

P.O. Box 1501
Hilo, Hawaii 96721
(808) 933-1534

**TESTIMONY OF
JONAH KAWIKA KERR**

Aloha kakou!

Aloha, my name is Jonah Kawika Kerr and I am twenty-four years old. I was born and raised in Hawaii. I've spent eleven years of my life on Kauai and the remainder here in Hilo.

I've been employed with the Hawaii State Department of Human Services Social Services Division for the past two years. I am a Social Worker for the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Unit 36. I am giving this testimony based on the experiences gained working in this field.

It saddens me to see the amount of Hawaiian children in our foster-care system. These children are victims not only of an abusive environment growing up but also of a Child Welfare Services System that is not culturally sensitive to the various races and ethnicity's found here in Hawaii. It is very important to help these Hawaiian children now in their greatest time of need so that they will someday be able to return the favor and help preserve our quickly diminishing Hawaiian culture. It would be wise to create a foster-care system that will help Hawaiian children identify with their culture.

By doing this we can not only teach them about our ancestors past morals and beliefs but we can also help them get out our foster-care system which will in turn keep their children out of this very same system. In time, if we take the proper steps and procedures we can drastically reduce the amount of Hawaiian children in foster-care, which will allow them to concentrate on rebuilding our culture instead of falling into the stereotype of it.

Mahalo a nui loa for your time and consideration of this testimony.