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

**Friday, May 16, 2025**

**Time: 10:00 AM**

**Location**: Queen Liliuokalani Building, 1390 Miller St, Honolulu

Department of Human Services Human Resources Conference Room, Room 1 and 2

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.

**Link to Recording:** [**https://youtu.be/LAIybdrABbM**](https://youtu.be/LAIybdrABbM)

**Call to Order: 10:03 AM**

**MISSION Statement: read by Commissioner Esmond (0:21-0:42)**

## [From [Chapter 577E,](https://capitolwebsite.azurewebsites.net/sessions/session2017/HRS-Chapter-PDF%27s/HRS_0577E.pdf) Hawaii Revised Statutes] The mission of the Hawaii State - Commission on Fatherhood ([HS-COF](https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/fatherhood/)) 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.

1. Introductions and Roll Call (0:00-8:21)
   1. Chair Jeff Esmond (Oahu) – Introductory Comments and Conduct Reminder
   2. Fatherhood Commissioners (voting members, by seniority)
      1. Alan Sunio (Hawai’i Coalition for Dads)
      2. Allen Cardines (Oahu)
      3. Brian Alston (Kauai)
      4. Marty Oliphant, Vice Chair (Oahu)
      5. Mark Augustine (Maui)
   3. Ex-Officio(s) or their designees (non-voting members) and Updates
      1. Director of Human Services, Jon Kimura
      2. Director of Health, Wendy Nihoa
      3. Executive Director Office of Youth Services, Leanne Gillespie
   4. Deputy Attorneys General for Sunshine Law issues
2. Lili Young
3. Erin Yamashiro
   1. Administrative Assistant – Devyn Goo
   2. Guests
4. Representative Marcus Oshiro
5. Steve Evans, Executive Director of Boys to Men Hawaii
6. Legislative Update (8:22-45:40)
   1. Guest Speaker – Former Representative Marcus Oshiro – Gambling, casinos and recreational marijuana bills in the 2026 legislative session (no specific bills attached to this agenda or for discussion)
7. Commissioner Cardines introduces Former Representative Marcus Oshiro, who is in the opposition of legalizing gambling and substances such as marijuana for both medical and recreational use. He urges the commissioners to engage in the State Legislature on the topics of gambling, casinos, and recreational marijuana bills during the 2026 legislative session by speaking to other representatives and government leaders in the following 8-10 months. He states that HB 1246, the recreational marijuana bill, will be returning in the 2026 legislative session. Oshiro informs the commission that HB 1308, relating to sports wagering, is still alive and well and that SCR 121, requesting department of business, economic development, and tourism, is closely related to gaming. He urges everyone to participate in these meetings to oppose the legalization of gambling (8:22-18:55).
8. Commissioner Alston asks what role education can play beyond the legislation that would educate new legislators. Oshiro answers that an organization called ‘Stop Predatory Gambling’ previously published information to inform policy makers/legislators on the dangers and effects on substances and addiction (18:56-20:35).
9. Commissioner Augustine shares his personal experience within his family members who have suffered from gambling addiction. Oshiro answers that there is a need for a new form of governing, and that the states who legalized gambling have not experienced a decrease in black market gambling. He also argues that legalizing medical marijuana allows youth to believe that it is medicine and safe to use (20:36-24:44).
10. Commissioner Cardines comments that they work closely with law enforcement, ex-gang members, and ex-drug dealers who have stated that they will not stop selling drugs or shut down gambling rooms even if marijuana use and gambling are legalized (24:45-25:56) .
11. Steve Evans comments that the public may be ignorant to the dangers of substances and gambling and will likely be more ignorant if it is legalized (25:57-27:47).
12. Commissioner Esmond comments that gambling has come up for decades and recreational marijuana has come up in the past two years. He asks if Hawaii is heading into a direction where legalization is possible regardless of opposition. Oshiro says that most people are not educated and are ignorant to the risks of legalization on gambling and substances, and that has led to a lot of support for both bills. Commissioner Esmond asks if a commissioner took an approach on opposing the bill, could they also request that something be added to the bill. Oshiro responds that usually a compromise can be reached. Commissioner Esmond comments that he has noticed vaping is out of control in schools and Oshiro comments that vaping marijuana, or “dap pens” are the most common for children to try marijuana (27:48-36:07).
13. Commissioner Augustine likens the legalization of gambling to stealing Hawaiian land again and feels that this should be promoted more. He also feels that it is directly correlated to sex trafficking. Oshiro comments that Hawaii has some of the highest rates of sex trafficking, specifically children (36:08-39:23).
    1. Commissioner Update - Legislative Update by Commissioner Alston (39:24-45:40)
14. Commissioner Alston shares that the legislative priorities this year were housing, education, health/human services, economic stability, justice and equity. 3,000 bills were introduced with fewer than 15% remaining active and just 44 passing both houses. He concludes that the commission can help by acting as local champions, policy advocates, and community connectors.
15. Community shares or concerns (45:41-48:41):
    1. Commissioner Updates (seniority order) and Community Outreach (up to 5 minutes each)
       1. Commissioner Cardines – Be a Hero to Your Children and Community Gathering on 5/19/25
16. Commissioner Cardines shares that 90 community leaders and guest speakers such as former HPD members and representatives will be coming together to the gathering. He hopes that it will help to address current issues and will be working with Adult and Teen Oahu PacWest to strengthen men and fathers.
17. Current Fiscal Year Initiatives (48:42-
    1. Annual Awards – marketing, outreach, press release and updates (48:42-1:02:48)
       * 1. Commissioner Esmond states that on June 7, 2025, the awards will be presented on Maui at the Celebration of Fathers & Families Event. Commissioner Alston shares that there will be an event in Kauai. Commissioner Sunio suggests having the mayor do a proclamation for the awards and offers to reach out. Commissioner Esmond also suggests the Governor’s office. Commissioner Cardines agrees with reaching out to the mayor to see what the availability looks like, and the commissioners agree that after the next meeting in June is ideal timing.
    2. Periodic Newsletter – Commissioner Alston – Summer 2025 Draft (1:02:49-1:13:51)
18. Commissioner Alston shares his draft of the Summer 2025 newsletter, focusing on fatherhood and trauma as well as legislative session highlights. Commissioner Esmond suggests passing off the draft to administrative assistant to work on formatting.
    1. Outreach Events (1:13:52-1:36:55)
       1. Commissioners Esmond and Augustine discuss the possibility of doing handouts at the [Maui Family Support Services, Inc.](https://mfss.org/) – 18th Annual Celebration of Fathers & Families on June 7, 2025. Commissioner Esmond shares that due to fiscal year ending, it is unlikely that a large purchase will be approved and suggests handing out candy and getting reimbursed for that smaller purchase. Devyn Goo clarifies that there is no guarantee for reimbursement since the budget memo was already submitted but commissioners are welcome to still submit receipts (1:13:52-1:26:19).

ii. Commissioner Esmond expresses frustration for issues with a previously rejected receipt/reimbursement request and that it seems impossible to make a purchase that comes up in the months of May or June which are our busiest months due to the proximity of Father’s Day and our awards. Devyn clarifies that it was rejected due to procurement issues and late submittal, as well as the fiscal year timeline, which ends in June. (Note from Chair: The request was requested to be paid out of the current fiscal year based on receipts in June of the prior fiscal year. Chair Esmond strongly disagrees with the reasoning that was provided to him about the rejection as this reasoning was not applied for other submissions.) Commissioner Esmond asks for clarification on the current year regarding Commissioner Augustine’s plans to purchase candy and get reimbursed. Devyn clarifies that he can still submit the receipt, however reimbursement is not guaranteed as all purchases and reimbursements taking place after April 30th needed to be included on the memorandum, which was already sent out (1:32:43-1:35:46).

* + 1. Periodic online gathering of fatherhood commissioners nationwide

i. Commissioner Alston reminds the commissioners of the plans for quarterly online gatherings of other fatherhood commissioners nationwide with the intent of sharing what each commission is up to. He suggests meeting with one other commissioner to plan out details in order to abide by Sunshine Law. He currently plans to rotate sponsors each quarter and states that this will allow for alignment between commissioners (1:26:20-1:32:42)

* + 1. Fatherhood Commission Luncheon (1:35:47-1:36:55)

i. Commissioner Esmond suggests tabling this topic until next meeting.

1. Ongoing Business and Updates
   1. Community shares or concerns - Public Testimony (allow 1 minute)
   2. Trauma Informed Training planning (1:36:56-1:41:04)
2. Commissioner Esmond shares that the tentative scheduled date is August 22nd with plans to take place at the Hawaii State Capitol meeting room with the following schedule: the commission meeting, followed by lunch for Commissioners only (Note from Chair: to be determined but lunch also for presenters, ex-officios and DHS attendees), then the Trauma Informed Training event.
   1. Professional Development (1:41:05-1:48:17)
      1. [Question, Persuade and Refer Suicide Prevention Certification Training](https://fathersandfamiliescoalition.org/programs.html) presented by Fathers and Families Coalition of America (5/14/25)– report
3. Commissioner Esmond and Alston attended the training, although Commissioner Alston ended up experiencing technical difficulties. Commissioner Esmond sums up the training that suicide is a solution to a perceived unsolved problem and that suicide itself is not the problem. He adds that QPR helps by questioning/finding the problem, persuading them to get help, and refer them to help. Commissioner Alston adds that it was emphasized during the training to ask very straightforward if someone struggling is considering suicide. He finds that there is currently an emphasis on the value that we have to each other.
   * 1. Hawai‘i Early Childhood State Plan Community Engagement Forum (5/15/25)
4. Commissioner Esmond shares that due to scheduling conflicts, he, along with Commissioner Alston were unable to attend. He states that a summary of the meeting should be provided soon for the commissioners to speak about next meeting (1:48:18-1:48:54).
   1. Commissioner position update (1:48:55-1:49:50)
5. Commissioner Esmond shares that there is one outstanding applicant from Oahu, who should be joining the commission as an interim commissioner by July 1st.
   1. Officer nominations and elections (1:49:51-1:50:39)
6. Commissioner Esmond shares that he is stepping down as chair as of June 30th. He shares that he feels he has fulfilled his objectives as transitionary chair and getting the commission’s administrative support. He states that elections will be held in the July meeting.
7. Upcoming Meetings (1:50:40-1:50:52)
   * 1. June 20, 2025 (DHS, Room 2F)
     2. Remaining 2025 meetings (7/18, 8/22, 9/19, 10/17, 11/21, 12/19)
8. Conclusion (Vote)
9. Commissioner Sunio shares that he has reached out to the mayor’s office and that they will get back to him. He also shares that he contacted a friend who may be able to create commission stickers for the Maui event. Commissioner Alston thanks Commissioner Esmond for his leadership as chair. Commissioner Cardines asks Commission Sunio to keep in touch regarding communication with the mayor’s office and thanks the commission and well as Commissioner Esmond for his role as chair (1:50:53-1:54:29).

**Adjourn: Commissioner Esmond moves to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Augustine, unanimously approved 11:57 pm.**