



The Judiciary, State of Hawaii

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair

The Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Friday, February 22, 2013, 9:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 211

WRITTEN COMMENTS

by

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Deputy Chief Judge/ Senior Judge

Family Court of the First Circuit

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 815, S.D.1, Relating to Children.

Purpose: To appropriate monies to the Zero to Three Court.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports this bill and Senate Draft 1. We wish to acknowledge the Legislature's foresight in the bill's introduction. We respectfully request that this appropriation be in addition to and not in lieu of any item in the current Judiciary budget request.

In 2008, the Family Court started its "Zero to Three Court" in response to increasing scientific evidence that (1) babies and toddlers are neurologically compromised by dysfunctional family dynamics even if they are not directly physically harmed; (2) their compromised brains results in long lasting compromised behaviors and learning disorders; (3) early intervention is effective in preventing or alleviating these problems; (4) there are proven techniques that can help many of these babies and toddlers.

The Zero to Three Court began with federal "seed" funding and grants from the national non-profit Zero to Three organization. The court was then continued through private monies from the Kellogg Foundation and HMSA. As with all such "specialty courts," long term



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sustainability necessarily requires that a dependable stream of state funding. This need came to the Zero to Three Court much earlier than expected due to consequences of the severe economic downturn. Adjustments were immediately made in order to continue the Court and its services. The Lead Judge, Judge Kuriyama, adjusted her assigned court calendars. The Family Drug Court (another specialty court begun by the family court) stepped up to the plate with much needed services to the babies and families in Zero to Three. Although greatly appreciated and much needed, the Family Drug Court cannot be expected to provide long term “stop gap” measures.

During the interim, this bill will enable the Zero to Three Court to continue providing essential services to babies and their families until more long term sustainable state funding can be secured. The services listed in this bill have already proven their effectiveness in healing traumatized brains, training better parents, and furthering family reunification.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.