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H.B. NO. 2268-84

A Bill for an Act Relating to the Family Courts.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

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SECTION 1. Section 571-46, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§571-46 Criteria and procedure in awarding custody. In the actions for divorce, separation, annulment, separate maintenance, or any other proceeding where there is at issue a dispute as to the custody of a minor child, the court may, during the pendency of the action, at the final hearing or any time during the minority of the child, make such order for the custody of the minor child as may seem necessary or proper. In awarding the custody, the court is to be guided by the following standards, considerations, and procedures:

- (1) Custody should be awarded to either parent or to both parents according to the best interests of the child.
- (2) Custody may be awarded to persons other than the father or mother whenever such award serves the best interest of the child. Any person who has had de facto custody of the child in a stable and wholesome home and is a fit and proper person shall prima facie be entitled to an award of custody.
- (3) If a child is of sufficient age and capacity to reason, so as to form an intelligent preference, his wishes as to custody shall be considered and be given due weight by the court.
- (4) Whenever good cause appears therefor, the court may require an investigation and report concerning the care, welfare, and custody of any minor child of the parties. When so directed by the court, investigators or professional personnel attached to or assisting the court shall make investigations and reports which shall be made available to all interested parties and counsel before hearing, and such reports may be received in evidence if no objection is made and, if objection is made, may be received in evidence provided the person or persons responsible for the report are available for cross-examination as to any matter which has been investigated.
- (5) The court may hear the testimony of any person or expert produced by any party or upon the court's own motion, whose skill, insight, knowledge, or experience is such that his testimony is relevant to a just and reasonable determination of what is to the best physical, mental, moral, and spiritual well-being of the child whose custody is at issue.
- (6) Any custody award shall be subject to modification or change whenever the best interests of the child require or justify the modification or change and wherever practicable, the same person who made the original order shall hear the motion or petition for modification of the prior award.
- (7) Reasonable visitation rights shall be awarded to parents, grandparents, and [to] any person interested in the welfare of the child in the

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discretion of the court, unless it is shown that such rights of visitation are detrimental to the best interests of the child.

- (8) The court may appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the interests of the child and may assess the reasonable fees and expenses of the guardian ad litem as costs of the action, payable in whole or in part by either or both parties as the circumstances may justify.”

SECTION 2. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed. New material is underscored.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon approval.

(Approved June 7, 1984.)