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

**Friday, June 20, 2025**

**Time: 11:00 AM**

**Location**: Queen Liliuokalani Building, 1390 Miller St, 2nd Floor, 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/NrlH\_KMEY0M?si=2fIvDOqCROI1w00z**](https://youtu.be/NrlH_KMEY0M?si=2fIvDOqCROI1w00z)

**Call to Order: 11:05 AM**

**MISSION Statement** read by Commissioner Cardines (1:20-1:50)

**[**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 (0:00-14:03)
   1. Chair Jeff Esmond (Oahu)
   2. Fatherhood Commissioners (voting members, by seniority)
      1. Allen Cardines (Oahu)
      2. Brian Alston (Kauai)
      3. Marty Oliphant, Vice Chair (Oahu)
      4. Neel Chauhan (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, Matthew Shim
      3. Executive Director Office of Youth Services, Leanne Gillespie
   4. Deputy Attorneys General for Sunshine Law issues
      1. Lili Young
      2. Erin Yamashiro
   5. Administrative Assistant
      1. Devyn Goo
   6. Guests
      1. Steve Evans, Director of Boys to Men Mentoring
2. Community shares or concerns (14:04-52:19):
   1. Commissioner Esmond acknowledges Juneteenth and Pride month, adding his personal experiences being part of the LGBTQ+ community as well as the challenges that can come with fatherhood. He adds that the National Suicide Hotline is being shut down but says that the Trevor Project should be added to the commission website as a resource (14:04-19:21).
   2. Guest Speaker- Geena Thielen – The Transgender Parent Experience (19:22-52:19)

Geena begins her presentation by acknowledging the misconception that transgender people change genders, and clarifies that transgender were born with an incongruence between body and gender, and how that is adjusted or dealt with is different from individual to individual. She says that 2 weeks ago, she and her wife renewed their vows, something that she did not believe was possible 18 months ago. She shares that she had a public life, as a man and a secret life that she tried to keep hidden, living in perpetual fear. She also shares about her diagnosis of cancer and how it led to her reflecting on her gender truth. She shares feeling unable to come out fully, as she felt she needed to be a father. In March 2024, she finally came out to her children, and 15 months later, they walked her down the aisle for her vow renewal. She concludes that she is a wife, daughter, sister, aunty and dad, and that while she is not sure why she kept the male title of “Dad”, she is both a woman and a dad (19:22-29:27).

* + 1. Commissioner Augustine relates his experiences as a father and wanting to be a protector of his children as well as the struggles of fatherhood (29:28-34:20).
    2. Commissioner Alston thanks Geena for sharing her story, and that he is at a conference about storytelling. He says that part of this conference is giving people the safe space and tools to be able to tell their difficult stories and that this has been a very appropriate setting to hear Geena’s story (34:21-37:06).
    3. Commissioner Chauhan thanks Thielen for her story and asks which part of her story was most challenging for her. Geena responds that overcoming her own sense of self-loathing was the hardest part, attributing it to being the reason she stayed closeted for so long (37:06-19:15).
    4. Commissioner Esmond relates to the use of the term “purging” from Geena’s story and thanks her for her vulnerability (39:34-40:41).
    5. Commissioner Oliphant thanks Geena for sharing her story and thanks the commissioners for having an open mind. He adds that we are lucky to live in Hawaii and agrees that everyone’s story is different (40:42-42:32).
    6. Commissioner Esmond acknowledges Leanne Gillespie’s comment, and Gillespie shares her experience with having her son come out as gay, stating that although she and her husband had known for a long time, it took her son a while to come out. She shares that for a while, she grieved her perception of what the future may have been and how that is part of the acceptance process. Geena relates with the concept of grieving, and how she has made space for the people in her life to grieve an expectation they may have had. Commissioner Esmond responds that grief is also important to those coming out who also grieve a life they thought they might have and for the parents of those coming out (42:33-49:36).
    7. Commissioner Cardines emphasizes Ohana, aloha spirit, and acceptance in Hawaii culture as well as the importance of creating a safe space as a Commission and as individuals. He thanks Geena for sharing her story (49:37-52:19.

1. Current Fiscal Year Initiatives (54:09-1:24:50)
   1. Annual Awards – marketing, outreach, press release and updates (54:09-)
      1. Aloha Father of the Year Awards (52:09-59:29)
         1. Commissioner Esmond shares that three of the awards have been given out and that plans still need to be made to get the others out. Commissioner Alston shares that he presented one award to Damon Ines on Kauai. Commissioner Cardines shares that he presented another award to Ed Warner during a church service, who advocates for safer roads after his son was killed by a drunk driver. Commissioner Esmond shares that he presented the third award to James Maina’aupo, a stroke survivor and participant at KEY Project.
      2. Parent-Friendly Business of the Year Award (59:30-1:00:39)
         1. Commissioner Esmond shares that the recipient is on Kauai and asks Commissioner Alston if there is a plan on presenting the award. Commissioner Alston shares that his plan is to call the recipient and how they might want to be awarded.
      3. Sponsorship Awards (1:00:40-1:15:30)
         1. Commissioner Esmond shares photos from the Sponsorship awards for Adult and Teen Challenge PacWest, Nanaikapono Church, and Maui Family Support Services. Commissioner Augustine shares his photos of the Maui Family Support Services 18th Annual Celebration of Fathers and Families event and shares that the event had over 500 registrants and reflects on some of the event highlights. He also shares that the Aloha Father of the Year nominee was not present to receive his trophy (1:00:04-1:12:53).
         2. Commissioner Alston thanks former Commissioner Mattos and Commissioners Oliphant and Augustine for their contributions to the event (1:12:54-1:13:25)
         3. Commissioner Oliphant shares his experience at the event, reflecting that the commission table had many visitors. He also shares his personal connection to Maui and how it is a special place to him. Commissioner Esmond thanks him for attending on the commission’s behalf and says he will be in touch to arrange for the Aloha Father of the Year nominee to be awarded this year (1:13:26-1:15:30).
      4. Update on presentation of awards (1:15:31)
         1. Oahu
            1. Update on Mayor’s Office (1:15:31-1:15:55)

Commissioner Esmond shares that Commissioner Sunio expressed that he has had difficulties reaching out to Mayor’s Office. Commissioner Cardines adds that he is also in the process of contacting the mayor for other things, but he will also add in the commission’s request when he reaches out.

* + - 1. Island of Hawai’i (1:15:56-1:18:41)
         1. Commissioner Alston shares that his idea is to have guest Steve Evans present the award on behalf of the commission. Commissioner Cardines adds that he will be meeting with the mayor with plans to fly out to Hawaii island and could also present the award as well.

V. Sponsorship Awards (continued) (1:19:01-1:21:13)

1. Commissioner Esmond shares a photo from Adult and Teen Challenge Oahu PacWest annual gala. Commissioner Cardines shares that the gala aims to raise funds to support men coming out of prison and in reintegration programs (1:19:01-1:20:35).

2. Commissioner Esmond shares a photo from the Children’s Discovery Center’s Father’s Day event, which included 2 days of free admission for fathers (1:20:36-1:21:13)

* 1. Periodic Newsletter – Commissioner Alston (1:21:14-1:24:00)
     1. Commissioner Esmond presents the draft of the Summer 2025 periodic newsletter. Commissioner Alston thanks Commissioner Esmond and admin assistant Devyn Goo for their support in putting the newsletter together, which focuses on fatherhood and trauma, in light of the Commission’s future training with the Office of Wellness and Resiliency. He also highlights the new spotlight section, which focuses on Commissioner Cardines’ work as Senior Pastor at Nanaikapono Church.
  2. Outreach Events (1:24:01-1:24:50)
     1. Periodic online gathering of fatherhood commissioners nationwide – Commissioner Alston shares that he has not had the opportunity to reach out to Commissioner Augustine for further planning, but he will be reaching out for a better update by next meeting.

1. Ongoing Business and Updates (1:24:51-1:31:47)
   1. Trauma Informed Training planning (1:24:51-1:28:29)
      1. Commissioner Esmond shares that the 8/22/25 training date has been confirmed, with plans for in person meeting. He expresses his hope for all the commissioners to attend in person for maximum effectiveness of the training (1:24:51-1:26:52).
      2. Commissioner Augustine asks if there is a website for the Office of Wellness and Resiliency to get Maui Family Support Services to sponsor and support the event. Commissioner Alston shares that there is a website that he can show to MFSS and Commissioner Augustine says he will look there to see if there is a flyer drafted (1:26:53-1:28:29).
   2. Commissioner position update (1:28:30-1:30:24)
      1. Commissioner Esmond shares that applicant Lowell was unable to attend the meeting, but that Commissioner Esmond hopes he will be appointed as an interim commissioner by next month. He shares that there are openings for Hawaii Island and Oahu as of next month.
   3. Officer nominations and elections (1:30:25-1:31:47)
      1. Commissioner Esmond shares that the official positions are Chair and Vice Chair. Finance Chair and Secretary are not official positions but were set up because the Commission did not have an Admin Assistant. He likes the idea of the Chair also holding the Finance Chair and that we do not necessarily need a Secretary now that there is an admin assistant. He adds that votes will be held next month.
2. Upcoming Meetings (generally 3rd Friday each month 10:00 AM) (1:31:48-1:32:04)
   1. Next Meetings
      1. Remaining 2025 meetings (7/18, 8/22, 9/19, 10/17, 11/21, 12/19)
3. Conclusion (Vote) (1:32:05-1:46:06)
   1. Commissioner Esmond shares the story behind the commission logo, with an excerpt from an article (below) highlighting the creation of the logo (1:32:05-1:33:55).

“The hand is holding or supporting the kalo, which is extremely important in Hawaiian culture because it serves as a symbol of ancestry, heritage and family as well as sustenance and life. The triangle has a dual meaning as it is both a symbol of the family (three points representing the mother, father and child) and safety and shelter of the home.” – Designer Jonathan Zane, 2016

* 1. Final Thoughts (1:33:56-1:46:05)
     1. Commissioner Cardines (1:33:56-1:37:36)
        1. Commissioner Cardines offers his continued support in his individual and organization’s capacity as he steps down as Commissioner. He reflects on his time as a commissioner and the challenges that came with COVID-19. He expresses his hope to continue attending the meetings and assisting the commission. He thanks the other commissioners for their contributions.
     2. Commissioner Esmond (1:37:37-1:45:33)
        1. Commissioner Esmond says that although he did not plan on being Chair, he has enjoyed his role. He reflects on some of his successes as chair and looks forward to the commission’s future. He thanks the commissioners, Sunshine Law monitors, and DHS staff for their contributions to the commission (1:37:37-1:42:16).
        2. Commissioners Cardines and Alston thank Commissioner Esmond for his leadership and contributions as Chair. Commissioner Oliphant thanks Commissioner Esmond as well as DHS staff for their support (1:42:17-1:45:33).
  2. Vote to Adjourn (1:45:34-1:46:06)

**Commissioner Esmond moves to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Oliphant, unanimously approved 12:51 PM.**