

JAN 23 2009

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILDREN.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's healthy
2 start program is designed to prevent child abuse and neglect and
3 promotes child development among high-risk infants and toddlers.
4 The legislature authorized the establishment of the healthy
5 start program in 1984, and the program was deployed statewide in
6 2001. Healthy Families America, a national program model
7 designed to help expectant and new parents provide a healthy
8 start for their children, drew largely from the research,
9 knowledge, and experience of Hawaii's healthy start program.

10 Research confirms the impact that an abuse-free, stable,
11 and nurturing environment has on a child's physical and
12 psychological development. The development of a child's brain
13 is negatively affected by trauma, abuse, and stress. Children's
14 brains are approximately ninety per cent developed by age three,
15 and to a great extent their earliest experiences define their
16 adult functional capacities. Statistics show a positive
17 correlation between childhood abuse and school failure,



1 delinquency, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and
2 homelessness.

3 Support programs such as healthy start are especially
4 important during times of economic distress. The Center for Law
5 and Social Policy notes studies showing that incidents of child
6 abuse and neglect increase during financial downturns. Healthy
7 start is an important resource for overburdened families to
8 assist them with safe and successful parenting. Parents unable
9 to form bonds with their infants or suffering from substance
10 abuse issues, domestic violence, depression, or financial
11 difficulty, are invited to the program. Once enrolled, parents
12 are offered practical support in the form of food, clothing, and
13 housing and employment resources, as well as parenting support
14 from social workers and child development specialists. Loss of
15 the support offered by the healthy start program to high-risk
16 families in such critical times can lead to increased child
17 abuse, social and health problems, and loss of future human
18 capital and productivity.

19 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$4,700,000 or so much
21 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2009-2010 and the



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1 sum of \$4,700,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for
2 fiscal year 2010-2011 to supplement the healthy start program.

3 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of temporary
4 assistance for needy families funds the sum of \$4,700,000 or so
5 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2009-2010 and
6 the sum of \$4,700,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for
7 fiscal year 2010-2011 to supplement the healthy start program.

8 SECTION 4. The sums appropriated shall be expended by the
9 department of human services for the purposes of this Act.

10 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2009.

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Report Title:

Children; Healthy Start; Keiki Caucus; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds from general revenues and the temporary assistance for needy families funds for the healthy start program.

