



## *The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i*

### **Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 28, 2017 at 1:35 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 211

By

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Family Court of the First Circuit

### **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 499, Relating to the Zero to Three Court.

**Purpose:** Appropriates funds for staff positions and various services to support the Hawaii Zero to three court.

### **Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary supports this bill and wishes to acknowledge and thank the Legislature for its initiative in the critical area of providing safety and succor to children in this age bracket by applying specific strategies developed by scientific research.

In 2008, the family court began to implement its vision of a “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 result in long lasting compromised behaviors and learning disorders; (3) early intervention is effective in preventing or alleviating these problems; and (4) there are proven techniques that can help many of these babies and toddlers.

The bill, at pages 1 to 5, can be a model “primer” for both laypersons and persons in policy making positions. Research and practices are clearly explained along with the



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consequences of inaction (or untimely action) and the positive results of skilled timely intervention. Pages 1 to 5 are also a good example of principled public policy based on “good” science. Social science research and data can sometimes be less than conclusive, not because of the research, but because of the difficulty of establishing sound metrics. In contrast, this research has been focused on and builds upon medical/neurological data that can be quantified.

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 monies that the national organization applied for and received from the Kellogg Foundation and the HMSA Foundation. The current funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) will end mid-2017. Long term sustainability will require a dependable stream of state funding. This critically timely bill will prove to be the watershed transition, as recognized on page 5, that will not only insure sustainability for this important court but will also enable an expansion of community resources benefiting all families in addition to the families in court.

The appropriations listed on page 6 of this bill are admirable evidence of the Legislature’s deep understanding and appreciation of the research-based tenets of the Zero to Three Court. In our Judiciary Appropriations bill (SB469, S.D. 1), we have requested the resources needed to sustain the Zero to Three Court at its current level of operations. However, the resources proposed in this bill will expand on our budget request and will enable the Zero to Three Court to enhance its program for the vulnerable population it serves. Additionally, we are grateful for the bill’s express intent, at page 6, that “It is not the legislature’s intent that the requested funds supplant the judiciary’s existing funding or budget requests.”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.