

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
INTERIM OF 2018

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COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Rep. Della Au Belatti Rep. Andria P.L. Tupola
Rep. Lei R. Larmont

NOTICE OF INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING

DATE: Tuesday, June 19, 2018
TIME: 11:05 a.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 325
 State Capitol
 415 South Beretania Street

A G E N D A

The State Department of Human Service's Child Welfare Services (CWS) programs include family strengthening and support, child protection, foster care, adoption, independent living and licensing of resource family homes, group homes and child-placing organizations. Services are available on Oahu, Hawaii, Kauai, Maui, Molokai and Lanai, with 36 units/sub-units and a staff of over 500.

Recommendations by CWS to family court or family members may be affected by interviews with teachers, parents, grandparents, foster parents, children, friends, police, doctors, nurses, social workers, non-profits, attorneys, and the guardian ad litem. The Briefing will review the procedures used to determine the "best interest" of the child and seek to ensure transparency for proper and timely decisions made for the safety and best interest of the child and well-being of the family members.

Due to the great recession in 2008, hundreds of positions throughout the State Departments were either cut or never filled upon retirement of State employees. For the Child Welfare Services branch, they have approximately 46 vacancies, many which directly relate to intake, review, investigations, and determinations of child abuse reports. Recently the branch had a backlog of over 300 cases of alleged child abuse or neglect. The failure to timely investigate such cases could be fatal to the abused and would lead to sanctions by the courts for failure to investigate a child abuse case.

The purpose of this Briefing will be to allow the Child Welfare Services branch, its' employees, their Union, and the advocates for the children and families to present recommendations and share concerns to the Legislature to address to current backlog.

An Informational Briefing was held on April 4, 2018 on the issue of the significant case loads and concerns with the high vacancies for the Child Welfare Services branch and plans to address the large case-loads and hiring and retention of CWS employees were discussed. A positive result from that Briefing was the passage of House Bill 2277, HD1, SD2, CD1 by the Legislature which establishes the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot Project within the Department of Human Services to increase staff by four (4) full-time positions in the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section. For the purposes of this Briefing, the actual plan of action by the Department of Human Services will be shared with the Legislature and the public.



At the end of the Briefing – The HHS Committee will summarize a short-term solution to immediately or in a feasibly expedited manner address the backlog of cases and concerns with expedited hiring and a long-term

solution to ensure retention of CWS employees and to ensure cases and investigations are conducted in a timely manner pursuant to the law. Moreover, the possibility of a cap on the number of cases per CWS worker will be discussed. Some of the recommendations may be administratively addressed and some may be by way of service providers, CWS, and family court working to coordinate and enhance efficiency. Finally, some recommendations may be proposals for bills for the 2019 Legislative Session.

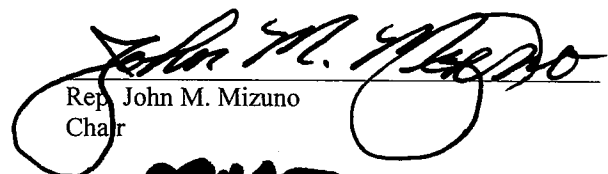
The following have been invited to participate at the Briefing:


Department of Human Services – Child Welfare Services
Family Court Representative relating to Child Welfare Services and Hearings
The Attorney General's Office
Hawaii Government Employees Association – HGEA
Hawaii Community Foundation
Service Providers and non-profits working with Child Welfare Services
Family and Children affected by Child Welfare Services

No public testimony will be accepted.

If you require special assistance or auxiliary aids and/or services to participate in the informational briefing (i.e., sign language interpreter or wheelchair accessibility), please contact the Committee Clerk at **586-6050** to make a request for arrangements at least 24 hours prior to the briefing. Prompt requests help to ensure the availability of qualified individuals and appropriate accommodations.

For further information, please call the Committee Clerk at **586-6050**.


Rep. John M. Mizuno
Chair


Rep. Scott K. Saiki
Speaker of the House

