

ACT 310

S.B. NO. 930

A Bill for an Act Making an Appropriation for a Resource and Technical Assistance Project on Autism.

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

SECTION 1. Findings and purpose. The legislature finds that current services available in Hawaii frequently do not meet the unique needs of persons with autism. While it is impossible to determine the exact number of persons with autism or autistic-like characteristics due to the absence of an effective system of diagnosis and follow-up, it is estimated that there are about eleven hundred people with autism in Hawaii. The lack of a diagnosis, or an inaccurate diagnosis, frequently results in inappropriate and insufficient support services at home, work, and in school for persons with autism. Families of persons with autism need to be supported because they are the primary providers of services. Without effective intervention and appropriate support to families, large numbers of persons with autism are at great risk of costly and long-term, or even lifetime institutionalization.

In 1991, the state planning council on developmental disabilities submitted a report on autism in response to H.C.R. No. 212, H.D. 1, entitled, "Requesting the State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to do a Feasibility Study of Comprehensive Services for People with Autism and Autistic-like Behaviors." This report found that:

- (1) The most effective interventions known in autism now are early identification and diagnosis, effective educational and behavioral interventions, and appropriate support services with an emphasis on continuity;

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- (2) Hawaii presently does not have adequate expertise in the field of autism, and lacks a comprehensive coordinated system of services for this population; and
- (3) Due to the lack of consistently available and appropriate services, Hawaii has spent over \$500,000 a year in 1990 and 1991 on just four adolescents with autism.

The report's major recommendation was that Hawaii establish and fund a three-year pilot program under the auspices of the University of Hawaii's university affiliate program, to be known as the Hawaii resource and technical assistance project on autism. The 1992 legislature provided \$200,000 funding for the project for fiscal year 1992-1993.

The purpose of this Act is to express strong legislative support and provide continuing funding so that this newly established autism project will continue to support and assist families, professionals, and persons with autism. The project shall provide:

- (1) Diagnostic expertise and a team of trained professionals to work in collaboration with parents throughout the child's evaluation;
- (2) Coordination of the development and implementation of meaningful service plans;
- (3) On-site training for families, community agencies, and schools to provide appropriate services for persons with autism;
- (4) Assistance to families in locating and accessing appropriate services;
- (5) Advocacy for individuals with autism and autistic-like characteristics to further develop and improve services; and
- (6) Facilitation of research, networking, information exchanges, and agreements among agencies and parents dealing with autism.

SECTION 2. The autism advisory committee, established within the University of Hawaii's university affiliate program, shall continue to assure appropriate coordination of activities and provide support and direction to the project.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$175,385, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 1993-1994, and the sum of \$182,263, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 1994-1995; to provide continuing funding for efforts to establish support and assistance to families, professionals, and persons with autism through the resource and technical assistance project on autism.

SECTION 4. The sums appropriated shall be expended by the University of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 1993.

(Approved June 21, 1993.)