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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WELLNESS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that research conducted  
2 over the last two decades in the fields of neuroscience,  
3 molecular biology, public health, genomics, and epigenetics  
4 reveal that experiences in the first few years of life build  
5 changes into the biology of the human body that, in turn,  
6 influence a person's lifelong physical, mental, and spiritual  
7 health. Adverse childhood experiences are traumatic experiences  
8 that occur during childhood, including physical, emotional, or  
9 sexual abuse; untreated mental illness; incarceration of a  
10 household member; domestic violence; and separation or divorce  
11 involving household members. These experiences can have a  
12 profound effect on a child's developing brain and body and, if  
13 not treated properly, can increase a person's risk for disease  
14 and other health conditions through adulthood.

15           The legislature further finds that early adverse childhood  
16 experiences shape the physical architecture of a child's  
17 developing brain and can prevent the development of a sturdy



1 foundation for learning, quality health, and positive behavior.  
2 Strong, frequent, or prolonged stress in childhood caused by  
3 adverse childhood experiences can become toxic stress, impacting  
4 the development of a child's fundamental brain architecture and  
5 stress response systems. Early childhood education offers a  
6 unique window of opportunity to prevent and heal the impacts of  
7 adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress on a child's  
8 brain, body, and spirit. Research on toxic stress and adverse  
9 childhood experiences indicates the existence of a growing  
10 public health crisis for the State with implications for  
11 Hawaii's educational, juvenile justice, criminal justice, and  
12 public health systems.

13       The legislature also finds that neurobiological,  
14 epigenetic, and physiological studies have shown that traumatic  
15 experiences in childhood and adolescence can diminish  
16 concentration, memory, and the organizational language abilities  
17 students need to succeed in school, thereby negatively impacting  
18 a student's academic performance, classroom behavior, and the  
19 ability to form relationships. A critical factor in buffering  
20 children from the effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood  
21 experiences is the existence of supportive, stable relationships



1 between children and their families, caregivers, and other  
2 important adults in their lives. Cultural practices that  
3 provide asset-based approaches involving the influence of a  
4 stable non-relative adult can provide the resilience needed to  
5 mitigate the effects on a child who has had high adverse  
6 childhood experiences. Positively influencing the architecture  
7 of a child's developing brain is more effective and less costly  
8 than attempting to correct poor learning, health, and behaviors  
9 later in life.

10 The purpose of this Act is to establish an office of  
11 wellness and resilience as a semi-autonomous authority within  
12 the office of the governor to support and implement the  
13 statewide framework developed by the trauma-informed care task  
14 force established pursuant to Act 209, Session Laws of Hawaii  
15 2021, by:

16 (1) Addressing the various barriers that impact the  
17 physical, social, and emotional well-being of all  
18 people in the State by building wellness and  
19 resilience through trauma-informed, strengths-based  
20 strategies; and



1 (2) Supporting agencies in their individual reform efforts  
 2 to address trauma-informed care and move toward a  
 3 collaborative, shared purpose of collective system  
 4 reform.

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 27, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended  
 6 by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and to read  
 7 as follows:

8 "PART . OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE

9 §27- Definitions. As used in this part, unless the  
 10 context otherwise requires:

11 "Office" means the office of wellness and resilience.

12 "Trauma-informed care task force" means the trauma-informed  
 13 care task force established pursuant to Act 209, Session Laws of  
 14 Hawaii 2021.

15 §27- Office of wellness and resilience; established.

16 (a) There is established within the office of the governor, on  
 17 a temporary basis and for special purposes, the office of  
 18 wellness and resilience.

19 (b) The office shall be headed by an executive director,  
 20 who shall be appointed by the governor without regard to  
 21 chapter 76, and who shall serve at the pleasure of the governor.



1 (c) The governor may use moneys from existing, unfilled  
2 staff positions from other executive branch agencies to appoint  
3 additional staff for the office. Staff appointed pursuant to  
4 this subsection shall be exempt from chapters 76 and 89 but  
5 shall be a member of the state employees' retirement system and  
6 shall be eligible to receive the benefits of any state employee  
7 benefit program generally applicable to officers and employees  
8 of the State.

9 (d) Department directors may assign employees from  
10 existing positions within their respective department to the  
11 office; provided that the staff shall represent their respective  
12 department's needs and shall have direct communication with the  
13 respective department's leadership during the course of their  
14 assignment with the office.

15 **§27- Functions.** The office of wellness and resilience  
16 shall:

17 (1) Address issues identified and implement solutions  
18 recommended by the trauma-informed care task force  
19 through a cross-representation of state departments  
20 and the private sector, including private donors;



- 1           (2) Identify common issues, unmet needs, and challenges  
2           encountered by departments and work to solve those  
3           issues through a cross-representation of state  
4           departments and the private sector, including private  
5           donors;
- 6           (3) Seek funding solutions using moneys that each  
7           department has access to, including federal, state,  
8           and private sources, and work with philanthropic  
9           organizations and other entities from the private  
10          sector to re-evaluate the State's funding priorities  
11          and find funding solutions to implement  
12          interdepartmental programming;
- 13          (4) Establish a procurement team that has cross-agency  
14          representation to streamline existing department grant  
15          and funding management and meet existing fiduciary  
16          obligations and other state requirements;
- 17          (5) Interact with community agencies, organizations, and  
18          other stakeholders to ensure the office is meeting the  
19          needs and wellness requirements of communities  
20          throughout the State; and



1 (6) Create a social determinants of health electronic  
2 dashboard that identifies a baseline of needs and  
3 concerns that impede high quality-of-life outcomes.

4 **§27- Annual report.** The office of wellness and  
5 resilience shall submit an annual report to the legislature no  
6 later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular  
7 session that contains a summary of its activities during the  
8 preceding year, including:

- 9 (1) Actions taken to address issues, unmet needs, and  
10 challenges relating to wellness and resilience;
- 11 (2) Funds received pursuant to the activities of the  
12 office from federal, state, private, and philanthropic  
13 sources;
- 14 (3) The office's engagement with community entities and  
15 other stakeholders; and
- 16 (4) Any other findings and recommendations, including any  
17 proposed legislation."

18 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much  
20 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the



1 establishment and operations of the office of wellness and  
2 resilience.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of the  
4 governor for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050, and  
6 shall be repealed on June 30,





**Report Title:**

Office of the Governor; Office of Wellness and Resilience;  
Trauma-Informed Care; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor. Authorizes the Office to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Appropriates moneys. Sunsets on an unspecified date. Effective 7/1/2050.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

