

JAN 19 2018

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# 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 in the county of Hawaii faces  
3 unique challenges as it is the office responsible for the safety  
4 and well-being of the State's most vulnerable children who have  
5 been abused, neglected, or are at high risk for abuse and  
6 neglect. The office oversees the safety of endangered children  
7 in a geographic area that extends from Honokaa to Ocean View,  
8 including the districts of north and south Hilo, Puna, and much  
9 of Hamakua and Kau. Furthermore, the rate of confirmed cases  
10 for abuse or neglect in 2015 was two hundred thirteen children  
11 per 100,000 residents in Hawaii county, nearly triple the rate  
12 of confirmed cases for the city and county of Honolulu.

13           The legislature further finds that due to challenging  
14 economic times and funding cuts in Hawaii's child welfare  
15 services, layoffs and hiring restrictions have caused the east  
16 Hawaii child welfare services section to lose nineteen of the  
17 fifty-six positions it had in 2009, resulting in a dramatic



1 increase in average caseload per caseworker. The recommended  
2 number of caseloads for social workers is no more than fifteen  
3 children, but social workers in east Hawaii regularly have  
4 caseloads of forty to fifty children. These higher caseloads  
5 increase the potential for harm to children at risk for neglect  
6 or abuse, further contributing to the high rate of confirmed  
7 cases in Hawaii county, and has even prompted the family court  
8 to sanction the east Hawaii child welfare services section  
9 because of late filings of reports and failure to meet court  
10 deadlines. Therefore, the legislature finds that it is  
11 necessary to undertake a pilot project demonstrating the  
12 positive impact of adequate staffing levels on the safety and  
13 well-being of at-risk children and families in east Hawaii.

14 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for:

15 (1) The department of human services to establish a five-  
16 year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare  
17 services section in Hawaii county that limits the  
18 number of children per child welfare services  
19 caseworker to no more than twenty; and

20 (2) Additional case managers and support staff for the  
21 pilot program.



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1 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
 2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
 3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for:

4 (1) The department of human services, child welfare  
 5 services branch, to establish a five-year pilot  
 6 program that limits the number of children supervised  
 7 by each child welfare services caseworker at no more  
 8 than twenty in the east Hawaii child welfare services  
 9 section in the county of Hawaii; and

10 (2) Eight full-time equivalent (8.0 FTE) case managers and  
 11 fifteen full-time equivalent (15.0 FTE) support staff  
 12 positions for the pilot program.

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

15 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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# S.B. NO. 2276

**Report Title:**

Child Welfare Services; Caseworker; Pilot Program; Hawaii County; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for DHS to establish a five-year pilot program in the east Hawaii child welfare services section in Hawaii county that limits the number of children per child welfare services caseworker to no more than twenty. Appropriates funds for additional case managers and support staff for the pilot program.

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