

JAN 18 2023

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ZERO TO THREE COURT.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawai'i Zero to  
2 Three court is a specialty court in the first circuit court,  
3 family court, established in 2009 with initial funding from the  
4 national Zero to Three program. Zero to Three courts are rooted  
5 in developmental science and aim to improve outcomes for  
6 maltreated infants and toddlers, reduce the reoccurrence of  
7 substantiated abuse and neglect of infants and toddlers under  
8 the court's jurisdiction, and shift the court's culture to focus  
9 on the needs of infants and toddlers. Participation is  
10 voluntary for parents who meet the criteria of past family court  
11 adjudication and having at least one child between the ages of  
12 zero to three years.

13           Key features of the Zero to Three court include monthly  
14 case conferences for each family, monthly court hearings, and a  
15 court team composed of a lead family court judge, designated  
16 guardian ad litem, parents' counsel, deputy attorneys general,  
17 and social workers from the department of human services. The



1 court hearings provide intensive judicial oversight and  
2 accountability for all parties while keeping the court team  
3 focused on timely permanency. Parent activities are held the  
4 same day as the monthly court hearings and enhance parenting  
5 skills while building a support system among participating  
6 families in a safe, judgment free environment. Infants and  
7 toddlers in the program receive a comprehensive developmental  
8 assessment that results in referrals to appropriate services.  
9 Families also participate in parent-child interaction therapy or  
10 child-parent psychotherapy to promote healthy family  
11 relationships.

12 The legislature further finds that the University of  
13 Hawaii's center on disability studies conducted an evaluation of  
14 the Hawai'i Zero to Three court, assessing program activities  
15 from August 2013 to July 2016. The study concludes that the  
16 program successfully meets the objectives of reducing parental  
17 alcohol or substance use, improving family reunification  
18 outcomes, decreasing the length of stay and number of placements  
19 in foster care, increasing visitation frequency, ensuring  
20 service availability timeliness, and increasing access to  
21 services.





# S.B. NO. 170

**Report Title:**

Zero to Three Court; Third Circuit; Judiciary; Program  
Coordinator Position; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes a Zero to Three Court Program Coordinator position.  
Expands the Zero to Three Court to the Third Circuit.  
Appropriates funds.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

