

JAN 23 2026

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 the malama ohana
2 working group, established by Act 86, Session Laws of Hawaii
3 2023, was tasked with recommending transformative changes to the
4 State's child welfare system. For fifteen months, seventeen
5 members of the working group representing those serving youth,
6 as well as youth, families, and community members throughout the
7 State, opened their hearts and listened deeply to the stories of
8 lived experience within the child welfare system. They
9 developed recommendations to establish a child welfare system
10 that is trauma-informed, sustains a community-based partnership,
11 and responds to the needs of children and families in the system
12 and the community. The result of this work was a powerful
13 vision for transforming how Hawaii supports families and
14 protects children.

15 Among the many recommendations to move toward this vision
16 was to strengthen the capacity of the child welfare services
17 branch to manage cases that are complicated by domestic violence



1 experienced by a parent or children in the family. In cases
2 involving domestic violence, the child welfare services system
3 must differentiate between parents who cooperate with the system
4 and those who use the system to punish or continue abusing their
5 partner.

6 The legislature further finds that child welfare services
7 social workers support and advocate for families and children
8 experiencing domestic violence through counseling, as well as
9 connecting clients with legal and community resources that
10 support safety and stability. One such resource is provided
11 through a one-year contract between the department of human
12 services and Domestic Violence Services for Families, a non-
13 profit that provides referred clients with individual and group
14 education, counseling, safety and service plans, supervised
15 visitation, parenting skills, and temporary restraining order
16 assistance, if needed.

17 In 2025, the child welfare services branch confirmed one
18 hundred eighty-one cases of children experiencing domestic
19 violence, and one hundred seventy-nine cases with confirmed
20 child victims. To assist the child welfare services branch with
21 better detecting and servicing the growing number of cases of



1 domestic violence, three new initiatives will need to be
2 implemented.

3 The first initiative involves specialized, comprehensive
4 domestic violence training for all child welfare services branch
5 staff, tailored to their roles: intake, assessment, case
6 management, and permanency. Intake and case management staff
7 will be trained to do universal screening to measure the level
8 of exposure to and involvement in violence in the home and
9 community, as well as other risk factors. Assessment and
10 permanency social workers will be trained to manage domestic
11 violence cases with skills in assessing child and family needs,
12 creating safety plans, gathering witness declarations, and
13 requesting medical records. The child welfare services branch
14 will contract the creation of or purchase a domestic violence
15 curriculum as well as any necessary trainers, and update
16 policies with best practices.

17 The second initiative is to develop a tracking system to be
18 integrated into the new computer system currently being
19 developed for the child welfare services branch, which is
20 projected to be available by the end of 2026. The new system
21 would monitor identified domestic violence cases and report on



1 the numbers, what specialized services were offered and used,
2 and the dispositions of the cases. This will help ensure
3 domestic violence cases are being monitored, identify patterns
4 of behavior that may be used to predict risk, and provide data
5 to inform policies for effective service delivery.

6 The third initiative is to establish a system in which a
7 contracted domestic violence specialist is regularly scheduled
8 to be on-site at one of the child welfare services branch
9 offices. This will facilitate and encourage consultation during
10 staff assessment, planning, and provision of support to families
11 with domestic violence. The collaborative work will build
12 systemic capacity within the child welfare workforce to
13 investigate domestic violence and to support and engage with
14 families during the child welfare services intervention.

15 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for the
16 department of human services to contract with one or more
17 organizations specializing in domestic violence to provide
18 training and on-site staff in child welfare services branch
19 offices to support all aspects of screening for and addressing
20 domestic violence within a case.



1 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
4 the department of human services to contract with one or more
5 organizations specializing in domestic violence to provide
6 training and on-site staff in child welfare services branch
7 offices to support all aspects of screening for and addressing
8 domestic violence within a case.

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

11 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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INTRODUCED BY: Rachel Farsa



S.B. NO. 2898

Report Title:

DHS; Child Welfare Services; Domestic Violence; Training;
Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to contract with one or more organizations specializing in domestic violence to provide training and on-site staff in Child Welfare Services Branch offices to support all aspects of screening for and addressing domestic violence within a case.

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