



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

**Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature
2023 Regular Session**

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 2, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

by:

Dawn West
Chief Court Administrator
Third Circuit

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 170, Relating to the Zero to Three Court.

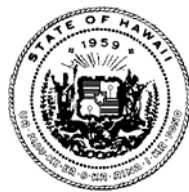
Purpose: The purpose of this Act is to establish a Zero to Three Court Program Coordinator position and expand the Zero Three Court to the Third Circuit. The bill appropriates funds.

Judiciary’s Position:

The Third Circuit appreciates the proposal for Zero to Three Court. However, due to our severe staffing shortage of workers, unfunded vacancies and inability to attract and train new hires, implementation of a new program would be very difficult at this time. Until we have recovery from budget reductions and the pandemic, we must focus our efforts on our existing programs. Please consider our current status and our need for restoration of funding for critical positions that were defunded during the pandemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
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January 31, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 170 – RELATING TO THE ZERO TO THREE COURT.**

Hearing: February 2, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, defers to the Judiciary, and provides comments.

PURPOSE: The bill's purpose is to establish a Zero to Three Court Program Coordinator position. Expands the Zero to Three Court to the Third Circuit. Appropriates funds.

The Zero to Three (ZTT) Court provides a valuable structure and process for families and children ages zero to three involved with the Family Court and Child Welfare Services. The Zero To Three Court has added resources to help parents and caregivers establish a safe and nurturing home. Numerous studies have shown the benefits to children and society when the length of stay in foster care is shortened with effective case management and children are reunited with their families. Families who participated in Hawaii's First Circuit ZTT Court have reunified with their children at higher rates, and their children's time in foster care is less than comparable families who did not participate in ZTT Court.

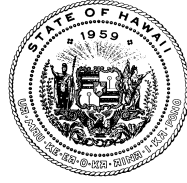
The voluntary nature of this program makes it a unique model in the child welfare system. The model emphasizes increased contact with families by providers and the Judiciary.

The ZTT court process motivates the families to participate and learn what is necessary to provide a safe and nurturing home. In addition, it links families to early intervention services to address children's developmental needs and to early learning communities to build social connections in their community. Linking to early intervention services and increasing social connections are protective factors that add to family resilience.

The ZTT model provides families special attention and more time and social opportunities to learn from each other and professionals in the field. The program's success relies on a limited number of families served at one time, the frequent nature of court hearings, specialized services, and trusting relationships built between the families, case managers, service providers, and the Court. Many families report they enjoy working with the case manager and thus want to stay in the program even though monthly court hearings are cumbersome.

A ZTT Court in the Third Circuit would be a positive resource for families of Hawaii island. In SFY 2022, 173 children were in foster care aged 0-3 from 143 families. Staff and stable funding for the ZTT Court will support the healing and development of the most vulnerable children and their families. Additionally, with the necessary funding for the Judiciary, the department will work with the Judiciary and community providers to develop a Zero To Three Court in the Third Circuit.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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WRITTEN
TESTIMONY
ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB170
RELATING TO ZERO TO THREE COURT.**

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: February 2, 2023

Room Number: 016

1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) support a permanent coordinator
2 for the Zero To Three Court (ZTT) program in the Third Circuit Court. ZTT has demonstrated
3 success on Oahu and is an important resource for families to grow healthfully and build
4 resilience.

5 The department defers to the Executive Budget for the relative priority of appropriations
6 requests.

7 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

8 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.

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