THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 952 S.D. 2

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

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

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

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

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

The legislature also finds that other states have successfully reduced the number of families involved in the

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

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the department of human services to establish a five-year child welfare system diversion and intervention pilot program to provide services for families and children involved, at risk of involvement, or at the risk of reinvolvement, with child welfare services.

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

(b) The pilot program shall include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on December 31, 2050.

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

Description:
Requires the Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Office of Wellness and Resilience to design a 5-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. (SD2)

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

