

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 14 2025

RE: S.B. No. 710
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Health and Human Services, to which was referred S.B. No. 710 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish the Child Welfare Task Force to develop strategies and policy changes to transform and improve the State's child welfare system;
- (2) Require the Department of Human Services to cooperate with the Child Welfare Task Force and provide support or other assistance; and
- (3) Appropriate funds for the Child Welfare Task Force to carry out its duties, including incidental costs and potential consultancy fees.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Office of Wellness and Resilience, Mālama 'Ohana Working Group, Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, Hawai'i Youth Services Network, Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i, Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform, and two individuals.



Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Human Services and Department of the Attorney General.

Your Committee finds that in 2022, the Auditor conducted a performance audit of the Child Welfare Services Branch of the Department of Human Services and concluded in report No. 24-05 that the Department's process to license child-specific homes did not comply with legal requirements and that the Department failed to monitor or evaluate the performance of its contractor hired to complete documentation necessary for licensing, ultimately putting children at risk. Your Committee further finds that the Legislature established the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group to improve the child welfare system by seeking, designing, and recommending transformative changes to the State's existing child welfare system. This measure promotes collaboration and coordination between relevant state agency stakeholders and the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group to develop actionable strategies for meaningful improvements to the State's child welfare system.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting language that would have included, as co-chairs of the Child Welfare Task Force, the:
 - (A) Chair of the Senate standing committee having primary subject-matter jurisdiction over the Department of Human Services; and
 - (B) Chair of the House of Representatives standing committee having primary subject-matter jurisdiction over the Department of Human Services;
- (2) Designating the Executive Director of the Office of Wellness and Resilience as the chairperson of the Child Welfare Task Force;
- (3) Changing the appropriation to an unspecified amount;
- (4) Inserting an effective date of December 31, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and



- (5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Health and Human Services that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 710, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 710, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Health and Human
Services,



JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, Chair



