

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that in 2022, the auditor
2 was requested to conduct a performance audit of the child
3 welfare services branch of the department of human services
4 (department), pursuant to senate concurrent resolution
5 102 S.D. 1 H.D. 1. In April 2024, the auditor published report
6 no. 24-05, finding that the department's process to license
7 child-specific homes did not comply with legal requirements and
8 that the department failed to monitor or evaluate the
9 performance of its contractor hired to complete documentation
10 necessary for licensing, ultimately putting children at risk.

11 The legislature also finds that, pursuant to Act 86,
12 Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, the malama ohana working group was
13 established to improve the child welfare system by seeking,
14 designing, and recommending transformative changes to the
15 State's existing child welfare system. The malama ohana working
16 group published its final report with various recommendations on
17 December 9, 2024.



S.B. NO. 710

1 The legislature further finds that the senate committee on
2 health and human services conducted an informational briefing on
3 November 21, 2024, to address the April 2024 state audit of
4 child welfare services and concerns regarding the child welfare
5 system in Hawaii. The informational briefing agenda included
6 highlights from the audit, recommendations from the malama ohana
7 working group, a review of the 2016 East Hawaii pilot program,
8 and a status update from the department of human services
9 regarding efforts to increase recruitment of foster families and
10 social workers.

11 The legislature notes that the informational briefing
12 highlighted persistent shortcomings in Hawaii's child welfare
13 system and recognizes that there is an urgent need for systemic
14 change.

15 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to convene a child
16 welfare task force to develop strategies and policy changes to
17 transform and improve the State's child welfare system.

18 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department
19 of human services, for administrative purposes only, a child
20 welfare task force to develop strategies and policy changes to
21 transform and improve the State's child welfare system,



1 including consideration of the recommendations of the malama
2 ohana working group, pursuant to Act 86, Session Laws of
3 Hawaii 2023.

4 (b) The department of human services shall fully cooperate
5 with the child welfare task force in carrying out its duties,
6 including providing any requested information in accordance with
7 federal and state law, and shall provide support or other
8 assistance as reasonably requested. The task force may consult
9 with other persons and organizations as necessary to carry out
10 its duties pursuant to this Act.

11 (c) The members of the child welfare task force shall
12 include the following individuals or their designees:

13 (1) The chair of the senate standing committee having
14 primary subject-matter jurisdiction over the
15 department of human services, who shall serve as
16 co-chair;

17 (2) The chair of the house of representatives standing
18 committee having primary subject-matter jurisdiction
19 over the department of human services, who shall serve
20 as co-chair;

21 (3) The attorney general;



- 1 (4) The director of human services;
- 2 (5) The director of human resources development;
- 3 (6) The executive director of the office of wellness and
- 4 resilience;
- 5 (7) The insurance commissioner; and
- 6 (8) Members of the malama ohana working group, pursuant to
- 7 Act 86, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023.

8 (d) The members of the child welfare task force shall
9 serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses,
10 including travel expenses, necessary for the performance of
11 their duties.

12 (e) The child welfare task force shall submit a report of
13 its findings and recommendations, including any proposed
14 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
15 to the convening of the regular session of 2026.

16 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000 or so much
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 for the
19 child welfare task force to carry out its duties pursuant to
20 this Act, including incidental costs and potential consultancy
21 fees.



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

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY:

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is highly cursive and difficult to decipher, but appears to contain the letters 'J', 'A', and 'R'.

S.B. NO. 710

Report Title:

DHS; Child Welfare Task Force; Child Welfare System; Malama Ohana Working Group; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Child Welfare Task Force to develop strategies and policy changes to transform and improve the State's child welfare system. Requires support from the Department of Human Services. Requires a report to the legislature. Appropriates moneys.

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

