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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO INCARCERATED PARENTS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that during the 1990s,  
2 the number of incarcerated parents in the United States grew by  
3 approximately fifty-nine per cent. The legislature further  
4 finds that currently there is no means of determining the exact  
5 number of incarcerated individuals with minor children in Hawaii  
6 as no procedure is in place for collecting such data. However,  
7 it is estimated that there are approximately 3,163 parents of  
8 6,665 children in Hawaii's prison system. An increased focus  
9 needs to be placed on the children of incarcerated individuals  
10 to maintain the parent-child bond.

11           Studies indicate that the children of incarcerated  
12 individuals suffer from a multitude of negative consequences,  
13 including possible displacement from their home and separation  
14 from their primary or secondary caregiver. As a result, these  
15 children experience strong emotional reactions to the  
16 incarceration and disruption in their home life, leading to a  
17 significant increase, up to six times more likely, of becoming  
18 involved in the criminal justice system themselves. State



1 policies contribute to the breakdown of the family by failing to  
2 facilitate the continued relationship between incarcerated  
3 individuals and their children, when the relationship is in the  
4 best interest of the child. Denial of visitation is a means of  
5 punishment or discipline of the incarcerated individuals, but  
6 those who truly suffer are the children. However, strengthening  
7 family relationships has a positive effect on preventing  
8 recidivism as studies have shown it can lessen the possibility  
9 of future incarceration after an inmate's release from a  
10 correctional facility. Studies have also shown that therapeutic  
11 involvement with families during incarceration builds better and  
12 stronger relationships between the incarcerated parent's  
13 children and the incarcerated parent once the parent is  
14 released.

15 A successful model has already been developed and  
16 implemented in the State. The supporting keiki of incarcerated  
17 parents (SKIP) project aims to strengthen families, decrease  
18 abuse and neglect of children of incarcerated parents, and  
19 decrease the occurrence of repeat incarceration. The SKIP  
20 program works with incarcerated fathers at Waiawa correctional  
21 facility, and has been a model for projects in correctional  
22 facilities for both men and women inmates, such as No Na Kamalii



1 and Ohana Strengthening at the Maui community correctional  
2 center and for Makua Keiki at the Kauai community correctional  
3 center. A partnership is also currently underway to replicate  
4 the program in the Hawaii community correctional center. All of  
5 the related SKIP programs have formed a coalition known as the  
6 SKIP Partnership. In addition to an educational playgroup, the  
7 program also enrolls inmate parents in parenting programs such  
8 as Kamalama classes based on traditional Hawaiian values, and  
9 the First Teachers Nurturing Fathers program which helps them to  
10 nurture themselves and others and to develop good parenting  
11 skills. The combination of education, play and learn groups,  
12 and support groups is aimed at increasing an incarcerated  
13 parent's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for  
14 young children.

15 Therefore, the legislature determines that the State should  
16 take an active role in aiding these families through the  
17 provision of parent-child interaction programs such as the SKIP  
18 program, to ensure that these children can build and maintain  
19 strong relationships with incarcerated parents and grow into  
20 well-adjusted, contributing members of the community, breaking  
21 generational cycles of abuse, neglect, violence, and crime that  
22 lead to incarceration.



1           The purpose of this Act is to support the expansion of  
2 parent-child interaction programs such as the SKIP program, at  
3 other state correctional facilities to facilitate appropriate  
4 child visitation of incarcerated parents.

5           SECTION 2. **Parent-child interaction.** (a) Within the  
6 department of public safety, programs, such as the supporting  
7 keiki of incarcerated parents program, shall be developed for  
8 and implemented in both male and female state correctional  
9 facilities. Funding provided by this Act shall be used for:

10           (1) The development and implementation of parent-child  
11 interaction programs that meet security requirements,  
12 such as the supporting keiki of incarcerated parents  
13 program, throughout the state correctional system,  
14 including:

15           (A) Training of public safety personnel on the merits  
16 of the program; and

17           (B) Hiring of additional public safety personnel to  
18 facilitate the implementation of the programs.

19           (2) The collection of accurate demographic data on the  
20 children of incarcerated parents, including the number  
21 of children each incarcerated parent has, the  
22 children's ages, resident addresses and schools,



1 custody and caregiving arrangements, and necessary  
2 services; and

3 (3) An independent review of the programs using  
4 researchers such as the University of Hawaii at Manoa  
5 public policy center.

6 (b) The department of public safety shall submit the  
7 independent review, including any recommendations and proposed  
8 legislation to the legislature no later than twenty days prior  
9 to the convening of the 2009 regular session.

10 (c) The department of public safety shall contract with  
11 nonprofit health and human service agencies, communities of  
12 faith, and other relevant agencies or organizations to establish  
13 and implement parent-child interaction programs under this Act.

14 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ , or so  
16 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2007-2008, and  
17 the same sum, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
18 year 2008-2009, for parent-child interaction programs at state  
19 correctional facilities.

20 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
21 of public safety for the purposes of this Act.

22 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2007.



**Report Title:**

Parent-child Interaction; Incarcerated Parents

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the expansion of parent-child interaction programs such as the Strengthening Keiki of Incarcerated Parents project (SKIP) at state correctional facilities.

