

## *Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents*

### Facilitating Connection and Hope

In April 2020, I had the opportunity to facilitate a Statewide Town Hall for the State of Hawaii. At least a month prior, I had watched a National Town Hall hosted by organization Think of Us. From there, I was truly inspired by the information that was shared and how connected I had felt in that moment. After immersing myself in the information, I reached out to the CEO of Think of Us for support in figuring out what was needed to put on a town hall. After much deliberation, I brought the idea to my site team that consisted of EPIC Ohana Inc. and HI H.O.P.E.S. State board advisor. They were very supportive in the idea and allowed me to take the reins in the development of the Town Hall.

Some of the ways in which they supported me in these efforts were by allowing me to have a group of coworkers who were willing and ready to assist with the creation of a successful town hall by developing the program, flier, assisting with spreading the word, and planning the overall purpose of the meeting and what we wanted participants to walk away with. We recognized that because we wanted to provide young people with answers about how things have shifted due to COVID, Child Welfare Services (CWS) was a crucial piece to the success of this event. CWS was an additional champion for this event as they had agreed to join us live to answer questions about the shift that CWS has made. This was important because I felt that as a young person, I was being trusted with a huge responsibility and had the opportunity to work alongside top leaders who believed that I could do it. With the incredible support of EPIC Ohana Inc, HI H.O.P.E.S. State board advisor and CWS, this event was a success with 200+ participants who felt connected, hopeful, and were able to get answers to questions that they've had since living in unfamiliar times. I had the opportunity to share power with the Branch Administrator of CWS and practice my skills as a facilitator.



To learn more about EPIC Ohana Inc., visit its [website](#). More about the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative is available on its [website](#).



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