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# 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 No. 102, S.D. 1, H.D. 1 (2022). In April 2024, the auditor  
6 published report no. 24-05, finding that the department's  
7 process to license child-specific homes did not comply with  
8 legal requirements and that the department failed to monitor or  
9 evaluate the performance of its contractor hired to complete  
10 documentation necessary for licensing, ultimately putting  
11 children at risk.

12           The legislature also finds that, pursuant to Act 86,  
13 Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, the malama ohana working group was  
14 established to improve the child welfare system by seeking,  
15 designing, and recommending transformative changes to the  
16 State's existing child welfare system. The malama ohana working



1 group published its final report with various recommendations on  
2 December 9, 2024.

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

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

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

20 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department  
21 of human services, for administrative purposes only, a child



1 welfare task force to develop strategies and policy changes to  
2 transform and improve the State's child welfare system,  
3 including consideration of the recommendations of the malama  
4 ohana working group, pursuant to Act 86, Session Laws of  
5 Hawaii 2023.

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

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

- 15 (1) The executive director of the office of wellness and  
16 resilience, who shall serve as chairperson of the task  
17 force;
- 18 (2) The attorney general;
- 19 (3) The director of human services;
- 20 (4) The director of human resources development;
- 21 (5) The insurance commissioner; and



1 (6) Members of the malama ohana working group, pursuant to  
2 Act 86, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, to be invited by  
3 the chairperson.

4 (d) The members of the child welfare task force shall  
5 serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses,  
6 including travel expenses, necessary for the performance of  
7 their duties.

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

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

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

20 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on December 31,  
21 2050.



**Report Title:**

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

**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 funds. Effective 12/31/2050. (SD1)

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

