
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTHY START.

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

1 SECTION 1. Hawaii has long been a leader in early
2 childhood services, reflecting an understanding of the
3 importance of early childhood development and proactive
4 legislation to ensure the safety and well-being of infants,
5 toddlers, and pre-schoolers. As a result, over the past twenty-
6 five years, many early childhood programs, services, and
7 concepts have been developed and expanded, including the healthy
8 start program, the zero to three program, the early learning
9 council, good beginnings alliance, the concept of universal pre-
10 school for four year olds, baby SAFE, keiki play mornings, the
11 parenting hotline, and the family center.

12 A recent renaissance in research and national-level policy
13 on early childhood underscores the foresight of these actions.
14 For example, the National Scientific Council on the Developing
15 Child published *The Science of Early Childhood Development:
16 Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do* (Harvard
17 University, 2007). Composed of leading neuroscientists,



1 pediatricians, developmental psychologists, and economists, the
2 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child reviewed all
3 current research and literature on early childhood development.
4 Based on this research, the publication presents the following
5 core concepts of development and considers their implications
6 for policy and practice:

- 7 (1) Child development is the foundation for community
8 development and economic development--capable children
9 become the foundation for a prosperous, sustainable
10 society;
- 11 (2) Brain architecture is built from the bottom up, with
12 simple circuits and skills providing the scaffolding
13 for more advanced circuits and skill over time;
- 14 (3) Toxic stress in early childhood is associated with
15 persistent effects on the nervous system and stress
16 hormonal systems that can damage developing brain
17 architecture and lead to lifelong problems in
18 learning, behavior, and mental and physical health;
- 19 (4) Policy initiatives that promote supportive
20 relationships and rich learning opportunities for
21 children create a strong foundation for high
22 achievement in school followed by greater productivity



1 in the workplace and solid citizenship in the
2 community;

3 (5) Substantial progress in proper child development can
4 be achieved by assuring growth-promoting experiences
5 through a range of parent education, family support,
6 early childhood education, and early intervention
7 programs;

8 (6) Later remediation for highly vulnerable children will
9 produce less favorable outcomes and cost more than
10 appropriate early intervention, beginning in the
11 earliest year of life; and

12 (7) Responsible investment is needed to produce results--
13 there is no benefit in using services that may be less
14 costly but fail to produce needed results.

15 Given the foregoing realities, the legislature finds it
16 prudent to reinstate early childhood services and continue the
17 work of the early learning council to develop a comprehensive
18 continuum of services as soon as possible, with emphasis and
19 priority given to the most vulnerable children. Abuse and
20 neglect often start early in a child's life. Perinatal child
21 abuse prevention and home visiting services with high-risk
22 families should be re-established on a permanent basis, as it is



1 critical to avert or minimize toxic stresses that cause long-
2 term damage to children.

3 As recent events exemplify, in tight economic times, the
4 safety net for vulnerable families is the first to be
5 dismantled. In the longer term, this will increase the cost of
6 services that already are very costly, such as special
7 education, mental health services, drug treatment services, and
8 prison construction. The State will also lose the potential
9 productivity that affected children should have as adults.

10 Establishing permanent services to ensure the safety and
11 optimal development of our children in their earliest years is
12 humane and economically strategic.

13 The purpose of this Act is to establish the healthy start
14 program in statute and to exempt the healthy start program from
15 the state budget allotment system.

16 SECTION 2. Chapter 37, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
17 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to
18 read as follows:

19 "§37- Programs exempt from allotment system. The
20 healthy start program of the department of health under section
21 321- shall be exempt from sections 37-32, 37-34, and 37-37, to
22 the extent that services provided by or contracted by the



1 department of health for the healthy start program shall be
2 determined by the legislature."

3 SECTION 3. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
5 and to read as follows:

6 "§321- Healthy start program; established. (a) There
7 is established within the department of health the healthy start
8 program. The program shall provide support services within a
9 family's natural environment to reduce the likelihood of child
10 maltreatment by reducing parental or environmental stressors;
11 provide linkages with community resources, including health and
12 mental health services, early childhood education, childcare,
13 family literacy, employment, social services, developmental
14 screening and appropriate child development education and
15 interventions, service coordination, and advocacy for families;
16 and provide parents with knowledge of child development, child
17 health, and positive parenting skills and problem-solving
18 techniques.

19 The program shall include a home visitation program to
20 foster family functioning, promote child health development, and
21 enhance positive parenting skills for families to reduce the
22 risk of child maltreatment by addressing malleable environmental



1 risk factors via information, support, and linkages to needed
2 community resources. The home visitation program shall:

- 3 (1) Include proactive universal screening and assessment
4 to enroll families at birth or prenatally before any
5 child welfare reports are made;
- 6 (2) Make home visit services available for families
7 assessed to be at-risk, with the highest priority
8 given to those with scores of forty and above on the
9 family stress checklist or parent survey;
- 10 (3) Maintain critical elements, especially related to
11 caseloads, staff ratios, and training, developed by
12 the Healthy Families America program;
- 13 (4) Focus on a relational approach with families, mother-
14 infant dyads, and supervisor and family support worker
15 relationships;
- 16 (5) Focus strongly on caregiver and infant attachment and
17 social and emotional development;
- 18 (6) Conduct interventions to strengthen protective factors
19 and reduce risk;
- 20 (7) Integrate emerging evidence-based practice, as
21 feasible and appropriate;



- 1 (8) Ensure continuous quality improvement by engaging
2 program staff; and
- 3 (9) Evaluate outcomes related to child development, risk
4 reduction, and confirmed cases of abuse, neglect, and
5 family resilience.

6 Acceptance of services by the family shall be voluntary.

7 Services shall continue until the child reaches three years of
8 age, or until the child reaches five years of age if there is a
9 younger sibling.

10 (b) In addition to public moneys from appropriations, the
11 department of health may receive federal grants and accept
12 private donations for purposes of funding the healthy start
13 program."

14 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

15 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.



Report Title:

Healthy Start Program; Established; Budget Exemption

Description:

Establishes the Healthy Start Program as a permanent program.
Exempts Healthy Start Program from the budget allotment system.
Clarifies purpose of Healthy Start Program. (HB2138 HD1)

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