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TO: The Honorable Daniel Holt, Chair
The Honorable Sean Quinlan, Vice Chair
House Committee on Legislative Management

FROM: Mark Patterson, Chair
Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission

SUBJECT: House Bill 1805, Relating to Child Welfare
Hearing: Monday, February 9, 2026; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 430

Chair Holt, Vice Chair Quinlan, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) submits testimony in **support** of House Bill 1805, relating to child welfare, which establishes an independent Office of the Child Advocate to oversee and evaluate the delivery of services to children and their families by various state agencies and entities, receive and investigate complaints, and make recommendations for improvement.

Children of incarcerated parents and youth involved in the foster care or child welfare system face a substantially higher risk of incarceration later in life. This heightened risk is often linked to preventable trauma, instability, and systemic failures experienced while navigating child welfare systems. These realities underscore the urgent need for strong, independent oversight to ensure vulnerable children are protected, supported, and not further harmed by the systems meant to serve them. Independent oversight plays a critical role in identifying systemic breakdowns early, promoting timely interventions, and safeguarding children's rights, safety, and long-term well-being—particularly for those at the intersection of the child welfare and justice systems.

Independent oversight of systems serving vulnerable populations is widely recognized as a best practice. The Commission's experience demonstrates that transparency, rigorous review, and public accountability drive meaningful improvements in safety, rehabilitative and therapeutic focuses, and overall system performance. Oversight helps uncover gaps in care, protects vulnerable populations, strengthens agency accountability, and builds public trust. Establishing an Office of the Child Advocate would extend these proven oversight principles to the child welfare system, providing impartial monitoring, investigating complaints, and advancing evidence-based recommendations to improve policies, practices, and outcomes for children and families.

Should you have additional questions, the Oversight Coordinator, Christin Johnson, can be reached at 808-849-3580 or at christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.