
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ZERO TO THREE COURT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawai'i Zero to
2 Three court is a specialty court in the first circuit court,
3 family court, established in 2009 with initial funding from the
4 national Zero to Three program. Zero to Three courts are rooted
5 in developmental science and aim to improve outcomes for
6 maltreated infants and toddlers, reduce the reoccurrence of
7 substantiated abuse and neglect of infants and toddlers under
8 the court's jurisdiction, and shift the court's culture to focus
9 on the needs of infants and toddlers. Participation is
10 voluntary for parents who meet the criteria of past family court
11 adjudication and having at least one child between the ages of
12 zero to three years.

13 Key features of the Zero to Three court include monthly
14 case conferences for each family, monthly court hearings, and a
15 court team composed of a lead family court judge, designated
16 guardian ad litem, parents' counsel, deputy attorneys general,
17 and social workers from the department of human services. The



1 court hearings provide intensive judicial oversight and
2 accountability for all parties while keeping the court team
3 focused on timely permanency. Parent activities are held the
4 same day as the monthly court hearings and enhance parenting
5 skills while building a support system among participating
6 families in a safe, judgment free environment. Infants and
7 toddlers in the program receive a comprehensive developmental
8 assessment that results in referrals to appropriate services.
9 Families also participate in parent-child interaction therapy or
10 child-parent psychotherapy to promote healthy family
11 relationships.

12 The legislature further finds that the University of
13 Hawaii's center on disability studies conducted an evaluation of
14 the Hawai'i Zero to Three court, assessing program activities
15 from August 2013 to July 2016. The study concludes that the
16 program successfully meets the objectives of reducing parental
17 alcohol or substance use, improving family reunification
18 outcomes, decreasing the length of stay and number of placements
19 in foster care, increasing visitation frequency, ensuring
20 service availability timeliness, and increasing access to
21 services.



1 The legislature notes that national funding for the Hawai'i
2 Zero to Three court ceased in 2012, and the court has been
3 unable to expand to other circuits. The third circuit,
4 comprising Hawai'i island, has expressed interest in starting a
5 program subject to available funding.

6 The purpose of this Act is to fund a program coordinator
7 position to support expansion of the Hawai'i Zero to Three court
8 to the third circuit. The appropriated funds shall not supplant
9 the judiciary's existent funding nor budget requests.

10 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and
13 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
14 year 2024-2025 to support a Hawai'i Zero to Three court program
15 coordinator position in the third circuit.

16 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary
17 for the purposes of this Act.

18 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.



Report Title:

Zero to Three Court; Third Circuit; Judiciary; Program
Coordinator Position; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a Zero to Three Court Program Coordinator position.
Expands the Zero to Three Court to the Third Circuit.
Appropriates funds. (SD1)

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