**HAWAI`I STATE - COMMISSION ON FATHERHOOD (HS-COF)**

**Friday, March 15, 2024**

**Time:  10:00 am**

**Location**: Queen Liliuokalani Building, 1390 Miller St, Conference Room **2F**, Honolulu. Virtual access to meeting via **Zoom** - Meeting ID #**876 5720 3038** / Password: **Fathers**

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87657203038?pwd=MlZOejU3VS9iRWVwNG1ZRWhLM1ZpQT09

Zoom waiting room will be open 5-15 minutes prior to meeting start time.

**MISSION Statement, read by Commissioner Esmond (1:32-1:55)**

**[From** Chapter 577E, Hawaii Revised Statutes**] The mission of the Hawaii State - Commission on Fatherhood (HS-COF) is to promote healthy family relationships by emphasizing the importance of fathers in the lives of their children. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity to state agencies and makes recommendations on programs, services, contracts, policies, and laws relating to children and families.**

**I. Rollcall, Introductions and Updates (0:54- 16:49):**

**Commissioners Present:**

(All from 10:04 am-12:52pm)

* Jeff Esmond, Chair
* Kawika Mattos
* Allen Cardines
* Brian Alston
* Marty Oliphant

**Commissioners Absent**

* Alan Sunio

**Ex-officios Present:**

* Mimari Hall, DHS

**Sunshine Law Monitors:**

* Deputy Erin Yamashiro

**Guests Present:**

* Neel Chauhan
* Mel Rapozo
* Brandon Shing
* Derek Kahalekai
* Kev Thompson
* Steve Pasanka
* Ashley Boutte
* Jed Tesoro

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond makes a motion to move Section V to follow Section II with the expectation that commissioners stay online until after approving the awards, and allowing up to 4 minutes per public testimony, seconded by Commissioner Mattos, unanimously approved (23:00)**

**II. Community shares or concerns (26:51-)**

1. Mel Rapozo shares about SB3335-SD2 and asks the commission to take a position against the legalization of recreational marijuana. He expresses the reasons for his position, including the mental health crisis (shortage of providers/lack of access) in Kauai, 30% of marijuana users develop substance abuse disorders, medical costs, and that other council members/commissioners from states that legalized marijuana said that it led to worsened homeless, medical, and crime issues. Commissioner Esmond asks if there is a black market on Kauai and if there is already homelessness and crime, Mel Rapozo responds yes to both. Jed Tesoro asks about 90-day suspensions for kids caught with marijuana in school and how that impacts their ability to graduate. Mel Rapozo responds that even if marijuana is legalized it will not be legal for children. Rapozo continues that another danger of marijuana is that people are willing to try it just because it is legalized, even if they never would have tried it otherwise. (26:51-49:27)
2. Ashley Boutte shares the written testimony that she is submitting to the commission on their decision to oppose SB3335. In her testimony, she shares her personal connection to the subject regarding her cousin Marcus George, who was shot and killed during a marijuana deal. She continues to ask what morality the legislature sets for Hawaii’s youth if they legalize marijuana and concurs with the commission on the opposition of SB3335. Commissioner Cardines thanks Boutte for her testimony and mentions the “Pot Farm” Article sent by Mel Rapozo in the chat. Rapozo urges the commissioners to read the article before deciding and states he believes topics such as these are not being talked about by legislators who are focused on the economic benefits. Commissioner Esmond asks Boutte if it would be fair to assume there may not have been a gun at the transaction (with her cousin) if marijuana was legal. Boutte responds that she doesn’t think it matters if it’s legal or not, stating that “once you enter into a world, you’re in that world.” Rapozo responds that although legalizing marijuana would mean selling “clean” marijuana, it would be much more expensive to purchase at a dispensary than on the streets, meaning people would likely still default to purchasing marijuana illegally like Boutte’s cousin. Commissioner Esmond asks Rapozo about local police not pursuing charges for small amounts of marijuana and if that means its “all across the board,” or if there is a chance police will still target minority populations. Rapozo confirms that because it is not a jailable offense, typically officers will just write a ticket however, if a crime is committed and marijuana is found on the person, they will be charged for possession. Neel Chauhan asks if there is any evidence that legalizing marijuana would become a gateway for people to try other drugs, Rapozo references a formal County council member who spoke about how his gateway drug was marijuana but acknowledges that there are studies that come out with different responses. Commissioner Alston and Jed Tesoro agree that marijuana was a gateway drug for their friends and family. Commissioner Cardines says that 90% of the men coming out of prison that he works with say that marijuana was their gateway and argues that people don’t go to politicians when they get sick, so why should we listen to politicians when it comes to drug safety. Commissioner Esmond shares a text from Kev Thompson asking the commissioners to consider the root problem of why people feel the need to use marijuana and not just removing one conduit. Commissioner Cardines replies that we should utilize ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) to address the issues. Commissioner Oliphant agrees and states that regardless of what the commission votes for, there are still many more issues at play (49:28-1:24:06).

**V. Legislative Update (Vote) (1:24:07-)**

a. Act 156 Task Force on Parentage Laws

i. Commissioner Esmond updates the commission on the last Task Force meeting, the subject of which regards when a mother gives birth and does not know who the father is or has multiple people trying to claim being the father, who goes on the birth certificate. Commissioner Mattos shares his personal experience with adopting 2 children and states that he wishes the birth certificate listed both the birth parents and adoptive parents. (1:24:07-1:27:56)

b. Discussion of possible testimony on outstanding bills, including discussion on HS-COF position and form of testimony (1:27:57-)

i. SB3335 SD2 or corresponding House bill – Relating to Cannabis (1:27:57-)

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves that the Hawaii State Commission on Fatherhood prepares and submits testimony in opposition to what is currently SB3335-SD2 or the corresponding House Bill, with the intent to submit testimony at the next hearing, seconded by Commissioner Mattos, approved 4-1.**

1. Commissioner Esmond shares the written testimony prepared; Commissioner Mattos asks to add that fathers cannot father in a healthy manner if they are struggling with addiction.

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves to insert the line “the HS-COF works to promote healthy family relationships by emphasizing the importance of fathers in the lives of their children; legalizing marijuana will undermine this effort”, seconded by Commissioner Oliphant, unanimously approved (1:52:08).**

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves that the HS-COF will do it’s best to present the testimony in person and to have as many commissioners present as possible, seconded by Commissioner Oliphant, unanimously approved (1:58:17)**

*(Note: Recess called by Commissioner Esmond from 1:58:45-2:02:10)*

ii. HB2757 HD1 or corresponding Senate bill - Paid Family Leave (2:02:11-2:09:42)

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves that the HS-COF will support HB2757-HD1, seconded by Commissioner Alston, 4-1 approved (2:07:26)**

1. Commissioner Cardines raises his concern that there may be unintended consequences. He cites the minimum wage raise, which ended up burdening some businesses.

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves that the HS-COF will submit the testimony as is with a minor editing correction of grammar, seconded by Commissioner Alston, unanimously approved (2:09:03).**

iii. HB2802 HD1 or corresponding Senate bill - Proposing an Amendment to Article 1, Section 23, of the Hawaii Constitution Relating to Marriage (2:09:43-2:17:23)

1. Commissioner Esmond shares the written testimony in support of the bill, stating that the “HS-COF believes that children of all married couples in Hawai’i should have the confidence that their parent’s marriage will not be threatened by the legislature’s right to define marriage to opposite-sex couples only, should Federal law change and the legislature should have this opportunity.”

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves that the HS-COF will support HB2802-HD1, seconded by Commissioner Mattos, 3-2 approved (2:12:52).**

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves that the HS-COF will support the testimony as written, seconded by Commissioner Mattos, 3-2 approved (2:13:55).**

iv. HB1775 HD1 or corresponding Senate bill – Universal Free Lunch (2:17:24-2:20:07)

1. Commissioner Esmond shares the written testimony in support of the bill, stating that, “The Hawaii State Commission supports HB1775 HD1 (or corresponding Senate bill) and believes that universal free school breakfast and lunches would benefit keiki in such need and also allow parents or caregivers the assurance that their children are able to eat in school.” The commissioners discuss that for many children in need/whose families are on government assistance, their only meals come from school and Commissioners Cardines and Alston respectively express their strong support for this bill.

**Vote: Commissioner Oliphant moves to approve the written testimony in support of HB1775 HD1, seconded by Commissioner Mattos, unanimously approved (2:19:46).**

v. HB1777 HD1 or corresponding Senate bill – School Based Oral Health (2:20:08-2:24:53)

1. Commissioner Esmond shares the written testimony in support of HB1777 HD1, stating that the commission “believes that because access to oral health care is limited from some keiki, this bill would increase such access with the goal of reducing tooth decay in Hawaii’s children.” The bill would bring dental care into schools and increase availability of dental care.

2. Commission Esmond agrees to table the discussion/vote until next meeting pending further research about what the dental care entails as “applying sealant” is mentioned in the bill description.

**III. Member Updates (2:25:54-)**

1. Community shares or concerns
	1. *This agenda has no item III, a.*
2. Ex-officio updates (2:25:54-2:26:08)
	1. Mimari Hall shares that Director Betts will be stepping down at the end of April and new Director Yamane will be taking office as of May 1. She continues that they are still in a legislative session and DHS continues to build and provide Maui wildfire survivors support through various programs.
3. Commissioner Updates (2:26:09-)
	1. Commissioner Esmond mentions the 2024 Keiki Rainbow Run on 4/20/24 @Kaka’ako Waterfront Park, Honolulu. It is a child-friendly event to raise money and give back to public schools. (2:26:09-2:27:35)
	2. Commissioner Mattos shares that Maui Family Support Services has been asked to hold men’s support group meetings in response to the rise of suicides and domestic violence in Lahaina in regard to the wild fires. (2:27:36-2:30:20)

**IV. Ongoing Business and Updates (2:30:21-2:41:27)**

1. Community shares or concerns - Public Testimony (allow 1 minute)
	1. *This agenda has no item IV, a.*

b. Annual Awards – Review of applications, process, scheduling, and outreach

i. Aloha Father of the Year Awards

a. Commissioner Esmond shares that he delayed the deadline until May 3, 2024

1. Commissioner Esmond mentions that in the past, each commissioner goes out and looks for applicants/recipients of the father of the year award and strongly encourages the commissioners to be very familiar with the quality of the recipient in case of interview.

ii. Parent-Friendly Business of the Year Award

* + 1. Commissioner Esmond shares that he delayed the deadline until May 3, 2024
		2. Commissioner Esmond states that he will try hard to find a business with parent-friendly policies.

iii. Sponsorship Awards

1. Commissioner Esmond shares that the deadline is set for April 10, 2024 and discussion on April 19, 2024.

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond makes a blanket motion to approve all three applications with the updated deadlines, seconded by Commissioner Mattos, unanimously approved (2:41:24)**

c. Periodic Newsletter (2:41:28-2:44:01)

a. Commissioner Esmond introduces the newsletter and Commissioner Alston shares the commission’s intent to release a newsletter every 3 months or so and the basic sections of the first newsletter, titled *Father Hunger*.

**Vote: Commissioner Esmond moves to accept the first newsletter and make appropriate edits for timing and for awards, seconded by Commissioner Oliphant, unanimously approved (2:43:54)**

**VII. Upcoming Meetings (2:44:02-2:44:37)**

1. Next Meetings
2. April 19, 2024
3. May 17, 2024
4. June 21, 2024

**IX. Conclusion (2:44:38-)**

1. Final Thoughts
	1. Commissioner Alston and Commissioner Cardines thank Commissioner Esmond for his work, his research, and effort. Commissioner Cardines suggests that Commissioner Mattos share about ACEs next meeting. Commissioner Mattos praises Commissioner Esmond for stepping into the role of chair.
2. Vote to Adjourn

**Adjourn: Commissioner Esmond moves to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Cardines, unanimously approved at 12:52 pm (2:48:27).**