

JAN 23 2026

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# 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 Fonda*



# 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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