
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 State's 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 a report
8 submitted to the 2025 legislature, the malama ohana working
9 group recommended establishment of preventive 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
17 successfully reduced the number of families involved in the



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

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the
6 department of human services to establish a five-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 of reinvolvement, with child welfare
10 services.

11 SECTION 2. (a) The department of human services shall
12 collaborate with the office of wellness and resilience to design
13 a child welfare system diversion and intervention pilot program.
14 The department of human services shall implement and administer
15 the pilot program.

16 (b) The pilot program shall include:

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



1 (2) Financial assistance and the provision of resources to
2 meet families' food, clothing, hygiene, housing,
3 parenting, childcare, household, and transportation
4 needs; and

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

11 (c) The department of human services, in collaboration
12 with the office of wellness and resilience, shall submit a
13 report of the department's findings and recommendations
14 regarding the child welfare system diversion and intervention
15 pilot program, including any proposed legislation, to the
16 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
17 the regular session of 2030.

18 (d) The department of human services may contract with
19 public and private entities to design, implement, and administer
20 the pilot program.



1 (e) The pilot program shall cease to exist on July 1,
2 2030.

3 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
5 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
6 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
7 year 2026-2027 to design, implement, and administer a child
8 welfare system diversion and intervention pilot program pursuant
9 to this Act, including contracting with public and private
10 entities to provide necessary services.

11 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
12 of human services for the purposes of this Act.

13 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

DHS; OWR; Child Welfare System; Diversion and Intervention;
Pilot Program; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Office of Wellness and Resilience, to design a five-year Child Welfare System Diversion and Intervention Pilot Program to support families and children involved, at risk of involvement, or at risk of reinvolvement with Child Welfare Services. Specifies that the Department of Human Services shall implement and administer the pilot program. Allows the Department to contract with public and private entities to provide necessary services. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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