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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that parenting can be  
2 challenging for anyone, but especially for parents and families  
3 whose basic needs are not met. Parents and caregivers who lack  
4 needed support may experience depression and mental health  
5 challenges, intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect,  
6 and substance addiction. This in turn may cause early childhood  
7 trauma for the children under their care.

8           The legislature further finds that each year in Hawaii,  
9 close to six hundred children from birth to age five are  
10 confirmed to be victims of child abuse and neglect, although the  
11 actual number of cases may be as much as five times greater.  
12 The legislature notes that half of all children in the child  
13 welfare system are under the age of five. Child rearing  
14 practices and handling parenting responsibilities made up the  
15 majority of contributing factors to child abuse and neglect,  
16 along with drug use. Child abuse and neglect impacts brain  
17 development and is costly, with the total lifetime economic



1 burden associated with child abuse and neglect estimated to be  
2 \$2,600,000,000 in Hawaii. The legislature additionally finds  
3 that fifty-eight per cent of Hawaii children live in families  
4 made vulnerable by adverse childhood experiences, which include  
5 family violence, substance abuse, untreated family mental health  
6 issues, divorce, or incarceration.

7 The legislature additionally finds that peer-to-peer  
8 support programs provide people with an instant and  
9 cost-effective safety net. Parents and caregivers have a place  
10 where they can learn, get screening and referrals, share  
11 resources, and build their self-confidence. The goal of these  
12 programs is to keep parents and children together, strengthen  
13 and grow community support and services, and increase the sense  
14 of hope and self-assurance amongst parents and caregivers of  
15 young children. Peer-to-peer support programs have also proven  
16 to be effective in reducing negative parenting practices,  
17 connecting victims of intimate partner violence to appropriate  
18 support, and encouraging completion of substance use disorder  
19 programs.

20 The legislature notes that investing early in peer-to-peer  
21 support programs can save millions of taxpayer dollars in



1 downstream interventions. Research has shown that investing in  
2 the prenatal-to-five-year time period can save seven times in  
3 downstream costs, including reducing costs associated with  
4 treatment programs, child welfare programs, special education  
5 programs, and incarceration.

6 The purpose of this Act is to support parents and  
7 caregivers of children from birth to age five by appropriating  
8 funds to the family health services division of the department  
9 of health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support  
10 programs.

11 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$860,000 or so much  
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
14 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
15 2026-2027 for the family health services division of the  
16 department of health to establish and support peer-to-peer  
17 support programs for families with children from birth to age  
18 five, to be expended as follows:

- 19 (1) \$200,000 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)  
20 program specialist V position and one full-time  
21 equivalent (1.0 FTE) program specialist IV position;



1 (2) \$270,000 for purchase of service contracts with  
2 neighborhood or location peer-to-peer based groups;  
3 and

4 (3) \$390,000 for purchase of service contracts for  
5 addiction and child welfare peer support programs.

6 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
7 of health for the purposes of this Act.

8 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.



**Report Title:**

Peer-to-Peer Support Programs; Children; Families; Positions;  
Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the Family Health Services Division of the Department of Health to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs for children from birth to age five and their families, including the establishment of program specialist positions. (CD1)

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