A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ZERO TO THREE COURT.

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

- 1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawai'i Zero to
- 2 Three court is a specialty court in the first circuit court,
- 3 family court, established in 2009 with initial funding from the
- 4 national Zero to Three program. Zero to Three courts are rooted
- 5 in developmental science and aim to improve outcomes for
- 6 maltreated infants and toddlers, reduce the reoccurrence of
- 7 substantiated abuse and neglect of infants and toddlers under
- 8 the court's jurisdiction, and shift the court's culture to focus
- 9 on the needs of infants and toddlers. Participation is
- 10 voluntary for parents who meet the criteria of past family court
- 11 adjudication and having at least one child between the ages of
- 12 zero to three years.
- 13 Key features of the Zero to Three court include monthly
- 14 case conferences for each family, monthly court hearings, and a
- 15 court team composed of a lead family court judge, designated
- 16 guardian ad litem, parents' counsel, deputy attorneys general,
- 17 and social workers from the department of human services. The

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- 1 court hearings provide intensive judicial oversight and
- 2 accountability for all parties while keeping the court team
- 3 focused on timely permanency. Parent activities are held the
- 4 same day as the monthly court hearings and enhance parenting
- 5 skills while building a support system among participating
- 6 families in a safe, judgment free environment. Infants and
- 7 toddlers in the program receive a comprehensive developmental
- 8 assessment that results in referrals to appropriate services.
- 9 Families also participate in parent-child interaction therapy or
- 10 child-parent psychotherapy to promote healthy family
- 11 relationships.
- 12 The legislature further finds that the University of
- 13 Hawaii's center on disability studies conducted an evaluation of
- 14 the Hawai'i Zero to Three court, assessing program activities
- 15 from August 2013 to July 2016. The study concludes that the
- 16 program successfully meets the objectives of reducing parental
- 17 alcohol or substance use, improving family reunification
- 18 outcomes, decreasing the length of stay and number of placements
- 19 in foster care, increasing visitation frequency, ensuring
- 20 service availability timeliness, and increasing access to
- 21 services.



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| 1 | The legislature notes that national funding for the Hawaiʻi |
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| 2 | Zero to Three court ceased in 2012, and the court has been |
| 3 | unable to expand to other circuits. The third circuit, |
| 4 | comprising Hawai'i island, has expressed interest in starting a |
| 5 | program subject to available funding. |
| 6 | The purpose of this Act is to fund a program coordinator |
| 7 | position to support expansion of the Hawai'i Zero to Three court |
| 8 | to the third circuit. The appropriated funds shall not supplant |
| 9 | the judiciary's existent funding nor budget requests. |
| 10 | SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general |
| 11 | revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$75,588 or so much |
| 12 | thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and the |
| 13 | same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year |
| 14 | 2024-2025 to support a Hawaiʻi Zero to Three court program |
| 15 | coordinator position in the third circuit. |
| 16 | The sums appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary |
| 17 | for the purposes of this Act. |
| 18 | SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023. |
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Report Title:

Zero to Three Court; Third Circuit; Judiciary; Program Coordinator Position; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a Zero to Three Court Program Coordinator position. Expands the Zero to Three Court to the Third Circuit. Appropriates funds.

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