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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 child welfare  
2 services branch of the department of human services is facing  
3 scrutiny over the branch's operations, including policies,  
4 procedures, and management. In a 2017 review conducted by the  
5 United States Department of Health and Human Services  
6 Administration for Children and Families, the child welfare  
7 services branch was found to have made no improvements from the  
8 previous evaluation conducted in 2009. The review further  
9 stated that the child welfare services branch only met five of  
10 the seven systematic factor categories, which were identical to  
11 the results in the 2009 evaluation.

12           The legislature further finds that there are other concerns  
13 about the child welfare services branch, including vacant  
14 positions within the agency, insufficient quality and frequency  
15 of caseworker visits, children remaining in foster care beyond  
16 fifteen months with no viable goal, and maltreatment allegations  
17 in pending cases not being formally investigated. Addressing



1 these concerns will help the branch in effectively carrying out  
2 its mission to ensure the safety and permanency of children in  
3 their own homes or, when necessary, in out-of-home placements.

4 The purpose of this Act is to establish a child welfare  
5 services task force to review the child welfare services branch  
6 and examine best practices that will help to improve child care  
7 safety through the branch.

8 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department  
9 of human services for administrative purposes a child welfare  
10 services task force to review the child welfare services branch  
11 and examine best practices that will help improve child care  
12 safety through the branch.

13 (b) The following individuals shall serve as members of  
14 the task force:

- 15 (1) The director of human services or the director's  
16 designee, who shall serve as chair of the task force;
- 17 (2) The administrator of the child welfare services branch  
18 or the administrator's designee;
- 19 (3) A representative from the child care licensing program  
20 designated by the administrator of the benefit,  
21 employment and support services division;



- 1           (4) A representative from the department of the attorney  
2           general, to be designated by the attorney general;
  - 3           (5) A representative from each of the county police  
4           departments in the State;
  - 5           (6) A representative from the United States Department of  
6           Defense Family Advocacy program;
  - 7           (7) A current or former foster youth, to be appointed by  
8           the department of human services;
  - 9           (8) A resource caregiver, to be appointed by the  
10          department of human services;
  - 11          (9) A biological parent of a current or former foster  
12          youth, to be appointed by the department of human  
13          services; and
  - 14          (10) A frontline child welfare services social worker, to  
15          be appointed by the department of human services.
- 16 The department of human services may appoint additional members  
17 to the task force. The task force members may recommend  
18 additional members with appropriate specialized expertise to the  
19 task force, to be approved by the chairperson.
- 20          (c) In carrying out its duties, the task force shall:

- 1           (1) Request input from child welfare services branch  
2           workers for changes in the workplace, including  
3           systems changes, overtime, leadership training, and  
4           the establishment of an advisory committee where staff  
5           can interact with the administration of the branch;
- 6           (2) Seek more state matching funds to secure a greater  
7           amount of federal funding for improved training,  
8           worker recruitment and retention, additional positions  
9           within the child welfare services branch, assistance  
10          for family court working with the branch, ample  
11          opportunities to secure advance degrees in the field  
12          of social work for branch workers, and support for the  
13          electronic system of the branch;
- 14          (3) Determine methods to improve on worker recruitment and  
15          retention, including the hiring of university students  
16          in the school of social work and offering loan  
17          repayments; and
- 18          (4) Evaluate the child welfare services branch's  
19          investigations of child abuse and look at areas that  
20          are in need of improvement that will allow for the  
21          timely completion of future investigations.



1           (d) The task force shall submit a report of its findings  
2 and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the  
3 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
4 the regular session of 2020.

5           (e) The task force shall cease to exist on June 30, 2020.

6           SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



**Report Title:**

Child Welfare Services; Task Force

**Description:**

Establishes a Child Welfare Services Task Force to review the Child Welfare Services Branch and examine best practices that will help to improve child care safety through the Branch.  
(SD1)

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