

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

651

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 14 , 2025

RE: H.B. No. 640
H.D. 2

Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Madame:

Your Committee on Human Services & Homelessness, to which was referred H.B. No. 640, H.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Office of the Ombudsman to publish a quarterly report on its website that identifies the number and nature of complaints that it receives regarding the Child Welfare Services Branch of the Department of Human Services; and
- (2) Require the Child Welfare Services Branch to provide notification to certain parties that complaints can also be filed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Human Services; Office of the Ombudsman; and one individual.

Your Committee finds that Hawaii's child welfare system plays a crucial role in protecting children and supporting families, yet concerns remain regarding its responsiveness and transparency.

2025-1733 HB640 HD2 HSCR HMSO



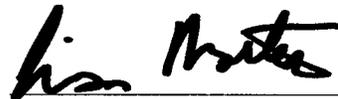
Families navigating the system often struggle to voice their grievances or seek resolution when issues arise. This measure addresses these challenges by strengthening oversight and accountability through the Office of the Ombudsman, ensuring that complaints regarding the Child Welfare Services Branch are independently reviewed and properly addressed.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Specifying that the Office of the Ombudsman publish an annual, rather than quarterly, report on its website;
- (2) Clarifying that the Child Welfare Services Branch shall be required to notify birth families, children in foster care, and resource caregivers that they can file a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Human Services & Homelessness that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 640, H.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it be referred to your Committee on Finance in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 640, H.D. 2.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Human Services &
Homelessness,



LISA MARTEN, Chair



