HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, TO WORK WITH THE FAMILY REUNIFICATION WORKING GROUP AND OTHER COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO ESTABLISH VISITATION CENTERS AT ALL STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND JAILS.

WHEREAS, as states grapple with the alarming statistics regarding children of incarcerated parents nationwide, child welfare servers and public safety stakeholders are acknowledging the adverse childhood experiences and trauma faced by children of incarcerated parents; and

WHEREAS, child welfare servers and public safety stakeholders are declaring that they will fulfill their duty to ensure the rights and wellbeing of all children, including the children of incarcerated parents; and

WHEREAS, parental incarceration is a strong risk factor for many adverse outcomes for children, including antisocial and violent behavior, mental health problems, failure to graduate from school, and unemployment; and

WHEREAS, parental incarceration is now recognized as an "adverse childhood experience"; it is distinguished from other adverse childhood experiences by the unique combination of trauma, shame, and stigma; and

WHEREAS, the prison environment can be frightening and traumatizing for children, both in the attitudes and behaviors of prison staff as well as the physical setting of approved visitation sites; and

WHEREAS, visits can include long waits, body frisks, rude treatment, exposure to crowded visiting rooms with no activities for children; and

WHEREAS, such conditions do not encourage frequent visits between incarcerated parents and their children, despite findings from studies suggesting the maintenance of family ties
and parent-child relationships is linked to post-release success, lower rates of recidivism, and fewer parole violations; and

WHEREAS, the alarming rates of intergenerational incarceration, which studies suggest may be attributed to the lack of communication and maintenance of child-incarcerated parent relationships; and

WHEREAS, caring for children who are experiencing the stigma and blame associated with parental incarceration is particularly difficult for caregivers and may be emotionally and physically taxing; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii's correctional system can benefit from the establishment of visitation centers at all local correctional prisons and jails with the hope to strengthen, rebuild, and reunify children with their incarcerated parents and ensure the welfare and wellbeing of children of incarcerated parents; and

WHEREAS, in January 2014, the legislative Keiki Caucus established a working group to explore the issues surrounding children and families impacted by incarceration, called the Family Reunification Working Group, which consisted of representatives from Blueprint for Change, Hawaiʻi Prisoner Resource Center, dba Holomua Center, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, ALU LIKE, Inc., Queen Liliʻuokalani Children's Center, Keiki O Ka Aina Learning Centers, Family Programs Hawaiʻi, Adult Friends for Youth, Community Alliance on Prisons, TJ Mahoney, Chaminade University's Native Hawaiian Program, and Makana O Ke Akua Clean and Sober Living, and included parents of children who have been affected by incarceration; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, that during the 2018 legislative interim, the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety, is requested to work with the Keiki Caucus's Family Reunification Working Group and other community stakeholders to develop a plan to establish children and family friendly visitation centers at all local correctional prisons
and jails to ensure the wellbeing of children of incarcerated parents and their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Human Services submit a report on the status of visitation centers, including any findings, recommendations, and proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Sessions of 2019 and 2020; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Human Services, Director of Public Safety, and Chairperson of the Keiki Caucus's Family Reunification Working Group.