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**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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February 28, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB1932 HD1 – RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.**

Hearing: March 1, 2022, 12:30 p.m.  
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill and provides comments. The Department respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill will require the Child Welfare Services Branch of the Department of Human Services to establish a pilot program to develop a modern case management software solution compatible with existing child welfare technology.

Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2060. (HD1) The HD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Deleting most of the preamble;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2060, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The intent of this bill is aligned with the DHS objectives to support a modern, web-based technology that can support the Child Welfare Services (CWS) Branch. A pilot project is not necessary as DHS is currently developing and implementing CWS' new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). CCWIS will modernize CWS data systems to provide business functionalities that include the ability to track caseload, create case plans, provide

triggers and alerts for monthly face-to-face visits, and allow families secured online access to their case information. The CCWIS project is currently under the Social Services Division Administrator's oversight and is monitored by the Federal Administration for Children and Youth (ACYF). In addition to monitoring, ACYF provides guidance and technical support so DHS will mitigate delays and problems in building CCWIS as CWS transitions from the development and planning stage to the implementation stage of CCWIS.

Youth formerly in care can access a web portal to submit applications for extending foster care support and access vital documents and case information. Additionally, effective February 1, 2022, web-based functionalities that create and manage Family Service Plans online became available to CWS workers and contracted providers.

DHS also procured a licensing solution that allows the public to submit online applications to become resource caregivers, formerly known as foster parents. This online application has been available since July 2021 and is found at: [rcg.hawaii.org](http://rcg.hawaii.org). On-going work with this contracted provider will eventually allow relative, and general resource caregivers access to online portals and the ability to share information with DHS.

Appropriating funds for a modern web-based technology software pilot will assist with supporting costs associated with piloting new software solutions. Additional funds will also be used to fund positions needed to implement and maintain CCWIS. These positions include but are not limited to business lead, technical lead, data quality, organization change manager, planner, and system trainer. The Department will update the resource needs as the session continues.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE  
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CRAIG K. HIRAI  
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GLORIA CHANG  
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EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
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**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
ON  
HOUSE BILL NO. 1932, H.D. 1

**March 1, 2022**  
**12:30 p.m.**  
**Room 308 and Videoconference**

**RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1932, H.D. 1: 1) establishes a child welfare services case management pilot program within the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop a modern case management software solution; 2) requires the branch administrator of the Child Welfare Services Branch (CWSB) or a designee to administer the program and for DHS to contract with a qualified child welfare software provider for the development of the software solution; 3) sets requirements for features to be included in the software solution and reporting requirements for CWSB; and 4) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds to DHS in FY 23 for the pilot program.

B&F notes that Act 40, SLH 2019, as amended by Act 6, SLH 2020, and Act 9, SLH 2020, lapsed and reauthorized \$22,622,000 in general obligation (G.O.) bond funds and \$37,012,000 in federal funds for the Modernization of Public Assistance Eligibility System capital improvement project in FY 20.

The G.O. bond funds have been released and DHS is in the process of procuring services to develop its planned Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System, which will include or integrate with other DHS information technology systems or applications to provide most of the features required of the bill's proposed software solution.

B&F also notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



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February 28, 2022

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke  
Finance Committee

FR: Binti

RE: HB1932 HD1 Relating to Child Welfare Services - **SUPPORT**

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HB1932 is an important bill that impacts the Department of Human Services' ability to improve outcomes for children who have experienced the foster care system in Hawaii.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer Binti's views regarding HB 1932, a bill that will help to empower the caseworkers to better monitor and protect the children on their caseloads. Binti currently provides software for the state of Hawaii that helps to recruit and license foster families, which is also used in over 190 agencies across 26 states nationwide. As a former social worker, I can personally attest to the need for improved technology to help support the increasing caseloads seen by the child welfare system. In addition, human service agencies are facing a staffing shortage that is reaching crisis levels throughout the state of Hawaii and across the country. Cutting-edge software solutions can help to reduce workloads while improving outcomes for children and families.

The number of children experiencing the foster care system in Hawaii has been increasing substantially while caseworkers are becoming more and more overloaded trying to maintain these increasing caseloads. Unfortunately, this results in fewer in-person visits to children and families, decreased child and family involvement in case planning, less support for families, and more opportunities for children and families to fall through the cracks. As discussed directly in the Bill, Hawaii has faced some of these challenges in the past 5 years, with increased numbers of kids in foster care and reduced strength ratings of child & family involvement in case planning and mental/behavioral health of the child. Workers' percentage of monthly visits to children in care has also consistently been below the national standard.

Outdated systems that are designed entirely for compliance and not to support the caseworkers day to day needs result in workers finding other means to track their work such as spreadsheets, word documents, and handwritten notes. All these factors combined can result in tragic outcomes that might otherwise have been avoided had the caseworkers and families been supported by systems that had safeguards in place to ensure best practices across the agency.

Binti is a mission-driven company focused on increasing equality of opportunity and giving every child a fair chance at life, and we are therefore in support of the proposed bill that will help to increase positive outcomes for children and families across the state of Hawaii. A thoughtfully and deliberately designed case management system can directly support not only the caseworkers but also the families and children themselves. Managed case plans can be established by workers and shared directly with other stakeholders through their respective portals within the system.

As this bill outlines, having portals specifically for families and older youth also helps to ensure the best possible outcomes for children by supporting the families they are matched with. Enabling a foster family to have immediate access to relevant information such as allergies, education plans, and other health information for the children placed in their homes empowers them to provide the best possible care for the child which in turn can help to improve outcomes and permanency. Empowering older youth to access and participate in their case encourages buy-in from the youth and

also supports collaboration between the youth and the team serving them, resulting in more successful placements and permanency plans.

Utilizing modern user-friendly software that is compatible with existing child welfare technology will reduce the paperwork and data entry requirements for caseworkers, thus empowering them to spend more time conducting face-to-face visits and working closely with the families and children that require extra care. Workers should be able to easily see their caseload. Children or families that have requirements coming due should be surfaced in a helpful way while enabling caseworkers to complete documentation directly within the system.

Binti strongly supports HB 1932 and asks the Hawaii Legislature to empower your child welfare services to improve outcomes for children and families by establishing this case management pilot program. We ask that you vote YES on HB 1932.

Thank you for considering our comments and concerns.

Kristin Atwood  
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