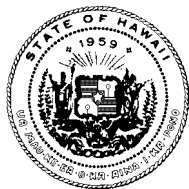


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February 3, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3115 – RELATING TO RELATIVE RESOURCE CAREGIVERS.**

Hearing: February 5, 2024, Time 1:02 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administrative measure.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to clarify when a relative seeking to be a resource caregiver for a child is entitled to an administrative appeal for denial of a foster home license.

Currently, section 587A-10, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), requires the Department to provide "the specific reasons for the denial and an explanation of the procedures for an administrative appeal" when a relative is denied a license to be a child's resource caregiver.

This proposal clarifies that an administrative review is not available when multiple relatives meet licensing standards and are suitable placement options, and the Department places the child with one suitable applicant. Applicants who meet licensing standards and are not selected often mistakenly request an administrative hearing on the issue of the child's placement when the child is placed in another suitable home. However, the Department's choice of one suitable candidate over another is not a denial to issue a license.

For family members who meet licensing standards, the Department's or the court's choice of one suitable candidate over the other is unrelated to the licensing standards; for example, the chosen candidate's home may be closer to the child's school. While there may be more than one suitable placement, the Department's administrative rules only allow the Department to issue one license to the suitable applicant where the child is placed.

When a suitable applicant mistakenly requests administrative review of the child's placement with another suitable applicant, the Department's Administrative Hearings Officers dismiss these requests for administrative review for lack of authority to decide the placement issue. These requests are time-consuming and an inefficient use of limited administrative resources. Further, relatives requesting the administrative review become frustrated and distrustful of the Department and court processes. They may also incur unnecessary legal expenses pursuing an administrative appeal, particularly if the family court or attorneys have mistakenly advised the relative to seek an administrative appeal.

This amendment seeks to clarify the appropriate circumstances under which an administrative appeal for the denial of a foster home license may be utilized by a child's relative to prevent unnecessary frustration, use of resources, time, and money for both the relative and the Department.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 3115, RELATING TO RELATIVE RESOURCE CAREGIVERS.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DATE: Monday, February 5, 2024 **TIME:** 1:02 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 225 and Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Lynne M. Youmans, Deputy Attorney General

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

The Attorney General supports this bill in the interest of greater government transparency and efficient administration.

This bill revises section 587A-10(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to clarify when a relative seeking to be a foster placement for a child can appeal a denial of their application to be licensed as the child's resource family through the Department of Human Services' (DHS) administrative appeals process. The bill also clarifies that a DHS decision to place a foster child in another licensed foster placement rather than the licensable home of the applying relative can only be reviewed by the Family Court because of the Family Court's exclusive jurisdiction to decide a child's placement.

Section 587A-10(a), HRS, codified the State's commitment to consideration of relatives as placement for children in foster custody. The section requires the DHS to provide a child's relative with an application to be licensed as the child's resource family upon the relative's request. The current wording of the section also provides that:

[i]f the application is submitted and denied, the department shall provide the applicant with the specific reasons for the denial and an explanation of the procedures for an administrative appeal.

Section 587A-10(a), HRS. This provision has led to some confusion about when and whether a relative applying to be a potential foster placement can request

the DHS for an administrative hearing to challenge any decisions regarding placement of a child in their home.

This bill clarifies that a relative whose application was denied because the relative did not meet the licensing standards for a resource caregiver license can seek an administrative hearing to challenge that denial. The bill further clarifies that a relative who meets all of the licensing standards, but who was not issued a license because the child was never placed in the relative's care, cannot seek an administrative hearing. The licensing decisions of the DHS for potential placements are separate from the decision on where to place a specific child. Only the Family Court has jurisdiction to decide placement issues for children under its supervision, pursuant to section 571-11(3), HRS. A relative who meets the standards for licensing, but with whom the child was not placed, must challenge the placement issue in the Family Court.

This bill helps to make the process for a relative to become a resource caregiver more transparent and provides clarity on how to challenge a decision if a relative's application is denied.

The Attorney General respectfully requests that the Committee pass this bill.

SB-3115

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 12:20:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marilyn Yamamoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator San Buenaventura and HHS committee,

I am disappointed in this bill for the same reasons that, as an advocate for families, I have perspective on issues that face parents that DHS is not willing to address.

SB3115 makes is mandatory for CWS to give a relative an application for placement, but parents report that they have no idea that there is an opportunity for a relative to apply.

The challenge is that parents do not get information from the workers that is contained in the statutes or the Parent Guide to Child Welfare. The Parent has a full page of critical information of relative placement, but parents constant tell me that have Guide. The Child Welfare Procedures Manual states that workers are to carry the Guid with them "at all times" to either give to a family or to refer to it to answer questions. I had brought up the subject that the Guide was missing the relative placement section after it was revised several years ago. The program development told me that, due to a legislative session, they were too busy to replace the missing section. It took 18 months of reminders to get that section back into the booklet. In that amount of time, more than 1000 families would have been put into the system not only without a Guide but without that critical section.

There is nothing wrong with this bill, but if parents don't know about the option to ask for relative placement, it means nothing.

Marilyn Yamamoto, Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform.