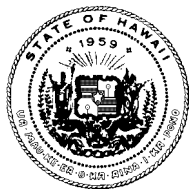


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March 17, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2713 HD1 – RELATING TO ADOPTION ASSISTANCE.**

Hearing: Monday, March 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 225, State Capitol & Video Conference

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill and offers comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace a budget priority identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** This measure appropriates funds to provide additional support and resources to families receiving benefits through the State's adoption assistance and permanency assistance programs. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Human Services (HD1) amended this measure by changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

DHS offers support services to families statewide who are working towards adoption or legal guardianship and families that have attained such legal statuses through Hawaii's child welfare system. The goals of these services are to:

- enhance child development,
- increase parents' competence in parenting,
- strengthen parent-child relationships, and

- address the needs of families in crisis and families at risk of child abuse or neglect.

Once adoption is finalized, the rights of the adoptive parents are the same as those of all other legal parents; that is, Child Welfare Services (CWS) cannot require adoptive parents to participate in services. Notably, the support services that the Department offers are voluntary, and their status as voluntary is essential to respect the rights of the adoptive family. CWS only has the statutory authority to mandate services if there are concerns about child abuse and neglect, per sections 350-1, 350-2, and Chapter 587A, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

DHS appreciates the bill's purpose of increasing funds to support the needs of adoptive and guardianship families. The trauma that children and families have experienced can manifest at different points in life, sometimes years after CWS has stepped out of the family, and families require continued support. Additional funds may also support Family First Hawaii's expansion, which includes supporting and strengthening adoptive and guardianship families as a target population.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.