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April 12, 2022

TO: Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
House Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 102 SDI- REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR TO UPDATE ITS CHILD WELFARE SERVICES BRANCH ASSESSMENT STANDARD PURSUANT TO HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 165, REGULAR SESSION OF HAWAII 2010.**

Hearing: Thursday, April 14, 2022, 9:00 a.m.  
State Capitol Conference Room 329 and  
Via videoconference

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) Human Services (DHS) provides comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the resolution is for the Office of the Auditor to update its Child Welfare Services (CWS) assessment standard and to complete a performance audit of CWS.

The Department engages in several audit and performance assessments. The Department is subject to federal periodic Child & Family Services Review conducted by the Children's Bureau of the Administration of Children & Families (ACF). Round 4 of the CFSRs will commence in federal fiscal year 2023. The goals of the CFSR are to:

- Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements
- Determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services
- Assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.

The CFSR results become the basis of the State's Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Hawaii has successfully engaged in this process three times. Notably, ACF meets regularly with CWS to review the status of the PIP.

Additionally, CWS has a comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) program, which involves continuously auditing CWS practice and implementing changes toward improved safety for children. Below are some of the CWS QA processes that address the concerns raised in the resolution.

- Case Reviews

The Department contracts with the University of Hawaii (UH) Maui College, Hawaii Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (HCWCQI), to annually conduct formal case reviews of a random selection of cases from every region of the State, using the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) tool. These reviews form the basis of action plans for each section. These comprehensive case reviews also include cases from CWS Differential Response System, referred to as "triage procedures" in the resolution.

- Targeted Reviews

When CWS leadership notices a pattern in the CWS data that they need to understand more fully, HCWCQI designs and conducts a review of CWS cases to target the issues to identify areas for improvement. Examples of past targeted reviews include:

- Resource Caregiver Background Clearances,
- Child's Placement Stability while in Foster Care,
- Increase in the Number of Children in Foster Care,
- Re-entry into Foster Care, and
- Time Spent in Foster Care Prior to Adoption.

- Case Expert Guidance

If challenging issues arises on a case, or if a CWS staff member has a concern about a case that may be difficult for the assigned worker to address on their own, a group of child welfare practice experts is called together, along with the assigned caseworker and their supervisor. This group reviews the case individually in advance and then meets for

several hours to discuss the challenges and provide guidance, including a best practice plan for moving forward with the case.

- Administrative Review Panel (ARP)

When it is not clear how to apply CWS policies and procedures in a specific case, an ARP may be held to determine the proper course of action. The ARP consists of CWS Administrators, CWS Program Development Staff, an HCWCQI representative, the caseworker, and their supervisor.

- Licensing Review Panel (LRP)

An LRP may be held when CWS staff need guidance on applying licensing rules and procedures to place a child in a particular resource home. The LRP panel consists of CWS administration, licensing supervisor, licensing worker, and the caseworker.

- Use of Child Welfare Expert Consultants

The Department regularly reaches out to national child welfare experts to guide CWS work and ensure the best outcomes for children and families. For example, over the past several years, CWS has been working collaboratively with the Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for States, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, Casey Family Programs, Mainspring Consulting, Chapin Hall, and Action 4 Child Protection.

- Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs)

The Multidisciplinary Team is a contracted service through DHS. It is comprised of a pediatrician, child psychologist, clinical social worker, and pediatric nurse -- all of whom are experts in child abuse and neglect -- to provide consultative services to the DHS on CWS cases. MDTs are held on a range of cases for various reasons, e.g., determining whether a child can safely return home, assessing a parent's capacity to engage successfully in services, and determining the cause of a child's injury. CWS policy requires that an MDT be held for any case involving serious harm or death.

- Child Death Reviews (CDR)

The DHS is a member of the Hawaii State CDR, a multidisciplinary team convened by the Department of Health. Membership includes medical professionals, emergency response personnel, and community agencies. The reviews look at preventable child

fatalities statewide to understand the risk factors that may have led to child death. Knowledge gained from the reviews is used to prevent future child deaths by the CDR Team proposing legislative and system changes.

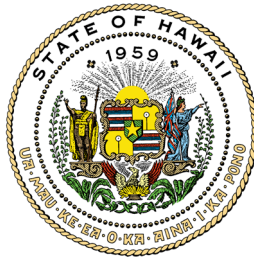
- Resource Caregiver Licensing Workgroup

A statewide resource caregiver licensing workgroup was formed two years ago to improve the safety and wellbeing of children placed in resource homes. The workgroup is reviewing and revising its resource caregiver licensing rules to protect children in foster care best and align with federal licensing standards. In addition, this workgroup has also reviewed and revised the mandatory training for resource caregivers, which will be implemented later this year. These actions will further ensure that whenever children are placed in foster care, the resource home is safe, appropriate, and able to meet the children's needs.

- CWS Advisory Committee

This committee is comprised of CWSB administration, HCWCQI staff, social service providers, court staff, Department of Health representatives, youth currently or formerly in foster care, resource caregivers, and family representatives. The Committee meets quarterly to share updates in their respective areas that affect the families. The CWS Advisory Committee allows CWS to obtain input from members on strategies to improve outcomes and policies and procedures that impact the delivery of services to children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this resolution.



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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES, & HOMELESSNESS  
The Honorable Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
The Honorable Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair

**S.C.R. NO. 102, S.D. 1, REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR TO  
CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES  
BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

Hearing: Thursday, April 14, 2022, 9:00 a.m.

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The Office of the Auditor offers comments on S.C.R. No. 102, S.D. 1, requesting the Office of the Auditor “update its Child Welfare Services Branch assessment standard pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution No. 165, Regular Session of Hawaii 2010, to include the second Program Improvement Plan required by the United States Department of Health and Human Services in 2010,” and conduct a performance audit “to include the triage procedure required by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act that was reauthorized by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003.”

As introduced, S.C.R. No. 102 requested the Auditor “to conduct a performance audit of the Child Welfare Branch of the Department of Human Services.” We did not submit written testimony on the measure when it was heard by the Senate Committee on Human Services; we had concluded that the proposed performance audit was sufficiently described and could be completed within the requested timeframe.

However, the Senate Committee on Human Services amended the concurrent resolution to request the Auditor to “update” certain information in place of the requested performance audit. Stand. Com. Rep. No. 3713 reflects that the committee appears to have based its action on the position expressed in 2013 by the then-acting Auditor that an audit of the Child Welfare Services Branch would duplicate reviews regularly performed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The position expressed by the then-acting Auditor is not our current position. We do not understand the reviews by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to preempt an audit. Moreover, we do not expect our audit to duplicate work performed by the federal agency. We would consider the review and oversight by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in developing our objectives for the proposed audit. Even if there is some duplication, our audit will be conducted pursuant to Government Auditing Standards promulgated by the Comptroller General of the United States and likely will involve approaches different from the federal reviews.

As noted above, we believe that the performance audit described in S.C.R. No. 102, as originally introduced, is sufficiently scoped; at a minimum, we expect the audit to provide transparency

into the branch's performance and to offer meaningful recommendations to the branch to address any audit findings.

While we can audit the Child Welfare Services Branch, we have limited resources. We cannot perform this audit, which we expect to be a major project, in addition to the other audits and reports that we are currently required to do as well as those required or requested in bills and concurrent resolutions that are currently alive this session. We strongly suggest that the committee consider all the work being requested by our office and defer those measures that the committee believes may be of lesser value.

Thank you for considering our testimony related to S.C.R. No. 102, S.D. 1.

**SCR-102-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 11:21:30 PM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimeona Kane, Chair	Waimanalo Neighborhood Board #32	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha nui kākou,

Chair Kimeona Kane of the Waimānalo Neighborhood Board #32 in strong support of this action to gain a better understanding of the capacity and capabilities of the services provided by the Child Welfare Services Branch.

Our Education Committee worked tirelessly with our community and members of the wider public to craft resolutions that could support a greater focus into this branch as a result of the horrific tragedy of Ariel Sellers of Waimānalo. Her death continues to leave our community and others asking so many questions about what went wrong, what more needs to be done and how can we make the change necessary to protect our children.

It is imperative to dig deeper into the CWS Branch to gain a broader understanding and seek changes that can help to preserve the sanctity that childhood represents.

Please pass this bill and help communities and CWS work towards addressing the future together.

Mahalo nui,

Kimeona Kane

Chair, Waimānalo Neighborhood Board #32

**SCR-102-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 2:54:44 PM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deborah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the audit of child welfare services. This is such an important part of making the system more efficient and even more important more effective. They Keiki , the families and the workers deserve this added information to have the opportunity to be succesful in accomplishing their goals.



**SCR-102-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 5:31:46 PM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara Mayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support an audit of child welfare services. It's time to hold them accountable as they take care of our keiki!

BIG mahalo,

Barbara Mayer

**SCR-102-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 11:11:59 PM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimeona Kane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha nui kākou,

Kimeona Kane from Waimānalo in strong support of this action to audit the Child Welfare Services Branch. It is an opportunity to save lives of those within the system and allows for the necessary actions to be taken to progress safety and wellbeing. Please help the communities and the service providers but setting the base reality via an audit and support this measure.

Mahalo nui,

Kimeona Kane

**SCR-102-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/14/2022 7:30:44 AM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kapua Medeiros	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee,

I am in Support of SCR102 SD1 that will create a better assessment of our current Child Welfare Services Department.

As a Waimānalo Community member I feel this Action is necessary to prevent another Ariel Sellers from falling Victim to the System's Failures.

Again, I am asking that you Support and Approve SCR102 SD1 and make the much needed improvements to our Child Welfare System here in Hawai'i.

Me ke Aloha,

Kapua Medeiros

Waimānalo Raised Resident

**SCR-102-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/14/2022 7:36:25 AM

Testimony for HHH on 4/14/2022 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mialisa Otis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SCR102 CD1. Please keep more eyes on innocent children, and hold their case workers responsible for their safety. Mahalo,

Mialisa