
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the east Hawaii
2 child welfare services section on Hawaii island faces unique
3 challenges as the office responsible for the safety and well-
4 being of vulnerable children who have been abused or neglected
5 or who are at high risk for abuse and neglect.

6 The east Hawaii child welfare services section is
7 responsible for the safety of endangered children in a vast
8 geographic area that extends from Honokaa to Ocean View,
9 including the districts of north Hilo, south Hilo, Puna, and
10 much of Hamakua and Kau. This is an area approximately the size
11 of all of the other Hawaiian islands combined.

12 In 2015, the rate of confirmed cases for abuse or neglect
13 in the area serviced by the east Hawaii child welfare services
14 section was two hundred thirteen children per one hundred
15 thousand residents, which is nearly triple the rate of confirmed
16 cases per one hundred thousand residents on the island of Oahu.



1 The legislature further finds that the great recession
2 triggered deep cuts in Hawaii's already overburdened child
3 welfare system and caused a long-term impact on the safety and
4 well-being of the most vulnerable children. Layoffs and hiring
5 restrictions caused the east Hawaii child welfare services
6 section to lose nineteen of the fifty-six positions it had in
7 2009. That reduction in staffing has caused a dramatic increase
8 in average caseloads. The Child Welfare League of America
9 recommends caseloads for social workers of no more than fifteen
10 children. In the east Hawaii child welfare services section,
11 social workers regularly have caseloads of forty to fifty
12 children. These higher caseloads increase the potential for
13 harm to children who are already experiencing or are at risk for
14 neglect or abuse and contribute to a crisis situation in east
15 Hawaii.

16 The east Hawaii child welfare services section workloads
17 have become so unmanageable that the department of human
18 services, child welfare services branch, has been sanctioned by
19 the family court because of late filings of reports and failure
20 to meet court deadlines.



1 Apart from the moral obligation to protect the most
2 vulnerable children, the legislature is frustrated with the very
3 large sums of money paid each year for legal claims and
4 settlements, including some caused by tragedies in the State's
5 child welfare system.

6 Child and family services reviews conducted by the United
7 States Department of Health and Human Services have found that
8 the more time a social worker spends with a child and a family,
9 the better the outcomes for those children and families.

10 The purpose of this Act is to establish a five-year pilot
11 project within the department of human services to ensure the
12 safety and well-being of at-risk children and families in east
13 Hawaii on Hawaii island by:

- 14 (1) Limiting the number of children supervised by each
15 east Hawaii child welfare services section social
16 worker to twenty or fewer; and
- 17 (2) Appropriating funds for eight full-time equivalent
18 (8.0 FTE) case managers and fifteen full-time
19 equivalent (15.0 FTE) support staff positions in the
20 east Hawaii child welfare services section on Hawaii
21 island.



1 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department
2 of human services a five-year pilot project to be known as the
3 east Hawaii child welfare services pilot project to assist
4 children and families in east Hawaii on Hawaii island. The
5 department of human services shall provide oversight of the
6 pilot project.

7 (b) The pilot project shall:

8 (1) Add eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) case managers
9 and fifteen full-time equivalent (15.0 FTE) support
10 staff positions in the east Hawaii child welfare
11 services section on Hawaii island; and

12 (2) Limit the number of children supervised by each east
13 Hawaii child welfare services section social worker to
14 twenty or fewer.

15 (c) The department of human services shall evaluate the
16 effectiveness of the pilot project annually. The evaluation
17 shall include:

18 (1) Findings as to whether the reduction in caseload
19 helped social workers to engage families, deliver
20 quality services, and achieve positive outcomes for
21 children and families;



- 1 (2) Findings as to whether the reduction in caseload
2 affected employee performance, satisfaction, and
3 attrition at the east Hawaii child welfare services
4 section;
- 5 (3) A comparison of the number and type of sanctions
6 imposed by the family court on the east Hawaii child
7 welfare services section on Hawaii island because of
8 late filings of reports and failure to meet court
9 deadlines during the five years preceding the pilot
10 project versus those that are imposed during the
11 pendency of the pilot project and twelve months after
12 it ends;
- 13 (4) A comparison of the number of legal claims and
14 settlements relating to the child welfare system and
15 the east Hawaii child welfare services section on
16 Hawaii island brought and their disposition during the
17 five years preceding the pilot project versus those
18 that are imposed during the pendency of the pilot
19 project and twelve months after it ends; and
- 20 (5) Any other data and analysis the department of human
21 services deems necessary.



1 (d) Data on the conduct and efficacy of the pilot project
2 shall be collected by service providers that work directly with
3 children who are assigned to social workers in the east Hawaii
4 child welfare services section and shall be submitted to the
5 department of human services every six months for evaluation
6 purposes for the duration of the pilot project and twelve months
7 after it ends.

8 (e) The department of human services shall submit an
9 annual report of its findings and recommendations, including any
10 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
11 days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of 2019,
12 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

13 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
15 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
16 east Hawaii child welfare services section pilot project,
17 including the hiring of eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE)
18 case managers and fifteen full-time equivalent (15.0 FTE)
19 support staff positions in the east Hawaii child welfare
20 services section on Hawaii island.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 human services for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Department of Human Services; Child Welfare Services; East
Hawaii Service Section; Caseload; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the East Hawaii Child Welfare Services Section Pilot
Project within the Department of Human Services to increase
staff and reduce caseloads in the East Hawaii Child Welfare
Services Section. Appropriates funds. (HB2277 HD1)

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

