
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the east Hawaii
2 child welfare services section on Hawaii island faces unique
3 challenges as the office responsible for the safety and well-
4 being of vulnerable children who have been abused or neglected
5 or who are at high risk for abuse and neglect.

6 The east Hawaii child welfare services section is
7 responsible for the safety of endangered children in a vast
8 geographic area that extends from Honokaa to Ocean View,
9 including the districts of north Hilo, south Hilo, Puna, and
10 much of Hamakua and Kau. This is an area approximately the size
11 of all of the other Hawaiian islands combined.

12 In 2015, the rate of confirmed cases for abuse or neglect
13 in the area serviced by the east Hawaii child welfare services
14 section was two hundred thirteen children per one hundred
15 thousand residents, which is nearly triple the rate of confirmed
16 cases per one hundred thousand residents on the island of Oahu.



1 The legislature further finds that the great recession
2 triggered deep cuts in Hawaii's already overburdened child
3 welfare system and caused a long-term impact on the safety and
4 well-being of the most vulnerable children. Layoffs and hiring
5 restrictions caused the east Hawaii child welfare services
6 section to lose nineteen of the fifty-six positions it had in
7 2009. That reduction in staffing has caused a dramatic increase
8 in average caseloads. The Child Welfare League of America
9 recommends caseloads for social workers of no more than fifteen
10 children. In the east Hawaii child welfare services section,
11 social workers regularly have caseloads of forty to fifty
12 children. These higher caseloads increase the potential for
13 harm to children who are already experiencing or are at risk for
14 neglect or abuse and contribute to a crisis situation in east
15 Hawaii.

16 The east Hawaii child welfare services section workloads
17 have become so unmanageable that the department of human
18 services, child welfare services branch, has been sanctioned by
19 the family court because of late filings of reports and failure
20 to meet court deadlines.



1 Apart from the moral obligation to protect the most
2 vulnerable children, the legislature is frustrated with the very
3 large sums of money paid each year for legal claims and
4 settlements, including some caused by tragedies in the State's
5 child welfare system.

6 Child and family services reviews conducted by the United
7 States Department of Health and Human Services have found that
8 the more time a social worker spends with a child and a family,
9 the better the outcomes for those children and families.

10 The purpose of this Act is to establish a five-year pilot
11 project within the department of human services to ensure the
12 safety and well-being of at-risk children and families in east
13 Hawaii on Hawaii island by:

14 (1) Appropriating funds for case managers and
15 administrative costs for the east Hawaii child welfare
16 services section on Hawaii island and travel costs for
17 the child welfare services division to train new
18 hires;

19 (2) Limiting the number of children supervised by each
20 east Hawaii child welfare services section social
21 worker to twenty or fewer; and



1 (3) Appropriating funds for the costs of appointing
2 guardians ad litem for minors and court-appointed
3 legal counsel for parents of minors in child welfare
4 cases in the third circuit.

5 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department
6 of human services a five-year pilot project to assist children
7 and families in east Hawaii on Hawaii island. The department of
8 human services shall oversee the pilot project, which shall be
9 known as the east Hawaii child welfare services pilot project.

10 (b) The pilot project shall:

11 (1) Add eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) case managers
12 to the east Hawaii child welfare services section on
13 Hawaii island; and

14 (2) No later than six months after the commencement of the
15 pilot project, limit the number of children supervised
16 by each east Hawaii child welfare services section
17 social worker to twenty or fewer.

18 (c) The department of human services shall evaluate the
19 effectiveness of the pilot project annually. The evaluation
20 shall include:



- 1 (1) Findings as to whether the reduction in caseload helps
2 social workers engage families, deliver quality
3 services, and achieve positive outcomes for children
4 and families;
- 5 (2) Findings as to whether the reduction in caseload
6 affects employee performance, satisfaction, and
7 attrition at the east Hawaii child welfare services
8 section;
- 9 (3) A comparison of the number and types of sanctions
10 imposed by the family court on the east Hawaii child
11 welfare services section on Hawaii island because of
12 late filings of reports and failure to meet court
13 deadlines:
- 14 (A) During the five years preceding the pilot
15 project;
- 16 (B) During the pendency of the pilot project; and
17 (C) Twelve months after the pilot project ends;
- 18 (4) A comparison of the number of legal claims filed
19 against the State that relate to the child welfare
20 system and the east Hawaii child welfare services



1 section on Hawaii island brought and their
2 disposition:
3 (A) During the five years preceding the pilot
4 project;
5 (B) During the pendency of the pilot project; and
6 (C) Twelve months after the pilot project ends; and
7 (5) Any other data and analysis the department of human
8 services deems necessary for the purposes of the pilot
9 project.
10 (d) The department of human services shall collect data on
11 the conduct and efficacy of the pilot project from service
12 providers that work directly with children who are assigned to
13 social workers in the east Hawaii child welfare services
14 section. The department of human services shall collect this
15 data every six months for evaluation purposes for the duration
16 of the pilot project and twelve months after it ends.
17 (e) The department of human services shall submit to the
18 legislature an annual report of its findings and
19 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, no later
20 than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular sessions
21 of 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.



1 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
4 east Hawaii child welfare services section pilot project,
5 including the hiring of eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE)
6 case managers, administrative costs for the east Hawaii child
7 welfare services section on Hawaii island, and travel costs for
8 the child welfare services division to train new hires.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 human services for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
14 costs of appointing guardians ad litem for minors and court-
15 appointed legal counsel for parents of minors in child welfare
16 cases in the third circuit.

17 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary for
18 the purposes of this Act.

19 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

DHS; CWS; Judiciary; East Hawaii Service Section; Caseload;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD2)

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