
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that homelessness is one
2 of the most pressing problems in Hawaii, and it requires a
3 robust, comprehensive effort to increase the pace at which
4 Hawaii addresses homelessness. In 2017, for the first time in
5 years, Hawaii's homelessness rate decreased. Hawaii is turning
6 the tide on the homelessness crisis by investing in proven
7 programs such as housing first and rapid rehousing. The network
8 of people and resources engaged in addressing homelessness has
9 begun to make more efficient use of available resources by
10 implementing a data-driven, collaborative process that matches
11 those experiencing homelessness with the services they need to
12 make more efficient use of available resources. However, Hawaii
13 continues to have the highest per-capita rate of homelessness of
14 any state in the United States, with an estimated 7,220 people
15 living on the streets and in shelters. Given the magnitude of
16 Hawaii's homelessness problem, the State needs to increase its
17 investment in, and commitment to, a solution.



1 The legislature further finds that addressing homelessness
2 requires a multi-faceted approach using proven interventions
3 that are targeted to particular characteristics of the homeless
4 population and address the root causes of homelessness. First
5 and foremost, Hawaii needs more housing that is affordable to
6 low-income families. Hawaii has the highest housing costs in
7 the nation, and the lowest wages after adjustment for the cost
8 of living. The greatest need is for housing that is affordable
9 to residents with incomes at thirty per cent or below the area
10 median income, the lowest end of the income scale. Much like
11 housing provided through the State's low-income public housing
12 program, housing for this income demographic will require
13 significant government subsidies to build. The Hawaii public
14 housing authority manages hundreds of units that are vacant due
15 to the need for major repairs, and these units could be rapidly
16 brought back into service to assist homeless and extremely low-
17 income families.

18 The legislature further finds that in addition to
19 affordable housing, Hawaii needs to sustain programs that
20 connect people experiencing homelessness with critical services
21 and housing, programs such as outreach, rapid rehousing, the



1 State's rent supplement program, housing first, Oahu's family
2 assessment center, law enforcement assisted diversion, and
3 substance abuse treatment.

4 Moreover, the legislature recognizes that outreach is
5 critically necessary to connect people to all available housing
6 options such as emergency shelters, transitional shelters,
7 housing first, rapid rehousing with rent stipends, and other
8 assistance. For many chronically homeless mentally ill persons,
9 it may take fifty or more individual outreach contacts, over
10 several months or years, to establish trust and move them off
11 the streets. Outreach teams may also perform wound care,
12 distribute hygiene kits or snacks, and offer to obtain
13 identification documents. Housing first programs have proven
14 effective in addressing homelessness for chronically homeless
15 individuals, including those who have an addiction, mental
16 illness, or both.

17 The legislature recognizes that the success of housing
18 first programs is attributable to its principles, which include:

19 (1) Moving chronically homeless individuals into housing
20 directly from the streets and shelters without a
21 precondition of accepting or complying with treatment;



- 1 (2) Providing robust support services for program
- 2 participants that are predicated on assertive
- 3 engagement rather than coercion;
- 4 (3) Granting chronically homeless individuals priority as
- 5 program participants in housing first programs;
- 6 (4) Embracing a harm reduction approach to addictions
- 7 rather than mandating abstinence while supporting
- 8 program participant commitments to recovery; and
- 9 (5) Providing program participants with leases and tenant
- 10 protections as provided by law.

11 The legislature finds that, while costly, housing first
12 programs are cost-effective. Providing housing and services
13 under the housing first program is less costly than the
14 alternative of providing emergency services and other necessary
15 services for unhoused chronically homeless persons.

16 The legislature also finds that rapid rehousing and the
17 State's rent supplement program have proven effective in
18 securing and maintaining housing for working homeless
19 individuals and families. A significant segment of the homeless
20 population has a stable source of income and only requires
21 modest financial help and some housing stabilization services



1 instead of full-scale subsidies and intensive, ongoing case
2 management. More than a quarter of Hawaii households fall into
3 homelessness simply because they lack money to pay rent, but
4 they have no other underlying issues. For these individuals and
5 families, a small subsidy may allow them to rapidly move out of
6 shelters and into permanent homes. Rapid rehousing provides
7 struggling households with a one-time payment to cover
8 delinquent rent, utility payments, or first month's rent and
9 security deposit. This one-time financial intervention is often
10 all that families need to avoid homelessness or quickly bounce
11 back from becoming homeless. In contrast, the State's rent
12 supplement program provides a "shallow" but sustained subsidy to
13 struggling households. Unlike the "deep" Section 8 subsidy
14 program, which helps families at the lowest end of the income
15 scale by bridging a wide affordability gap between income and
16 housing costs, the State's rent supplement program helps
17 households that are closer to financial self-sufficiency but
18 that still have a narrow affordability gap to fill. The program
19 provides a small time-limited subsidy that wards off
20 homelessness while providing time for families to close the
21 affordability gap and achieve self-sufficiency. Financial case



1 management and counseling are critical to stabilizing these
2 families for future sustainability in permanent housing.
3 Because individual subsidies under the rapid rehousing and state
4 rent supplement programs are relatively low, the programs may
5 resolve homelessness for a large number of individuals and
6 families relative to the total cost of the subsidy program.

7 Additionally, the legislature finds that the family
8 assessment center, which was opened on Oahu in September 2016,
9 has achieved extraordinary results over its first year of
10 operation. Out of fifty-four households served, ninety-one per
11 cent were successfully housed. The assessment center offers
12 comprehensive services including benefit reviews and
13 determinations, health assessments, service coordination, and
14 housing placement. This proven model can be replicated on the
15 neighbor islands as an effective way to move families with
16 children rapidly to permanent housing. For example, on the
17 island of Hawaii, a large parcel of land has been set aside to
18 develop housing solutions for homelessness in Kona, where the
19 need for localized services is particularly acute.

20 Finally, to adequately address homelessness, the
21 legislature recognizes that Hawaii needs to disrupt the



1 ineffective, destructive, and expensive cycle of substance abuse
2 addiction that leads to homelessness, arrest, incarceration,
3 release, and a return to addiction and living on the streets.
4 The law enforcement assisted diversion program is a pre-booking
5 diversion program that grants police officers the discretionary
6 authority to redirect low-level offenders, who are typically
7 drug-involved and homeless, to case managers if the offender
8 consents to being assisted.

9 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate moneys to the
10 Hawaii public housing authority, the department of human
11 services, and the department of health to support the State's
12 most effective efforts to end homelessness: public housing,
13 outreach, rapid rehousing and the state's rent supplement
14 program, housing first, Oahu's family assessment center, the law
15 enforcement assisted diversion program, and civil legal
16 services.

17 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$35,000,000 or so
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
20 the Hawaii public housing authority to provide public housing
21 improvements and renovations statewide.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii public
2 housing authority for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,750,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
6 department of human services to continue to administer housing
7 first programs for chronically homeless individuals in the
8 State.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 human services for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,750,000 or so much
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
14 department of human services to continue to administer the rapid
15 rehousing program to assist homeless individuals or families in
16 obtaining or maintaining permanent housing and to cover housing
17 stabilization services and administrative costs to operate the
18 program.

19 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
20 human services for the purposes of this Act.



1 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$800,000 or so much
3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
4 Hawaii public housing authority to administer a state rent
5 supplement pilot program to assist one hundred currently
6 homeless families with minor children or families with minor
7 children at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic
8 violence in obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, by
9 providing time-limited rental assistance up to \$500 per month
10 and financial case management by a United States Department of
11 Housing and Urban Development certified financial counseling
12 organization.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii public
14 housing authority for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,200,000 or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
18 department of human services to continue to administer the
19 outreach services program to homeless persons, including, but
20 not limited to, individuals and families with children and



1 unaccompanied homeless youth, including \$310,000 for civil legal
2 services.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
4 human services for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
7 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
8 department of health to continue to administer outreach,
9 counseling, and diversion for unsheltered homeless persons
10 experiencing substance abuse, including \$250,000 to continue
11 administering the law enforcement assisted diversion pilot
12 program.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
14 health for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$680,000 or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
18 department of human services to continue to administer the
19 family assessment center for homeless families.

20 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
21 human services for the purposes of this Act.



H.B. NO. 1766

1 SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 16 2018



H.B. NO. 1766

Report Title:

Homelessness; Housing; Outreach; Rapid Rehousing; State Rent Supplement; Housing First; Oahu Family Assessment Center; Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to DHS and DOH to continue to administer programs for individuals or families who require assistance to avoid or escape homelessness including outreach, Rapid Rehousing, Housing First, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, and the Family Assessment Center on Oahu. Appropriates funds to HPHA for public housing improvements and renovations statewide and a pilot program for the State Rent Supplement Program.

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