

JAN 21 2022

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ZERO TO THREE COURT.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawai'i Zero to
2 Three court is a specialty court in the first circuit court,
3 family court, established in 2009 with initial funding from the
4 national Zero to Three program. Zero to Three courts are rooted
5 in developmental science and aim to improve outcomes for
6 maltreated infants and toddlers, reduce the reoccurrence of
7 substantiated abuse and neglect of infants and toddlers in the
8 court's jurisdiction, and change the court's culture to focus on
9 the needs of infants and toddlers. Participation is voluntary
10 for parents who meet the criteria of having been adjudicated in
11 family court and having at least one child between the ages of
12 zero to three years.

13 Key features of this specialized court include monthly case
14 conferences for each family, monthly court hearings, and a court
15 team composed of a lead family court judge, designated guardian
16 ad litem, parents' counsel, deputy attorneys general, and social
17 workers from the department of human services. The court



1 hearings provide intensive judicial oversight and accountability
2 for all parties while keeping the team focused on timely
3 permanency. Parent activities are held the same day as the
4 monthly court hearings to enhance parenting skills and build a
5 support system with the other families in the program in a safe,
6 judgment free environment. Infants and toddlers in the program
7 receive a comprehensive developmental assessment which results
8 in appropriate referrals to services and the families also
9 participate in parent-child interaction therapy or child-parent
10 psychotherapy to promote healthy family functioning.

11 The legislature also finds that an evaluation of the Hawai'i
12 Zero to Three court was conducted by the University of Hawaii's
13 center on disability studies covering program activities from
14 August 2013 to July 2016. The study concluded that the program
15 is successful in meeting the objectives of reducing parental
16 alcohol or drug use, improving reunification outcomes for
17 families, decreasing the length of stay in foster care and
18 number of placements, increasing visitation frequency, ensuring
19 timeliness of service availability, and increasing access to
20 services.



1 The legislature notes that national funding for the Hawai'i
2 Zero to Three court ceased in 2012 and it has not been able to
3 expand to other circuits. The third circuit, comprising Hawai'i
4 island, has expressed interest in starting a program subject to
5 available funding.

6 The purpose of this Act is to support expansion of the
7 Hawai'i Zero to Three court to the third circuit by funding a
8 program coordinator. It is not the legislature's intent that
9 the requested funds supplant the judiciary's existing funding or
10 budget requests.

11 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$75,588 or so much
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to support
14 a Hawaii Zero to Three court program coordinator position in the
15 third circuit.

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

18 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

19
INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 2391

Report Title:

Zero to Three Court; Third Circuit; Judiciary; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a Zero to Three program coordinator position.
Expands the Zero to Three court program to the Third Circuit.
Appropriates funds.

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