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Testimony on Operating Budget Bill 11 (2013), CD2
For Fiscal Year 2014

CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Presented to the Honolulu City Council
Wednesday, June 5, 2013

By Onolina Taotofi
Adult Friends for Youth
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Chairman and members of the City Council, I am here to testify in support of the Grant-In-Aid proposal in Bill 11 (2013), CD2 for Adult Friends for Youth. This bill will allow Adult Friends for Youth to provide services for students who are at risk at Farrington, Campbell, Kapolei, and Leilehua High Schools.

Hello, my name is Onolina Taotofi, and I once was a client of Adult Friends for Youth. I am a graduate of Farrington High School class of 2011. Within my four years there, I was part of an all-boy gang from Kuhio Park Terrace. Getting into fights and being suspended or sent to the vice principal's office was normal for me. Since that was normal for me, my academics were not looking too good at the time. AFY helped me a lot when I was in trouble, especially my social worker, Mo Maumalaga. Finding out that we had similar backgrounds drew me closer to him and all of the other staff at AFY as well. I was the only female in the group that I was in. Our group meetings were weekly and that gave us a feeling of being cared for. We would also go on outings to the beach or to the movies and I really felt like that helped us not only stay out of trouble, but also to have fun and enjoy the positive vibes. We always looked forward to our next meetings with Mo because, although we had fun, when it came down to business, he always kept it real with us. As for academics, Mo would round up all who needed help in any of their classes and take us to AFY's office so that we had a place to study and do our homework. Individually, Mo also helped me stay out of trouble by suggesting that I play sports to keep me occupied and to manage my free time positively and wisely. Because of the trust that was built, I considered it. I tried out for Farrington's volleyball team and I made it. From there on, I played club volleyball for Impact Hawaii. With this club, I attended a big tournament in Vegas where recruits from all over the U.S. came to scout. I had the privilege to play volleyball at the collegiate level for Coach Kanoe Bandy at Taft College for the past two years. Thanks to the financial support of Ronald Oyama and AFY, I was able to attend the tournament that changed my life. Now I plan on returning back to Taft for one more year to complete my Associates in Social Work and move on to a university so that I can earn my Masters because my goal is to return to Hawaii to work for AFY. AFY has impacted my life in numerous ways. They have helped me make choices that lead me in the path for a better and brighter future.

I know that AFY has the ability to help a lot of high risked kids who are in the situation that I was in, or maybe worse. I believe that AFY can help communities throughout Hawaii and is capable of reaching the lives of kids who are lost and need someone to care for and encourage them to be their best and to reach their potential.

I ask that you would support Bill 11 CD2 as it will provide the financial means for AFY to continue to help and serve these high-risk kids who are the future of our communities.

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Council