

JAN 18 2019

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# 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 child welfare  
2 services branch of the department of human services is facing  
3 scrutiny over the branch's operations, including policies,  
4 procedures, and management. In a 2017 review conducted by the  
5 United States Administration for Children and Families, the  
6 child welfare services branch was found to have made no  
7 improvements from the previous evaluation conducted in 2009.  
8 The review further stated that the child welfare services branch  
9 only met five of the seven systematic factor categories, which  
10 were identical to the results in the 2009 evaluation.

11           The legislature further finds that there are other concerns  
12 about the child welfare services branch, including vacant  
13 positions within the agency, insufficient quality and frequency  
14 of caseworker visits, children remaining in foster care beyond  
15 fifteen months with no viable goal, and maltreatment allegations  
16 in pending cases not being formally investigated. Addressing  
17 these concerns will help the branch in effectively carrying out



1 its mission to ensure the safety and permanency of children in  
2 their own homes or, when necessary, in out-of-home placements.

3 The purpose of this Act is to establish a child welfare  
4 services task force to review the child welfare services branch  
5 and examine best practices that will help to improve child care  
6 safety through the branch.

7 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department  
8 of human services for administrative purposes a child welfare  
9 services task force to review the child welfare services branch  
10 and examine best practices that will help to improve child care  
11 safety through the branch.

12 (b) The following individuals shall serve as members of  
13 the task force:

14 (1) The director of human services or the director's  
15 designee, who shall serve as chair of the task force;

16 (2) The administrator of the child welfare services branch  
17 or the administrator's designee;

18 (3) A representative from the child care licensing program  
19 designated by the administrator of the benefit,  
20 employment and support services division;



1 (4) A representative from the department of the attorney  
2 general, to be designated by the attorney general;

3 (5) A representative from each of the county police  
4 departments in the State; and

5 (6) A representative from the United States Department of  
6 Defense Family Advocacy program.

7 Task force members may recommend additional members with  
8 appropriate specialized expertise to the task force, to be  
9 approved by the chairperson.

10 (c) In carrying out its duties, the task force shall:

11 (1) Request input from child welfare services branch  
12 workers for changes in the workplace, including  
13 systems changes, overtime, leadership training, and  
14 the establishment of an advisory committee where staff  
15 can interact with the administration of the branch;

16 (2) Seek more state matching funds to secure a greater  
17 amount of federal funding for improved training,  
18 worker recruitment and retention, additional positions  
19 within the child welfare services branch, assistance  
20 for family court working with the branch, ample  
21 opportunities to secure advance degrees in the field



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1 of social work for branch workers, and support for the  
2 electronic system of the branch;

3 (3) Determine methods to improve on worker recruitment and  
4 retention, including the hiring of university students  
5 in the school of social work and offering loan  
6 repayments; and

7 (4) Evaluate the child welfare services branch's  
8 investigations of child abuse and look at areas that  
9 are in need of improvement that will allow for the  
10 timely completion of future investigations.

11 (d) The task force shall submit a report of its findings  
12 and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the  
13 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
14 the regular session of 2020.

15 (e) The task force shall cease to exist on June 30, 2020.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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**Report Title:**

Child Welfare Services; Task Force

**Description:**

Establishes a Child Welfare Services Task Force to review the Child Welfare Services Branch and examine best practices that will help to improve child care safety through the Branch.

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