

JAN 20 2010

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTHY START.

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

1 SECTION 1. Hawaii has long been a leader in early
2 childhood services, reflecting an understanding of the
3 importance of early childhood development and proactive
4 legislation to ensure the safety and well-being of infants,
5 toddlers, and pre-schoolers. As a result, over the past twenty-
6 five years, many early childhood programs, services, and
7 concepts have been developed and expanded, including the healthy
8 start program, the zero to three program, the early learning
9 council, good beginnings alliance, the concept of universal pre-
10 school for four year olds, baby safe, keiki play mornings, the
11 parenting hotline, the family center, and others.

12 A recent renaissance in research and national level policy
13 on early childhood underscores the foresight of these actions.
14 For example, the National Scientific Council on the Developing
15 Child published *The Science of Early Childhood Development:
16 Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do* (Harvard
17 University, 2007). Comprised of leading neuroscientists,
18 pediatricians, developmental psychologists, and economists, the



1 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child reviewed all
2 current research and literature on early childhood development.
3 Based on this research, the publication presents the following
4 core concepts of development and considers their implications
5 for policy and practice:

- 6 (1) Child development is the foundation for community
7 development and economic development; capable children
8 become the foundation for a prosperous, sustainable
9 society;
- 10 (2) Brain architecture is built from the bottom up, with
11 simple circuits and skills providing the scaffolding
12 for more advanced circuits and skill over time;
- 13 (3) Toxic stress in early childhood is associated with
14 persistent effects on the nervous system and stress
15 hormonal systems that can damage developing brain
16 architecture and lead to lifelong problems in
17 learning, behavior, and mental and physical health;
- 18 (4) Policy initiatives that promote supportive
19 relationships and rich learning opportunities for
20 children create a strong foundation for high school
21 achievement followed by greater productivity in the
22 workplace and solid citizenship in the community;



1 (5) Substantial progress in proper child development can
2 be achieved by assuring growth-promoting experiences
3 through a range of parent education, family support,
4 early childhood education, and early intervention
5 programs;

6 (6) Later remediation for highly vulnerable children will
7 produce less favorable outcomes and cost more than
8 appropriate early interventions, beginning in the
9 earliest year of life; and

10 (7) Responsible investment is needed to produce results;
11 it is not profitable to utilize intervention that may
12 be less costly but fails to produce needed results.

13 Given the foregoing realities, the legislature finds it
14 prudent to move as soon as possible to reinstate early childhood
15 services and continue the work of the early learning council to
16 develop a comprehensive continuum of services, with emphasis and
17 priority given to the most vulnerable children. Abuse and
18 neglect often start early in a child's life. Perinatal child
19 abuse prevention and home visiting services with high-risk
20 families should be re-established on a permanent basis, as it is
21 critical to avert or minimize toxic stresses that cause long-
22 term damage to children.



1 As recent events exemplify, in tight economic times, the
2 safety net for vulnerable families is the first to be
3 dismantled. In the longer term, this will increase the cost of
4 services which already are very costly, such as special
5 education, mental health services, drug treatment services, and
6 prison construction. The State will also lose the potential
7 productivity which these affected children should have as
8 adults.

9 The strategy of establishing permanent services to ensure
10 the safety and optimal development of our children in their
11 earliest years is humane and economically strategic.

12 The purpose of this Act is to exempt the healthy start
13 program from the state budget allotment system and to establish
14 the healthy start program in statute.

15 SECTION 2. Chapter 37, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
16 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to
17 read as follows:

18 "§37- Programs exempt from allotment system. The
19 healthy start program of the department of health under section
20 321- shall be exempt from sections 37-32, 37-34, and 37-37, to
21 the extent that services provided by or contracted by the
22 department of health for the healthy start program shall not be



1 diminished or eliminated due to budgetary shortfalls. This
2 exemption shall apply to personnel positions for the healthy
3 start program within the department of health."

4 SECTION 3. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
5 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
6 and to read as follows:

7 **"§321- Healthy start program; established.** (a) There
8 is established the healthy start program, to be placed under the
9 department of health for administrative purposes. The healthy
10 start program shall provide support services within a family's
11 natural environment to reduce the likelihood of child
12 maltreatment by reducing parental or environmental stressors;
13 provide linkages with community resources including health and
14 mental health services, early childhood education, childcare,
15 family literacy, employment, social services, developmental
16 screening and appropriate child development education and
17 interventions, service coordination, and advocacy for families;
18 and provide parents with knowledge of child development, child
19 health, and positive parenting skills and problem-solving
20 techniques.

21 The healthy start program shall include a home visitation
22 program to foster family functioning, promote child health



1 development, and enhance positive parenting skills for families
2 in order to reduce the risk of child maltreatment by addressing
3 malleable environmental risk factors via information, support,
4 and linkages to needed community resources. The home visitation
5 program shall:

- 6 (1) Include proactive universal screening and assessment
7 to enroll families at birth or prenatally before any
8 child welfare reports are made;
- 9 (2) Make home visit services available for families
10 assessed to be at-risk, with the highest priority
11 given to those with scores of forty and above on the
12 family stress checklist or parent survey;
- 13 (3) Maintain critical elements, especially related to
14 caseloads, staff ratios, and training, developed by
15 the Healthy Families America Program;
- 16 (4) Focus on a relational approach with families, mother-
17 infant dyads, and supervisor and family support worker
18 relationships;
- 19 (5) Focus strongly on caregiver and infant attachment and
20 social and emotional development;
- 21 (6) Conduct interventions to strengthen protective factors
22 and reduce risk;



- 1 (7) Integrate emerging evidence-based practice, as
- 2 feasible and appropriate;
- 3 (8) Ensure continuous quality improvement by engaging
- 4 program staff; and
- 5 (9) Evaluate outcomes related to child development, risk
- 6 reduction, and confirmed cases of abuse, neglect, and
- 7 family resilience.

8 Acceptance of services by the family shall be voluntary.
9 Services shall continue until the child reaches three years of
10 age, or until the child reaches five years of age if there is a
11 younger sibling.

12 (b) In addition to public moneys from appropriations, the
13 department of health may receive federal grants and accept
14 private donations for purposes of funding the healthy start
15 program.

16 (c) As provided in section 37- , the healthy start
17 program shall not be subject to budget reductions made under the
18 allotment system."

19 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

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1 SECTION 5. This Act, upon its approval, shall take effect

2 retroactive to

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Report Title:

Healthy Start Program; Established; Budget Exemption

Description:

Creates the healthy start program; exempts healthy start program from the budget allotment system. Clarifies purpose of healthy start program.

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