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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the east Hawaii  
2 child welfare services section in the county of Hawaii faces  
3 unique challenges as it is responsible for the safety and well-  
4 being of the State's most vulnerable children, including those  
5 who have been abused, neglected, or are at high risk for abuse  
6 and neglect. The office oversees the safety of endangered  
7 children in a large geographic area that extends from Honokaa to  
8 Ocean View, including the districts of north and south Hilo,  
9 Puna, and much of Hamakua and Kau. Furthermore, the rate of  
10 confirmed cases for abuse or neglect for Hawaii county in 2015  
11 was two hundred thirteen children per 100,000 residents, nearly  
12 triple the rate of confirmed cases for the city and county of  
13 Honolulu.

14           The legislature further finds that due to challenging  
15 economic times and funding cuts in Hawaii's child welfare  
16 services, layoffs and hiring restrictions have caused the east  
17 Hawaii child welfare services section to lose nineteen of the



1 fifty-six positions it had in 2009, resulting in a dramatic  
2 increase in average caseload per caseworker. The recommended  
3 number of caseloads for child welfare services social workers is  
4 no more than fifteen children, but child welfare services social  
5 workers in east Hawaii regularly have caseloads of forty to  
6 fifty children. These higher caseloads increase the potential  
7 for harm to children at risk for neglect or abuse, further  
8 contributing to the high rate of confirmed cases in Hawaii  
9 county, and has even prompted the family court to sanction the  
10 east Hawaii child welfare services section because of late  
11 filings of reports and failure to meet court deadlines.  
12 Therefore, the legislature finds that it is necessary to  
13 undertake a pilot project to demonstrate the positive impact of  
14 adequate staffing levels on the safety and well-being of at-risk  
15 children and families in east Hawaii.

16 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for:

- 17 (1) The department of human services to establish a five-  
18 year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare  
19 services section in Hawaii county that limits the  
20 number of children per child welfare services  
21 caseworker to no more than twenty; and



1           (2) Additional case managers and support staff for the  
2           pilot program.

3           SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
5 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for:

6           (1) The department of human services, child welfare  
7           services branch, to establish a five-year pilot  
8           program that limits the number of children supervised  
9           by each child welfare services caseworker to no more  
10          than twenty in the east Hawaii child welfare services  
11          section in the county of Hawaii; and

12          (2) Eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) case managers and  
13          fifteen full-time equivalent (15.0 FTE) support staff  
14          positions for the pilot program.

15          The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
16 human services for the purposes of this Act.

17          SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

Child Welfare Services; DHS; Caseworker; Pilot Program; Hawaii County; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section in Hawaii county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty. Appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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