



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809

February 10, 2019

TO: The Honorable Representative Chris Lee, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 388 - RELATING TO THE ZERO TO THREE COURT**

Hearing: February 11, 2019; 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services supports this bill and respectfully defers to the Judiciary on positions and appropriation amounts.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds for the Hawaii Zero to Three court.

The Zero to Three (ZTT) court provides a valuable structure and process for families and children ages zero to three involved with the Family Court and Child Welfare Services. The Zero To Three court has added resources that help support parents and caregivers establish a safe, nurturing home. Numerous studies have shown the benefits to children and society when children's length of stay in foster care is shortened with effective case management, and children and their families are successfully reunited.

The voluntary nature of this program makes it a unique model in the child welfare system which emphasizes the motivation of the families to participate and learn what is necessary to become stable families who eventually need no further reliance on the judiciary or welfare system.

Families are provided special attention and given more time and social opportunities to learn from each other and professionals in the field. The success of the program is built upon the limited number of families served at one time, frequent nature of court hearings,

specialized services available for the families, and trusting relationships built between the families, case manager and service providers. Many families report they enjoy working with the case manager and thus want to stay in the program even though monthly court hearings are cumbersome.

In SFY2018, 19 families were served which involved 39 children. ZTT currently serves 25 children. The national ZERO TO THREE's Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams published its evaluation report that included data from Hawaii's Zero To Three court. Here is the link to the September 30, 2017 report:

<http://qicct.org/sites/default/files/QIC-ITCT%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report%20Executive%20Summary%202017.compressed.pdf>.

Having stable funding for positions will support the healing and development of the most vulnerable children and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



## *The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i*

### **Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary**

Representative Chris Lee, Chair  
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Monday, February 11, 2019, 2:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

By  
Christine E. Kuriyama  
Senior Judge, Deputy Chief Judge  
Family Court of the First Circuit

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 388, Relating to the Hawai‘i Zero to Three Court.

**Purpose:** Appropriates funds for the Hawai‘i Zero to Three Court.

#### **Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary respectfully supports this bill as submitted in that it is requesting additional funding for the Hawai‘i Zero to Three Court, with the understanding that: “(t)he purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to support the Hawai‘i zero to three court. It is not the legislature’s intent that the appropriated funds supplant the judiciary’s existing funding or budget requests.” (page 3, lines 14-17).

The Judiciary is deeply appreciative of the Keiki Caucus and the individual members of the Legislature for their continued support of and interest in the Hawai‘i Zero to Three Court, as well as the other programs that the Judiciary has initiated and maintained for the benefit of Hawai‘i’s children and families. The Keiki Caucus’ tireless advocacy and voice for children oftentimes too small or young to speak for themselves are always necessary and always welcomed. This bill speaks to that continuing advocacy and concern, and the Judiciary thanks the Caucus.

The Judiciary has included as part of its budget package, a no-cost conversion of the current Program Manager/Coordinator position to permanent status. This would give the Hawai‘i Zero to Three Court the necessary added stability to continue to grow and move



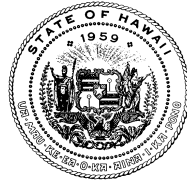
House Bill No. 388, Relating to the Hawaii Zero to Three Court  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Monday, February 11, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.  
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forward, albeit not necessarily at the accelerated rate that is likely envisioned by the Keiki Caucus' somewhat larger appropriations request for the Hawai'i Zero to Three Court in this bill.

For the Committee's consideration, the figures noted for the Program Manager and Case Manager on page 4, lines 3 and 4 are incorrect. The more accurate amounts are:

Program Manager (Social Worker V - SR24C)	\$59,616
Case Manager (Social Worker IV - SR22C)	\$52,956

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB388**  
**RELATING TO THE HAWAII ZERO TO THREE COURT.**

REP. CHRIS LEE, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: February 11, 2019

Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** \$257,430 general fund appropriation.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports additional resources for  
3 the Hawaii Zero To Three Court (ZTT) program because it is an effective and proven approach  
4 to minimize Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

5 Prevention of ACEs is a strategic priority for DOH since they are correlated with poor health  
6 outcomes such as substance use disorder, obesity and chronic illness and premature death. ZTT  
7 can improve family bonding and resiliency that can help a young child thrive, and reduce public  
8 expenditures for health care, public safety, and special education among other things.

9 Assuring ZTT as a resource for at-risk families and children is a sound investment of public  
10 moneys.

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**HAWAII FAMILY SUPPORT INSTITUTE**  
*Making Hawaii's Families Strong*

February 4, 2019

Representative Chris Lee, Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Representative Joy San Buenaventura,, Vice-Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Re: HB 388, relating to the Zero to Three Court

Dear Representatives Lee, San Buenaventura and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am Gail Breakey, Director of the Hawaii Family Support Institute testifying in strong support of HB 388, relating to the Zero to Court. This Court serves infants, toddlers in foster care by treating family problems and ensuring a safe, permanent home for children within 12-18 months.

Understanding the impact of trauma during the early period of formative brain development clarifies the importance of this Court.

- A baby is born with trillions of neurons waiting to be wired into a brain. Programming occurs through interactions with parents.
- Nurturing and consistent care promotes brain development in sequential patterns, establishing language, ability to related to others and positive self-esteem.
- Trauma and a chaotic environment interrupt these patterns, often resulting in chronic post-traumatic stress and a host of negative behaviors and developmental problems.
- The ZTT Court intervenes during the most important time in a child's social-emotional development.

The Zero to Three Court is highly successful:

- Substance abusing parents are successfully rehabilitated,
- Out of home placements are limited to 2, instead of multiple, debilitating placements and permanent placements occurs within 16 months.
- Children who cannot safely be re-united achieve permanency placements.
- There has been only one re-abuse case among all families served.
- It's cost effective: \$4,000 per family compared with estimated lifetime cost of \$210,010 for one untreated child abuse case per the Center for Disease Control.

The priority funding for this Court is to convert the Case Manager position from a temporary to a permanent position, which is in the Judiciary budget and the Chief Justice has noted this is a priority for the Family Court at this time. A permanent program manager position is crucial to stability and further program development. HB 388 also requests support for a case manager position, which is part of this program model, and support for direct services for families .

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Gail Breakey, RN, MPH, Executive Director  
Hawaii Family Support Institute  
UH School of Social Work at Manoa



**TO: Chair Lee, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary**

**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

**DATE/LOCATION:** February 11, 2019; 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 325

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 388– RELATING TO THE HAWAII ZERO TO THREE COURT**

**We support HB 388 which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Zero to Three Court.** The Hawaii Zero to Three Court has proven to be successful through its support of families and keiki particularly during a child's most critical developmental stage.

Early childhood neuroscience is clear that the first 1,000 days of each life provides the foundation for future development. Working with parents and their keiki at an early age to promote healthy child development, school readiness, nurturing parenting skills, and reduce toxic family stress is critical for future success. ZTT intervenes and has successfully rehabilitated parents with substance abuse issues, reunited children with their parents or placed children into safe permanent care and educated parents and minimized re-abuse cases.

We ask you to support stable funding for the Hawaii Zero to Three Court as it facilitates the necessary processes to support a family with young children dealing with their current issues. ZTT addresses the immediate needs of the child during difficult family times that could occur through complicated legal proceedings. It is of crucial importance that we invest in our keiki. Programs like ZTT are also a key component to our war on intergenerational poverty as it addresses issues early on providing the child and their parents with opportunities for hope-filled future success.

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii's not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 18 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs,



child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of HB 388**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.



## O`ahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Rep. Chris Lee, Chair

Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

DATE: Monday, February 11, 2019

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 415, State Capitol

RE: HB 388 Relating to the Hawai`i Zero to Three Court

To the Honorable Chris Lee, Chair; the Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura; and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

The O`ahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities (OCCLP) of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i (DPH) hereby submits its testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 388 relating to the Hawai`i Zero to Three Court.**

HB 388 appropriates funds for the Hawaii Zero to Three Court.

The University of Hawaii center on disability studies conducted an evaluation of Hawai'i zero to three court activities from August 2013 to July 2016. The study concluded that the Hawai'i zero to three court is successfully meeting the objectives of reducing parental alcohol or drug use, improving reunification outcomes for families, decreasing the number of placements and the length of stay in foster care, increasing visitation frequency, ensuring timeliness of service availability, and increasing access to services.

DPH believes that all families should have an equal opportunity to build their assets and become self-sufficient; and DPH supports a strong safety net of programs that will afford them the opportunity to do so. DPH believes that it is our kuleana to protect our children, our future, from violence and neglect and provide them with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and thrive.

DPH supports initiatives that enhance access and equity in education, employment, and business opportunities intended to lift families and individuals out of poverty and remove existing barriers to equal opportunity in our communities.

DPH supports legislation and best practice policies that prioritize the safety, security and well-being of our foster children, who are our most vulnerable keiki in our community. This is the paramount consideration when making decisions regarding the time frame, criteria and justification for reunification and family placement. We will always respect family and familial bonds, but reunification with every biological family is not always the safest, most secure or in the best interests of every child. This is especially true in aggravated circumstances cases involving drug use history, physical abuse, sexual abuse and unstable housing. DPH strongly supports the efforts of parents and all people to recover and reorganize their lives for the better, but our ultimate concern must also be for the short and long-term safety and wellbeing of our foster children. *Democratic Party of Hawai`i Platform (2018), p. 15, ln. 1-18.*

For the foregoing reasons, i.e., to protect our children, our future, from violence and neglect and provide them with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and thrive, OCCLP supports HB 388 and urges its passage out of the Committee on Judiciary.

Mahalo nui loa

Me ka `oia`i`o

/s/ *Melodie Aduja*

Melodie Aduja

Chair, O`ahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities  
of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i

Ph. (808) 258-8889

Email: legislativepriorities@gmail.com

February 11, 2019

**LATE**

To: Representative Chris Lee, Chair  
Representative Joy San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Laura Nevitt, Policy Director  
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **H.B. 388– RELATING TO THE HAWAII ZERO TO THREE COURT  
Capitol, Room 325, February 11 2019 2:00 PM**

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**On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), I am writing in SUPPORT of .B. 388, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Zero to Three Court**

The Zero to Three Court program started in Hawaii in 2009 and has had amazing results over the years by assisting children receive vital services, reconnect with family, and overcome negative consequences of maltreatment during vital development at ages one to three years old. Additionally, according to a program evaluation from August 2013 to July 2016 conducted by the University of Hawaii's Center on Disabilities, the families have seen overall benefits from reducing parental alcohol or drug use, decreasing the length of stay in foster care and number of placements, increasing visitation frequency, and increasing access to services.

With the loss of national funding in 2012, the Zero to Three Program has had a level of insecurity and the inability to grow. By providing a stable source of funding for staff, the program will better be able to serve the children and families of Hawaii.

**For these reasons, HCAN asks that you pass H.B 388.**

*HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education.*