Kukui Center. We celebrate and appreciate the impact you have and the opportunities you provide.

There was a particularly key piece of legislation passed which will have a major impact on those we serve. There is no more important measure of how a society values its workers than through what we pay them. Long the state with the highest cost of living in the nation, we have been stuck for many years with a minimum wage of \$10.10/hour, among the lowest in the country. On October 1, it will rise to \$12 an hour. By comparison, California is currently at \$15 per hour. By the time we raise it to \$18 an hour in 2028, we will probably still be far behind in our workers' ability to earn a living wage.

What people earn is the key and root of so many of the problems that are addressed by Kukui Center programs. Whereas 42% of Hawaii families struggle to meet their everyday needs, the number of Kukui Center families are probably double that figure. One's income determines where you live (or if you have a home), the amount of time you have to devote to helping your children learn, if you can feed your family, if you can afford your own car, if you can access necessary medical care and the list goes on. Certainly, one's quality of life is directly impacted by your income.

It's a start but we need to do better.



Making Real Change

This legislative session Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies has been active and busy to say the least. Even though we didn't introduce our own legislation and bills this session, we supported numerous bills through the Hawaii Women's Coalition and the Women's Legislative Caucus.

Our advocacy and strategic support helped advance a number of issues important to and impacting women, mothers, birthing people, children and families. We supported bills around Title IX, rental discrimination, increasing the minimum wage, programs for women victims and their children, domestic violence, child and elder care. Many of these bills did not pass despite our collective efforts. However, we are proud to say that the Menstrual Equity Bill, to provide free menstrual products to public school students, and the Postpartum Coverage Bill, to increase postpartum coverage to from 6 weeks to 12 months for Medicaid recipients, both passed due to our efforts, support and collective collaboration.

Many battles are being continuously fought in the legislative session break that impact families. We continue to work on maternal health and family support as we follow and participate in meetings about Community Health workers and the inclusion of doulas as an integral part of the maternal-child continuum of care that should be covered by Medicaid. So for us the work is never done or on hiatus. Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies will do all we can to shift the narrative and do what is necessary for families to get the care and support they need.

*"So for us the work is
never done or on hiatus."*

Sunny Chen
Executive Director-HMHB



*Tanya Smith-Johnson, (2nd from the right) HMHB
Policy Director & Community Based Doula Program
Director*



SB 206 Equitable Access to Housing

The legislative session led to some major outcomes for housing and homeless services. Family Promise secured a \$200,000 grant-in-aid to support the creation of our homeless resource center for families. A number of bills were passed to increase affordable housing and resources for homeless services.

One that Family Promise was especially supportive of was SB206, related to rental discrimination. Beginning May 1, 2023 landlords will no longer be able to discriminate against Section 8 vouchers or permanent supportive housing vouchers. We have all seen the rental postings online with a bold, "No Section 8" statement across the bottom. Honolulu is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the US that still allows this practice. SB206 will change that, ensuring that voucher recipients are able to equitably access housing. Our community has seen an increase in housing assistance vouchers in recent years, but many have struggled to find landlords willing to accept these vouchers.

This is progress. Let's advocate for continued progress on resources to help families experiencing housing instability not just survive in Hawaii, but thrive!





Hawaii Literacy Launches Digital Literacy Program

The economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated a need to diversify Hawaii's economy beyond tourism. The pandemic has also shown the importance of digital literacy, particularly as applied to distance learning, telehealth appointments, and working from home.

The state of Hawaii found that the economic disruption has increased the focus on computer science education as a key driver of both economic growth and digital literacy and would help to diversify Hawaii's economy away from tourism and into other technological fields. A new bill SB242 was passed. The purpose of this Act is to improve digital literacy throughout the State by further increasing computer science education offerings at public schools.

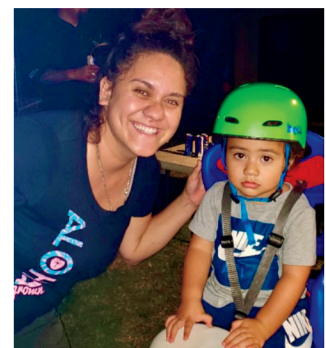
To address this issue for adults, Hawaii Literacy joined the Workforce Resiliency Initiative to reach the goal of connecting 100,000 people to opportunities to develop digital skills. The addition of this partnership to existing programs will help the 1 in 6 adults to reach a basic level of digital and traditional literacy to ensure they can participate in the initiative. We've created a digital literacy model to focus on connectivity, culturally informed digital skills training, and access to technology that can be scaled to public housing sites and other organizations that serve low literacy adults.

Parents Rally at the Legislature

This legislative session, parents of children who receive special education in their public schools rallied together opposing a Bill introduced in the House and Senate. This Bill targeted parents who harass school personnel and interfere with school operations by flooding schools with phone calls and sending disgruntled emails, to the point of impeding staff work performance and causing undue stress. The language in draft 2 of HB2125 suggested that the passion of parents speaking up on behalf of their children "with intent to impede the government operations of an educational worker" was such that Keith Hayashi, HDOE Superintendent and Risk Manager Russell Suzuki, in the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaii Affairs hearing held on February 24, 2022, cited special education parents specifically as the reason. The special education community was enraged.

LDAH, parents of children with disabilities and other provider organizations provided testimony to the Senate Committee on Education on March 23rd. Before the hearing started, Senator Michelle Kidani, committee chair announced that HB 2125, HD2 would not pass the committee. Overwhelming applause and gratitude of thanks resonated throughout the room.

LDAH has since tried to meet with Superintendent Hayashi to discuss how we can work together for the future of parent and school relationships, only to be turned away. It took six phone calls and finally an email from the Director of Special Education asking to meet.





Kids Hurt Too Hawaii Offering Trauma-Informed Care to Schools

The Legislature passed HB 1322 relating to Trauma-Informed Care, which defines adverse childhood experiences as ‘a variety of traumatic experiences that occur during childhood.’ There are two specific experiences claimed in the bill that have direct correlation to the work of Kids Hurt Too Hawaii, including 1) Incarceration of a household member, and 2) separation or divorce involving household members.

Traumatic experiences early in life can have a profound effect on a child’s developing brain and body. If not treated properly, traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence can impair concentration, memory, academic performance, and increase the risk for developing disease and other poor health conditions through adulthood.

To protect children from the adverse effects of trauma, children need supportive and stable relationships with families, caregivers, and other important adults in their life. The bill claims that the ‘influence of a stable non-relative adult can provide the resilience needed to mitigate a child with high adverse childhood experiences.’

KHTH has taken action by offering in-school programs that provide peer support groups for children coping with trauma brought about by loss and/or separation from one or both parents. The program is called Kahua ‘O Mali’o, meaning ‘Place of Light and Comfort,’ with their first program out of Nanaikaipono Elementary School. By expanding services to schools, KHTH’s support groups can reach more children and families that are unable to make the commute to the Kukui Center.



Moving Forward Together: Providing Access and Stability



For many program participants, day to day living is uncertain, needs can quickly outweigh supports. The opportunity for consistent access to resources is a welcome oasis. In the recent legislative session, HB2510, increasing the minimum wage and tip credit, and SB2821, securing free access to menstrual products for all public-school students, go a long way to reducing stress and making life more manageable.

The large majority of our participants are newly entering the work force. Unlike many of their peers, these young people are living independently without the consistent financial and social support of family. With rising costs for housing and daily expenses like food and gas, a higher base pay helps make ends meet and saving for the future possible. Hopefully, this may allow our younger generation to stay or return to the islands.

For school-age participants, inconsistent support and resources can affect access to basic hygiene needs. Without consistent access to menstrual supplies, youth often experience attendance problems, affecting academic achievement, higher stress, and even social trauma. This simple act provides much needed relief and support. Hale Kipa also participates with the Ma`i Movement, providing menstrual products to participants who may be experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

OUR PROGRAMS NEED YOUR HELP 5



The agencies at the Kukui Center need the following goods and services for the vulnerable children and families that they serve. If you can help in anyway, please contact Marlene at mamong@kukuicenter.org.

Mahalo Nui Loa

KIDS HURT TOO HAWAII

- See thru Plastic Bins
- Air Purifier
- Gift Cards for Lunch
- Shredder
- Volunteer to digitize/scan documents

HALE KIPA

- New tablets & laptops
- Working Condition Microwaves, New Pillow Cases, Sheets, Furniture

HEALTHY MOTHERS HEALTHY BABIES

- New GRACO Pack 'n Play Travel Cribs
- Folding Chairs
- Gift Cards for Lunch
- Shredder

LEADERSHIP IN DISABILITIES & ACHIEVEMENT IN HAWAII

- Gift Cards & School Supplies
- Volunteer Graphic Artist
- Volunteer AV Tech to help with virtual conferences

HAWAII IMMIGRANT JUSTICE CENTER

- Volunteers to assist the elderly & disabled families move into housing

HAWAII LITERACY

- Locally Published Books for Keiki (new or gently used)
- School Supplies & Back Packs
- See thru Plastic Bins
- Shredder

The agencies also need translators in Korean, Chuukese, and Marshallese.

6 COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



SODERHOLM BUS AND MOBILITY WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Several years ago, Erik Soderholm, President of Soderholm Bus and Mobility, visited the Kukui Center with fellow members of the Honolulu Rotary Club for a Paul Harris event. This is an opportunity for club members to learn about the workplaces and organizations that the members are involved with. The event was hosted by Jack Dwyer, President of the Kukui Children's Foundation and Judy Lind, its' Executive Director.

Following a tour of the center, Erik approached Judy and asked if we could use a handicapped accessible van. This very generous offer resulted in the donation of a bus to Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii (LDAH) which they are using to screen children for vision hearing and developmental disabilities.

A few months ago, Erik again approached Judy with an offer of help, this time the donation of a wheelchair accessible van for a needy family with a handicapped child. LDAH had the perfect family who had a great need for a van to transport their child and was thrilled to receive this wonderful gift.



Gus Soderholm presenting van keys to Ginger

"Hello Gus, Thank you again for donating the van to my family. I'm still in disbelief. Yesterday, Tre' enjoyed his ride home! He sat quietly, looking out both sides of the window, enjoying the scenery. I'm excited to have the van when we go to Tre's appointment this week. I can't thank you all enough! Mahalo, Ginger"



Ginger with son, Tre'

Mahalo Palena 'Ole

Gratitude Beyond Measure to our 2022 Community Partners for your continued support of goods and services. With Aloha, the Staff and Agencies at the Kukui Center

Partnerships for Donations of Services

Ace Security & Locksmith
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The Bead Gallery
The CPA Collective
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Watumull Fund
Na Lei Aloha Foundation
Women's League of Central Union Church
Ekkebus Charitable Foundation

Partnerships for Donations of Goods

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Big City Diner
CS Wo & Sons
Assn. Legal Administrators
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Kirk Hovious
Islander Group
Junior League Sustainers
Servco Pacific
Soderholm Bus and Mobility
Soldat Construction
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Hawaii Youth Services Network
Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority
Luke Center for Public Service
Nanakuli Housing Corporation
Seymour Kazimirski
Waikiki Community Center Seniors
Winners Camp Foundation

Aloha,

If you know of any individuals,
businesses, or organizations that can
offer their support and interested in
joining our Community Partners

Program, please email
mamong@kukuicenter.org.

Mahalo nui loa!



Summer 2022
Harry and Jeanette Weinberg
Kukui Center

A gathering place for those who serve vulnerable children and families

**245 North Kukui Street - #103
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817**

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www.familypromisehawaii.org

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAII

Legal services for immigrant victims
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KIDS HURT TOO HAWAII

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Literacy & lifelong learning services
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HEALTHY MOTHERS HEALTHY BABIES

COALITION OF HAWAII

Advocacy & direct services for pregnant
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HALE KIPA

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