

ACT 156

S.B. NO. 1423

A Bill for an Act Relating to a Commission on Fatherhood.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that children benefit from positive relationships with not only their mothers but also their fathers:

- (1) It is widely recognized that children are more likely to thrive with support, guidance, and nurturing from both parents;
- (2) Paternal involvement is important especially for very young children, since early childhood contributes to the development of emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills;
- (3) Children whose fathers are involved in their activities, eat meals together, go on outings with them, and help them with their homework, have fewer behavioral problems, are more social, and perform better in school;
- (4) Fathers who are involved in their children's schooling, such as volunteering at school and attending school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and class events, tend to have children who have higher grades, enjoy school more, and are at lower risk of being suspended or expelled;
- (5) The father-child relationship affects daughters as well as sons, since girls who live with both parents do better academically and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, early sexual involvement, and the use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs; and
- (6) Although negative peer influence is the major reason children use drugs, research suggests that a positive family influence is the main reason children do not use drugs, and boys and girls are less likely to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs if their fathers are involved in their lives.

The legislature agrees with the National Governors Association's position that government at all levels can and should take immediate action to encourage active participation by fathers of all ages in raising their children and the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies to strengthen the role of fathers in their children's lives.

The legislature further agrees that additional investment in fatherhood would broaden the population served; provided that there should be support of and coordination between existing programs, and that these new initiatives should not be funded at the expense of another vital human service program.

The purpose of this Act is to establish a commission on fatherhood to promote healthy family relationships between parents and children.

SECTION 2. The Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended by adding a new chapter to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

**“CHAPTER
COMMISSION ON FATHERHOOD**

§ **-1 Findings and purpose.** The legislature finds that, across the United States, there is a renewed understanding of the unique importance of fathers in the lives of their children, families, and communities. It is widely recognized that children are more likely to thrive with support, guidance, and nurturing from both parents. The absence of one parent from a child's life can place that child at a greater risk of health, emotional, educational, and behavioral problems associated with the child's development. However, many young men today are themselves fatherless, lack appropriate role models, and are in need of information and education regarding the appropriate roles and responsibilities of fathers.

The legislature further finds that the role of fathers in the raising of children and in the health and well-being of families is often unintentionally overlooked in government contracts, programs, and services dealing with children's health, welfare, and education.

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide for a statewide program to promote healthy family relationships between parents and children.

§ **-2 State commission on fatherhood.** There is established the state commission on fatherhood within the office of the lieutenant governor for administrative purposes.

§ **-3 Members; terms; chair; quorum; compensation.** (a) The commission shall consist of fifteen members and reflect the geographic and cultural diversity of the State. The membership shall include:

- (1) Ex officio, the director of human services, superintendent of education, director of health, attorney general, director of the office of children and youth, and executive director of the office of youth services, or their designees; and
- (2) Eight voting members shall be appointed by the governor as provided in section 26-34, except as otherwise provided in this section, as follows:
 - (A) Two members shall be appointed by the governor from a list of three nominees submitted by the president of the senate, and two members shall be appointed by the governor from a list of three nominees submitted by the speaker of the house of representatives; and

(B) Four members shall be appointed by the governor from the community.

(3) One voting member shall be designated by the Hawaii Coalition for Dads.

(b) Of the appointed members, there shall be at least one member from each of the counties of Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii.

(c) All members shall serve for a term of two years. Any vacancies occurring in the membership of the commission shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointments.

(d) The chair and vice chair of the board shall be selected annually from the nongovernmental members of the commission appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(2). A simple majority shall constitute a quorum, whose affirmative vote shall be necessary for all actions.

(e) The members shall serve without compensation.

(f) Any member of the commission shall be immune from civil liability as provided in section 26-35.5.

§ **-4 Duties.** The commission shall serve in an advisory capacity to state agencies to promote healthy family relationships between parents and children. In addition, the commission may make recommendations on programs, services, and contracts relating to children and families, and may:

- (1) Act as a central clearinghouse and coordinating body for governmental and nongovernmental activities and information relating to the promotion of healthy families;
- (2) Identify promising best practices that support and engage both parents in the emotional and financial support of their children;
- (3) Identify obstacles that impede or prevent the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children;
- (4) Raise public awareness of the consequences that the absence of the father may cause in a child's life;
- (5) Recommend policies and practices, both within and without state government, that sustain and reengage fathers in the lives of their children;
- (6) Promote, foster, encourage, and otherwise support programs designed to educate and train young men who are both current and future fathers as to effective parenting skills, behaviors, and attitudes;
- (7) Promote, foster, encourage, and otherwise support programs that promote fatherhood;
- (8) Promote, foster, encourage, and otherwise support programs that counter poverty and low income by increasing the capacity of fathers to overcome personal challenges and become productive, independent, and financially responsible contributors to their family; and
- (9) Do any and all things necessary to carry out its duties and the purposes of this chapter.

§ **-5 Meetings.** The meetings of the commission shall be subject to the requirements of chapter 92.

§ **-6 Exemption from administrative supervision of boards and commissions.** Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the commission shall be exempt from section 26-35 with the exception of section 26-35(2), (3), (7), and (8).

§ **-7 Administration of funds.** The commission shall administer funds appropriated or allocated for its work and shall be authorized to accept, disburse, and allocate funds that may become available from other governmental and private

sources; provided that all such funds shall be disbursed or allocated in compliance with any specific designation stated by the donor and, in the absence of any specific designation, the funds shall be disbursed or allocated on projects related to any of the purposes of this chapter.”

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2003, and be repealed on June 30, 2005.

(Approved June 14, 2003.)