
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that as of November 2002,
2 forty-one states passed safe surrender laws to protect newborn
3 infants who might otherwise be abandoned in an unsafe
4 environment. The enactment of laws establishing a safe haven
5 for newborn infants in Hawaii is long overdue.

6 Current law allows for the prosecution of parents who
7 abandon their newborn infants. These parents are often young
8 mothers who are unable to deal with the harsh reality of
9 parenthood. Their solution is leaving the newborn in a
10 populated area with the hope that someone will find and care for
11 the child. Although the possibility of prosecution was intended
12 to deter mothers from taking such a careless approach, newborn
13 infants have suffered and died as the result of abandonment in
14 life-threatening situations.

15 "Safe-surrender" laws take a different approach by making
16 the child's needs the immediate concern, rather than focusing on
17 the mother's liability. The goal of these laws is to create a
18 system where parents can leave their newborns in a place of



1 safety without fear of being prosecuted for child abandonment.
2 Anonymity, confidentiality, and freedom from prosecution for
3 parents may encourage them to leave a newborn infant at a
4 suitably safe place and thus save the newborn infant's life.
5 While established adoption procedures may be preferable, safe-
6 surrender laws provide an alternative that saves the lives of
7 newborns.

8 In 2003, the governor vetoed House Bill No. 133, Conference
9 Draft 1, because the Governor objected to the individual leaving
10 the baby without also leaving medical or genealogical history.
11 This Act is nearly identical to House Bill No. 133, but to
12 address the governor's objection, by providing that the
13 individual is allowed to leave the baby if the individual also
14 leaves any known family medical history of major illnesses or
15 diseases.

16 The purpose of this Act is to establish a safe haven for
17 newborns and provide for their future health and safety by:

- 18 (1) Providing immunity from prosecution for leaving an
19 unharmed newborn at a hospital, fire station, or
20 police station;



1 (2) Providing immunity from liability for hospitals, fire
2 stations, police stations, and their personnel, who
3 receive the newborn; and

4 (3) Conditioning relinquishment on the requirement that
5 the individual leave written information on the family
6 medical history of the child.

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

10 "CHAPTER

11 SAFE PLACE FOR NEWBORNS

12 § -1 **Definitions.** As used in this chapter:

13 "Department" means the department of human services.

14 "Fire station" means a building for fire equipment and
15 firefighters.

16 "Firefighter" means a member of a fire department whose
17 principal duties are to prevent and fight fires.

18 "Health care provider" means an individual licensed,
19 certified, or otherwise authorized or permitted by law to
20 provide health care in the ordinary course of business or
21 practice of a profession.



1 "Hospital" means a facility licensed as a hospital by the
2 department of health and accredited by the Joint Commission on
3 Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

4 "Law enforcement officer or police officer":

5 (1) Means any public servant, whether employed by the
6 State or any county, or by the United States, vested
7 by law with a duty to maintain public order, to make
8 arrests for offenses, or to enforce the criminal laws,
9 whether that duty extends to all offenses or is
10 limited to a specific class of offenses; and

11 (2) Includes the attorney general, deputy attorneys
12 general, county prosecuting attorneys, and deputy
13 prosecuting attorneys engaged in the enforcement of
14 criminal law.

15 "Police station" means a facility where police officers
16 daily report for assignments, paperwork, and other police
17 business.

18 "Unharmful condition" means no evidence of injury to a
19 child's physical or psychological health or welfare, as
20 evidenced in any case where:

21 (1) The child exhibits no:



- 1 (A) Substantial or multiple skin bruising or any
- 2 other internal bleeding;
- 3 (B) Injury to skin causing substantial bleeding;
- 4 (C) Malnutrition;
- 5 (D) Failure to thrive;
- 6 (E) Burn or burns;
- 7 (F) Poisoning;
- 8 (G) Fracture of any bone;
- 9 (H) Subdural hematoma;
- 10 (I) Soft tissue swelling;
- 11 (J) Extreme pain;
- 12 (K) Extreme mental distress;
- 13 (L) Gross degradation; or
- 14 (M) Death;
- 15 (2) The child has not been the victim of:
- 16 (A) Sexual contact or conduct, including but not
- 17 limited to rape, sodomy, molestation, sexual
- 18 fondling, or incest;
- 19 (B) Obscene or pornographic photographing, filming,
- 20 or depiction; or
- 21 (C) Other similar forms of sexual exploitation;



1 (3) Injury does not exist to the psychological capacity of
2 a child as evidenced by a substantial impairment in
3 the child's ability to function;

4 (4) The child has been provided in a timely manner with
5 adequate food, clothing, shelter, psychological care,
6 physical care, medical care, or supervision; and

7 (5) The child has not been provided with dangerous,
8 harmful, or detrimental drugs, as defined by section
9 712-1240; except in cases where a child's family
10 provides the drugs to the child pursuant to the
11 direction or prescription of a practitioner, as
12 defined in section 712-1240.

13 § -2 **Unharmred newborns left at hospitals, fire**
14 **stations, or police stations; avoidance of prosecution.** A
15 person may leave a newborn child with the personnel of a
16 hospital, a fire station, or a police station without being
17 subject to prosecution for abandonment of a child pursuant to
18 section 709-902; provided that:

19 (1) The newborn child was born within seventy-two hours of
20 being left at the hospital, fire station, or police
21 station, as determined within a reasonable degree of
22 medical certainty;



1 (2) The newborn child is left in an unharmed condition;
2 and

3 (3) The newborn child is accompanied by written
4 information concerning any known family medical
5 history, including major illnesses and diseases.

6 § -3 **Safe place for newborns.** (a) The personnel of a
7 hospital, fire station, or police station may receive a newborn
8 child; provided that:

9 (1) The newborn child was born within seventy-two hours of
10 being left at the hospital, fire station, or police
11 station, as determined within a reasonable degree of
12 medical certainty;

13 (2) The newborn child is left in an unharmed condition;
14 and

15 (3) The newborn child is accompanied by written
16 information concerning any family medical history,
17 including major illnesses and diseases.

18 (b) The personnel of the hospital, fire station, or police
19 station:

20 (1) Shall ask the person leaving the newborn child:

21 (A) For information about the infant's parents, and
22 shall inform the person that the information



1 shall be kept confidential; provided the newborn
2 child is unharmed when presented to the hospital,
3 fire station, or police station; provided further
4 that refusal of the person leaving the infant to
5 provide such information shall not prevent
6 personnel from accepting the newborn child; and

7 (B) About the medical history of the mother or
8 newborn child;

9 (2) May provide the person leaving the newborn child with
10 information about how to contact relevant social
11 service agencies; and

12 (3) Shall notify appropriate law enforcement agencies that
13 a newborn child was received, for purposes of matching
14 the child with missing children reports.

15 (c) If a hospital, fire station, or police station
16 receives a newborn child pursuant to subsection (a), any health
17 care provider, firefighter, or police officer receiving the
18 child shall perform any act necessary, in accordance with
19 generally accepted standards of their professional practice, to
20 protect, preserve, or aid the physical health or safety of the
21 newborn child during the temporary physical custody.



1 § **-4 Reporting.** Within twenty-four hours of receiving
2 a newborn under section -3, the personnel of the hospital,
3 fire station, or police station shall inform the department that
4 a newborn has been left at the premises; provided however, that
5 the department shall not be informed before the person leaving
6 the newborn leaves the premises.

7 § **-5 Immunity.** (a) A hospital with responsibility for
8 performing duties under this chapter, any health care provider,
9 or hospital personnel working at the hospital, a fire station
10 and any firefighter or fire personnel, and a police station and
11 any police officer or police personnel shall be immune from any
12 criminal liability that otherwise might result from their
13 actions, if they are acting in good faith in receiving a newborn
14 child, and shall be immune from any civil liability that
15 otherwise might result from merely receiving a newborn child.

16 (b) A hospital performing duties under this chapter and
17 any health care provider or hospital personnel working at the
18 hospital, a fire station and any firefighter or fire personnel,
19 and a police station and any police officer or police personnel
20 who are mandated reporters under section 350-1.1 shall be immune
21 from any criminal or civil liability that otherwise might result



1 from the failure to make a report under section 350-1.1 if the
2 person is acting in good faith in complying with this chapter.

3 § **-6 Authority to reunite; placement.** (a) Upon
4 receiving custody of a newborn child that has been discharged
5 from a hospital that received the newborn child pursuant to
6 section -3, the department may reunite the newborn with the
7 newborn's parents.

8 (b) The department may:

9 (1) Search for relatives of the newborn as a placement or
10 permanency option; or

11 (2) Implement other placement requirements that give a
12 preference to relatives;

13 provided that the department has information as to the identity
14 of the newborn child, the newborn's mother, or the newborn's
15 father.

16 § **-7 Status of child.** Except as otherwise provided in
17 section 709-902, for purposes of proceedings under this chapter
18 and adoption proceedings, a newborn child left at a hospital,
19 fire station, or police station under section -2 shall be
20 considered an abandoned child."

21 SECTION 3. Section 709-902, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
22 amended to read as follows:



1 "**§709-902 Abandonment of a child.** (1) A person commits
 2 the offense of abandonment of a child if, being a parent,
 3 guardian, or other person legally charged with the care or
 4 custody of a child less than fourteen years old, the person
 5 deserts the child in any place with intent to abandon it.

6 (2) Leaving a newborn child at a hospital, fire station,
 7 or police station pursuant to section -2 shall not constitute
 8 a violation of this section.

9 ~~[(2)]~~ (3) Abandonment of a child is a ~~[misdemeanor.]~~ class
 10 C felony."

11 SECTION 4. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
 12 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
 13 begun before its effective date.

14 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
 15 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

17

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Report Title:

Abandoned Children; Safe Haven; Immunity from Prosecution

Description:

Provides immunity from prosecution for leaving an unharmed newborn at certain safe havens within 72 hours of birth.

Provides immunity from liability for personnel at the safe havens for receiving a newborn.

