

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that more initiatives
2 must be established to address the unmet needs of children and
3 families in the child welfare system.

4 The legislature also finds that the malama ohana working
5 group was established within the office of wellness and
6 resilience to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes
7 to the State's existing child welfare system. In their report
8 submitted to the 2025 legislature, the malama ohana working
9 group recommended establishment of preventative programs and
10 comprehensive services to reduce the risk of families entering
11 the child welfare system.

12 The legislature further finds that the child welfare
13 services branch of the department of human services has
14 struggled to fill vacant positions, resulting in high caseloads
15 for existing staff.

16 The legislature also finds that other states have been
17 successful in reducing the number of families involved in their



1 child welfare systems by implementing innovative programs that
2 include peer support and system navigation; resources and
3 financial assistance; and parenting and family-strengthening
4 classes.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the
6 office of wellness and resilience to establish a two-year child
7 welfare system diversion and intervention pilot program to
8 provide services for families and children involved, at risk of
9 involvement, or at the risk or reinvolverment, with child welfare
10 services.

11 SECTION 2. (a) The office of wellness and resilience
12 shall design, implement, and administer, a child welfare system
13 diversion and intervention pilot program.

14 (b) The pilot program shall include:

15 (1) Trained, trauma-informed peer support navigators with
16 lived experience to assist with enrollment in public
17 benefit initiatives, as well as community-based and
18 cultural programming;

19 (2) Financial assistance and provision of resources for
20 food, clothing, hygiene, housing, parenting,
21 childcare, household, and transportation needs; and



1 (3) A trauma-informed intervention program that improves
2 caregiver-child relationships and parenting skills
3 through teaching and coaching on positive
4 communication, and child behavior management, calming,
5 and emotional regulation strategies for both the
6 caregiver and child.

7 (c) The office of wellness and resilience shall submit a
8 report of its findings and recommendations for the child welfare
9 system diversion and intervention pilot program, including any
10 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
11 days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2027.

12 (d) The office of wellness and resilience may contract
13 with public and private entities to design, implement, and
14 administer the pilot program.

15 (e) The pilot program shall cease to exist July 1, 2027.

16 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,714,292 or so much
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
19 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
20 2026-2027 to design, implement, and administer a child welfare
21 system diversion and intervention pilot program pursuant to this



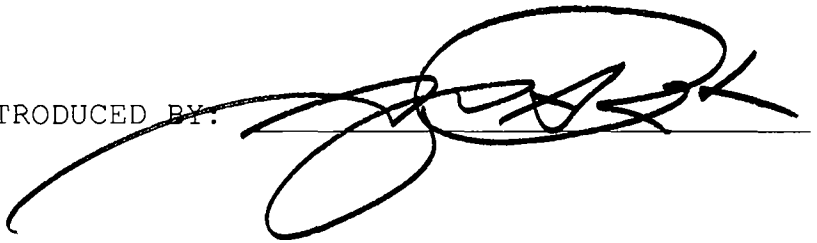
1 Act, including contracting with public and private entities to
2 provide necessary services.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the office of
4 wellness and resilience for the purposes of this Act.

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

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INTRODUCED BY:

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S.B. NO. 952

Report Title:

OWR; Child Welfare System; Diversion and Intervention; Pilot Program; Report; Appropriations

Description:

Requires the Office of Wellness and Resilience to design, implement, and administer a two-year Child Welfare System Diversion and Intervention Pilot Program to support families and children involved, at risk of involvement, or at risk of reinvolverment with child welfare services. Allows the office to contract with public and private entities to provide necessary services. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

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

