

MAR 07 2025

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# SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO CONDUCT MANDATORY INQUIRIES INTO ALL  
FATALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES THAT OCCURRED TO CHILDREN  
INVOLVED IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

1           WHEREAS, the Department of Human Services (DHS), Child  
2 Welfare Services Branch has experienced a troubling number of  
3 child fatalities and serious injuries resulting from systemic  
4 failures, including neglect in foster care placements and unsafe  
5 reunifications; and

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7           WHEREAS, nineteen child fatalities or serious injuries have  
8 been reported since 1997 and over ten million dollars have been  
9 paid out in lawsuits so far; and

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11           WHEREAS, in the case of Reubyne, who was beaten in 1997 and  
12 is still in a vegetative state, DHS was sued for negligence and  
13 settled for two million dollars; and

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15           WHEREAS, in the case of Peter Boy Kema, who was murdered in  
16 1997 though his body was never found, his family was involved in  
17 multiple Child Welfare Services cases and ultimately reunified;  
18 however, a Special Master's report states that the Department  
19 should never have reunified, the father was convicted, and a  
20 lawsuit is pending; and

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22           WHEREAS, in 1999 a Waianae family was given permanent  
23 guardianship over a group of children, who after reaching  
24 adulthood, successfully sued DHS following the parents'  
25 conviction for assault and sexual abuse in 2005; and

26  
27           WHEREAS, in the case of Alexis Cabantang, who was left with  
28 permanent disabilities after she was beaten and nearly died in  
29 2005, her guardian was sentenced to twenty years in prison and  
30 the Department of Education was successfully sued for failure to  
31 report her injuries to Child Welfare Services; and



1  
2 WHEREAS, in the case of Cyrus Belt, who was thrown over a  
3 freeway overpass in Honolulu in 2008, the responsible party was  
4 sentenced to life in prison and DHS settled a lawsuit brought by  
5 the father for not intervening despite having been notified six  
6 days prior that the mother was using methamphetamine; and  
7

8 WHEREAS, in the case of Braden McVeigh, who was murdered in  
9 2009 after being reunited with his father over the objections of  
10 the grandmother, DHS was successfully sued; and  
11

12 WHEREAS, in 2012, Zion McKeown was beaten to death at the  
13 age of four after being reunified with the parents despite  
14 multiple warnings against reunification; and  
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16 WHEREAS, in the case of Ronela Pascual, who was critically  
17 injured in 2008 after reunification which left her unable to  
18 communicate until her death in 2013 at the age of eleven; and  
19

20 WHEREAS, in the case of Zachary Durto-Burgess, who was  
21 beaten to death after being reunified with his parents in 2010,  
22 his parents were sentenced to life in prison; and  
23

24 WHEREAS, Zack Morris was convicted of sexual abuse and DHS  
25 was successfully sued by the boys who were placed in his foster  
26 home despite suspicions of child abuse in other states; and  
27

28 WHEREAS, Fabian Garcia died in her foster home on Big  
29 Island due to blunt force trauma and has yet to receive justice;  
30 and  
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32 WHEREAS, Shaelyn Stone was withdrawn from public school and  
33 died of starvation in 2017; thereafter, her parents and  
34 grandparent were all convicted of manslaughter; and  
35

36 WHEREAS, a seven day old infant died of brain damage at  
37 Tripler Hospital after an older sibling similarly died of  
38 injuries, and the parents were later convicted of murder for  
39 both children in 2020; and  
40

41 WHEREAS, in 2020 a lawsuit was filed against DHS for  
42 overlooking systemic abuse in a foster home where the eleven



1 adopted children were forced into slave labor, molested, and  
2 starved before a teen child ultimately killed the abusive  
3 adoptive mother; and  
4

5 WHEREAS, Ariel Sellers was murdered in 2021 at the age of  
6 six after being starved, gagged, and kept in a dog cage by her  
7 adoptive parents who are currently in jail awaiting second  
8 degree murder charges; and  
9

10 WHEREAS, in 2021 an infant was declared deceased after  
11 Child Welfare Services had been called in to investigate the  
12 situation months earlier but decided not to open a case; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, Bula Mahoe was charged with sexual abuse of his  
15 parents' foster children; and  
16

17 WHEREAS, Caitano used foster children to conduct an illegal  
18 drug ring in 2022, and was ultimately indicted for that offense  
19 along with sexual abuse and physical abuse; and  
20

21 WHEREAS, Geanna Bradley was found dead in her home in 2024  
22 after being starved and physically abused by her guardians, who  
23 are now charged with second degree murder, and another child in  
24 the home was found in very serious condition; and  
25

26 WHEREAS, repeated failures to act upon warnings and ensure  
27 child safety have resulted in preventable deaths and injuries;  
28 and  
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30 WHEREAS, despite a 2005 policy directive (DHS 2005-PA-3)  
31 requiring safety concerns to be immediately reported to judges,  
32 these warnings have often been ignored; and  
33

34 WHEREAS, lawsuits for some of the child fatality and  
35 serious injury cases have been successful, but they are complex,  
36 expensive, and time-consuming, while in the meantime, there is  
37 no assurance that preventative measures have been taken by DHS;  
38 and  
39

40 WHEREAS, Hawaii does have a child death review panel per  
41 the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)  
42 requirements, but there is no disclosure to the public or



1 assurance that the circumstances of a death or injury have been  
2 addressed for future prevention; and

3  
4 WHEREAS, unlike Hawaii, states like California, Florida,  
5 and Colorado publish detailed information online about such  
6 cases and some even mandate these disclosures to ensure  
7 transparency and accountability, particularly when there has  
8 been previous state involvement; and

9  
10 WHEREAS, studies of child deaths over decades have resulted  
11 in four main causes:

12  
13 (1) Failure of communication between staff and agencies;

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15 (2) Inexperience and lack of skill of individual social  
16 workers;

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18 (3) Failure to follow established procedures; and

19  
20 (4) Inadequate resources to meet demands; now, therefore,

21  
22 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third  
23 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2025, the  
24 House of Representatives concurring, that the Senate Committee  
25 on Health and Human Services and House Committee on Human  
26 Services and Homelessness are urged to conduct mandatory  
27 inquiries into all fatalities and serious injuries that occurred  
28 to children involved in Child Welfare Services; and

29  
30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these inquiries must include a  
31 comprehensive review of systemic failures, resource allocation,  
32 departmental accountability, and the identification of measures  
33 to prevent further harm; and

34  
35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the goal of these inquiries  
36 should be to ensure full transparency, prompt and thorough  
37 action, and the establishment of safeguards that prioritize the  
38 safety and well-being of all children under the Department of  
39 Human Services' care; and

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41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature is committed to  
42 enacting laws in response to the results of the mandated



# S.C.R. NO. 185

1 inquiries that ensure similar transparency and accountability as  
2 seen in other states, such as Colorado, to uphold the public  
3 trust and prevent future tragedies; and  
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5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
6 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Human  
7 Services, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of  
8 Representatives, Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and  
9 Human Services, and Chair of the House Committee on Human  
10 Services and Homelessness.  
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OFFERED BY:  \_\_\_\_\_

