



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Joint Legislative Committee on Family Caregiving  
August 16, 2007

by  
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### **University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Response to the information request of the Joint Legislative Committee on Family Caregiving**

Co-Chair Les Ihara, Jr., Co-Chair Marilyn Lee, and Members of the Committee:

Approximately six million grandparents live with their grandchildren in the United States today. Asian American grandparents are more likely to live with and care for their grandchildren, and grandparents in Hawai'i are twice as likely to live with their grandchildren as grandparents in the rest of the United States (8 percent in Hawai'i compared to 3.9 percent in the remaining U.S.). Asian American grandparents represent 40 percent of all grandparents who are responsible for caring for these grandchildren while only 14 percent are European American. Of Asian grandparents caring for grandchildren in Hawai'i, approximately 51 percent are Japanese, 27.5 percent are Filipino, and 16.1 percent are Chinese.

I commend the Hawai'i State Legislature's quest to examine the fate of grandparents caring for grandchildren and outcomes for these children in Hawai'i. Grandparents often provide a significant amount of family support, however we don't know much about how grandparents fare while caring for their grandchildren. Parenting is a huge stress at any age, but being the sole source of care or a major source of care for grandchildren during a person's elderly years may exacerbate preexisting health conditions and stretch already limited physical, financial, and housing resources to the breaking point.

Studies of caregiving among Asian American grandparents have been sparse, but indicate that Asian American grandparents are more apt to be involved in caring for their grandchildren for socio-cultural and economic reasons.

A study of Chinese American grandparents found that the typical form of assistance offered was childcare by grandmothers who acted as substitute parents. Childrearing knowledge was highly valued and grandparents were reported to be helpful in the development of ethnic identity. Another found that Filipino American grandparent caregivers reported their role as a "natural role expectation" rather than a burden. These grandparents cared for their grandchildren on a full-time basis and described difficulties in disciplining their grandchildren and reported preexisting and existing health problems. Nevertheless, they did not perceive caregiving as a burden. Another study of full-time Filipino American grandparent caregivers found that role satisfaction was a significant predictor of perceived health status and resources (employment, income, education) also made a significant difference in regards to how they perceived their role (occupancy, involvement, integration) and health.

***How the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is addressing issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren:***

**1. How are UH Mānoa students being trained and educated about issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren and other relatives raising children whose parents will not or cannot take care of them?**

School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene

- Undergraduate and graduate nursing students receive didactic and clinical information and training on issues facing kinship caregivers of grandchildren/children in their parent-child, family, and community/public health courses.
- UH Mānoa's nursing curriculum is focused on individuals, families, and communities/systems with an emphasis on health disparities and the care of vulnerable populations.
- There is also a great emphasis to include curriculum which addresses the care of the elderly/geriatric population in both the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs.

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

Family Resource offers a variety of courses that bring this content into the curriculum. Courses teach parenting, aging, family interaction, and family policy issues.

- FAMR 334: Middle Age and Aging (Lori Yancura, Michael Cheang and Ronaele Whittington)
- FAMR 454: Family Public Policy
- FAMR 360: Family Resource Management (Michael Cheang)
- FAMR 341: Parenting
- FAMR 445 Family Life Education
- Service learning activities: Family Education Centers of Hawai'i Mary Martini and Jim Deustch teach parenting to family members raising children and in the last 3 years, grandparents were among the participants who learned effective parenting.

**2. What types of research have been or are currently being conducted on the issue of grandparents raising grandchildren and other relatives raising children?**

School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene

- Dr. Kataoka-Yahiro and Dr. Clementina Ceria-Ulep are nurse researchers who have worked on several research projects in this area. Dr. Rick Caulfield, Rhoda Yoshino, and Dr. Lori Yancura from the CTAHR Department of Family and Consumer Sciences have also worked with Drs. Kataoka-Yahiro and Ceria-Ulep.

- Recent research projects have included:
  - *“Filipino American Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren: Caregiving Role, Acculturation, and Perceived Health Status”*: Described and determined relationships between caregiving role, acculturation, and perceived health status and to tested for direct and moderating effects of acculturation and caregiving role on perceived health status with 47 grandparents.
  - *“Filipino Grandparent Caregiving Role”*: Completed the translation process and tested the consent form, visual aids, and questionnaire protocol with approximately 17 grandparents.
  - *“Strengths and Needs of Asian American Grandparents in Hawai‘i”*: Obtained descriptive information about Asian American grandparents and their perception of strengths and needs of grandparent caregiving role and perceived health status.
  - *“Immigrant Filipino Grandparents Caregiving and Health Status Study”*: Explored the context of grandparent caregiving of grandchildren and health status of immigrant Filipino grandparents in intergenerational families as a basis for future research and planning of nursing interventions. The funds were to hire a research consultant and translation consultant for the writing of the NIH NIA RO3 grant proposal.
  - *“Filipino Grandmothers’ Caregiving Role, Involvement, Reactions, and Health Status Study: An Asian American Experience”*: Utilized a focus group approach to examine Filipino American grandparent caregiver role and involvement in child and family care, caregiver reaction, and perceived health status.

#### College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

- In collaboration with the Executive Office on Aging, Dr. Lori Yancura of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences has been conducting needs assessment on grandparents raising grandchildren (GRG) in Hawai‘i. The outcome of the needs assessment is twofold: a report that will be submitted to the legislature at the end of this year, and also a short fact sheet.

The needs assessment consists of three components: agency survey, grandparents raising grandchildren survey, and grandparent focus groups. Agency survey will illustrate what types of services community agencies provide to GRG, and what services they need to better assist GRG. GRG survey and focus groups will address what services they receive, what services they need but do not receive, and how the state and community services can better assist them.

- Along with these three components, Dr. Yancura is analyzing existing data, such as Hawai‘i Health Survey, to include statistics from existing data to better illustrate who these grandparents are. In order to develop evidence-based social policy regarding aging, kincare caregivers, and family social support issues, we need basic information on grandparents caring for their grandchildren.

- Dr. Yancura's Ohana Caregivers research will provide much needed data on the health of grandparents caring for their grandchildren, but has provided numerous research and education opportunities for our undergraduate students to pursue gerontology research or geriatrics careers. One of her former mentees is a medical student who will pursue a geriatrics career. Last year two of her students won the UHM undergraduate student research awards for gerontological projects. (Further information on Dr. Yancura's Ohana Caregivers project can be found at [http://www.hawaii.edu/ohanacaregivers/.](http://www.hawaii.edu/ohanacaregivers/))

### **3. How is UH partnering with community stakeholders in bridging research and real-life practice on the issue of grandparents raising grandchildren and other relatives raising children?**

#### School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene

- School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene Hui Ola Pono Medicaid Project members are working with the School of Social Work, Hui Ho'omalua: A Program of Partners in Development, Catholic Charities, and the Department of Health and Human Services (Dr. Patricia Newlin) to develop a kinship foster care parenting curriculum and training program beyond the existing foster care curriculum. Many of the kinship foster care parents are grandparents caring for their grandchildren and other relatives raising children whose parents will not or cannot take care of them.

#### College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

- **Na Tutu Coalition:** Cooperative Extension Services has been involved with grandparents raising grandchildren since a national teleconference sponsored by Wisconsin and CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service) in 1999. Family and Community Education (FCE) groups from Windward and South O'ahu Councils have been involved in this area, and Rhoda Yoshino has worked with these groups and has been instrumental in the formation of the Na Tutu Coalition. Na Tutu has been involved in working with the legislature to introduce several bills to assist grandparents as they raise their grandchildren.

Na Tutu was formed in response to crises experienced by grandparents who were not legal guardians for their grandchildren, and yet needed to be their primary caregivers. These grandparents faced difficulties such as enrolling their custodial grandchildren in school and authorizing medical consent. Policies addressing these critical issues were passed into Hawai'i legislation.

Na Tutu FCE members are now seeking assistance for grandparents living in senior housing who suddenly have their grandchildren thrust upon them. Na Tutu works closely with UH Mānoa's Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative extension agents to address restrictions in senior residential housing facilities that do not allow children to live on the premises on a long-term basis even when their grandparents become their sole caregiver. Together, Na Tutu and FCS have begun extensive research into the laws in various states in order to draft legislation that will meet the needs of Hawai'i's

grandparents and grandchildren.

FCE has provided support through statewide lobbying efforts for these three pieces of legislation. FCE grandparents in Na Tutu have also worked with the legislature and served on the Hanai task force several years ago. FCE Na Tutu members have maintained positive working relations with key legislators and their staff to keep them informed of important issues impacting grandparents raising their grandchildren.

- ***Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center:*** Rhoda Yoshino and the Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center, Koolaupoko Unit have jointly started support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. Several FCE members who are grandparents raising their great grandchildren are members of this support group. Yoshino also networks with Generations United and the Hawai'i Intergeneration Network.
- ***The Family Education Centers of Hawai'i (FETCH):*** Collaborates with Family and Consumer Sciences faculty members, community family life specialists, and our undergraduate Family Resources students to provide community family education activities to serve community needs. Family caregivers are provided with training over 12 weeks and support for family members raising children and adolescents. Parent and family members from the community participate in FETCH to enhance family caregiver skills in promoting effective life skills in their children such as getting up, dressing, eating, keeping clean, school difficulties, bedtime, etc. More information can be found at <http://www.efetch.org/programinfo.htm>.

Yoshino's role as an extension educator is to assist the public (FCE/Na Tutu/ grandparents) in identifying issues/needs and concerns that affect them or people in their families or communities and to identify strategies for positive solutions for these issues. She encourages them to continue on with their efforts, supports them in their research, and provides education in communication skills, group dynamics, and facilitation skills.

- ***UH Mānoa Center on Aging:*** The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has included in its funding request for the supplemental budget a request for funding for the Center on Aging, which would allow us to be more responsive to the Legislative requests in this area, and conduct Hawai'i specific research on the complicated issues surrounding aging.