
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 requires a robust,
3 comprehensive effort to increase the pace at which Hawaii
4 addresses homelessness. In 2017, for the first time in years,
5 Hawaii's homelessness rate decreased. Hawaii is turning the
6 tide on the homelessness crisis by investing in proven programs,
7 such as housing first and rapid rehousing. The network of
8 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.
12 However, Hawaii continues to have the highest per capita rate of
13 homelessness of any state in the United States, with an
14 estimated 7,220 homeless people living on the streets and in
15 temporary shelters. Given the magnitude of Hawaii's
16 homelessness problem, the State needs to increase its investment
17 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 of
8 living. The greatest need is for housing that is affordable to
9 residents at the lowest end of the income scale, with incomes at
10 thirty per cent or below the area median income. Much like
11 housing provided through the State's low-income public housing
12 program, building housing for this income demographic will
13 require significant government subsidies. Also, the Hawaii
14 public housing authority manages hundreds of units that are
15 vacant due to the need for major repairs, and these units could
16 be rapidly brought back into service to assist homeless and
17 extremely low-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, and programs that provide services, such as



1 outreach, rapid rehousing, rent supplements, housing first,
2 assistance at Oahu's family assessment center, law enforcement
3 assisted diversion, and 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 further finds that the State's efforts to
17 combat homelessness would be enhanced by establishing an "ohana
18 zones" program to provide housing to homeless individuals and
19 families based on principles similar to housing first, but with
20 more flexibility that allows for a higher degree of utilization.



1 The legislature also finds that rapid rehousing and the
2 State's rent supplement program have proven effective in
3 securing and maintaining housing for working homeless
4 individuals and families. A significant segment of the homeless
5 population has a stable source of income and only requires
6 modest financial help and some housing stabilization services
7 instead of full-scale subsidies and intensive, ongoing case
8 management. More than a quarter of Hawaii households fall into
9 homelessness simply because they lack money to pay rent, but
10 they have no other underlying issues. For these individuals and
11 families, a small subsidy may allow them to rapidly move out of
12 shelters and into permanent homes. Rapid rehousing provides
13 struggling households with a one-time payment to cover
14 delinquent rent, utility payments, or first month's rent and
15 security deposit. This one-time financial intervention is often
16 all that families need to avoid homelessness or quickly bounce
17 back from becoming homeless. In contrast, the State's rent
18 supplement program provides a shallow but sustained subsidy to
19 struggling households. Unlike the deep subsidy section 8
20 housing choice voucher program, which helps families at the
21 lowest end of the income scale by bridging a wide affordability



1 gap between income and housing costs, the State's rent
2 supplement program helps households that are closer to financial
3 self-sufficiency but that still have a narrow affordability gap
4 to fill. The program provides a small time-limited subsidy that
5 wards off homelessness while providing time for families to
6 close the affordability gap and achieve self-sufficiency.
7 Financial case management and counseling are critical to
8 stabilizing these families for future sustainability in
9 permanent housing. Because individual subsidies under the rapid
10 rehousing and state rent supplement programs are relatively low,
11 the programs may resolve homelessness for a large number of
12 individuals and families relative to the total cost of the
13 subsidy program.

14 Additionally, the legislature finds that the family
15 assessment center, which was opened on Oahu in September 2016,
16 has achieved extraordinary results over its first year of
17 operation. Out of fifty-four households served, ninety-one per
18 cent were successfully housed. The assessment center offers
19 comprehensive services including benefit reviews and
20 determinations, health assessments, service coordination, and
21 housing placement. This proven model can be replicated on the



1 neighbor islands as an effective way to move families with
2 children rapidly to permanent housing. For example, on the
3 island of Hawaii, a large parcel of land has been set aside to
4 develop housing solutions for homelessness in Kona, where the
5 need for localized services is particularly acute.

6 Finally, to adequately address homelessness, the
7 legislature recognizes that Hawaii needs to disrupt the
8 ineffective, destructive, and expensive cycle of substance abuse
9 addiction that leads to homelessness, arrest, incarceration,
10 release, and a return to addiction and living on the streets.
11 The law enforcement assisted diversion program is a pre-booking
12 diversion program that grants police officers the discretionary
13 authority to redirect low-level offenders, who are typically
14 drug-involved and homeless, to case managers if the offender
15 consents to being assisted.

16 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 17 (1) Establish an ohana zones program to provide housing to
18 homeless individuals and families based on principles
19 similar to the housing first program; and
20 (2) Appropriate moneys to the Hawaii public housing
21 authority, department of human services, and



1 department of health to support the State's most
2 effective efforts to end homelessness, including
3 public housing improvements, housing first, rapid
4 rehousing, housing homeless children pilot program,
5 outreach services, the law enforcement assisted
6 diversion program and civil legal services, Oahu's
7 family assessment center, and the establishment of the
8 emergency department homelessness assessment pilot
9 program and medical respite pilot program.

10 SECTION 2. (a) There is established an ohana zones
11 program to provide housing to homeless individuals and families
12 based on principles similar to the housing first program.

13 (b) The governor shall designate an executive branch
14 agency with specific expertise in construction and housing
15 development, including expertise in addressing issues related to
16 infrastructure and road access, to determine the number and
17 locations of the ohana zones. The designated agency shall
18 develop and implement the ohana zones program, which, at a
19 minimum, shall provide the following facilities and services at
20 each ohana zone site:

21 (1) Secure dwelling spaces that:



- 1 (A) May be private or communal;
- 2 (B) Have access to toilets, showers, and other
3 hygiene facilities; and
- 4 (C) Have access to an area for food storage and meal
5 preparation;
- 6 provided that if newly constructed or
7 substantially rehabilitated, the cost of these
8 dwelling spaces shall not exceed \$15,000, and no
9 less than fifty per cent of the materials and
10 supplies for these dwelling spaces shall be
11 purchased in-state;
- 12 (2) Medical and social support services, which shall be
13 onsite to the extent practicable;
- 14 (3) Onsite childcare;
- 15 (4) Transportation to school, employment, and any
16 appointments related to medical care or supportive
17 services that are not available onsite; and
- 18 (5) Any other facilities or services necessary to make the
19 ohana zone site a suitable destination to which:
- 20 (A) Hospitals may directly discharge qualified
21 patients; and



1 (B) Law enforcement agencies may divert, in lieu of
2 arrest, persons apprehended during "sweeps" of
3 homeless encampments.

4 (c) The agency designated pursuant to subsection (b) shall
5 coordinate with public or private entities, as appropriate, to
6 develop and implement the ohana zones program; provided that if
7 any land under the jurisdiction of the department of land and
8 natural resources is determined to be suitable for use as an
9 ohana zone, the designated agency shall:

10 (1) Work with the department of land and natural resources
11 to transfer any land designated for use as an ohana
12 zone to an agency whose mission is more suited to the
13 management of ohana zones; and

14 (2) Work with the department of land and natural resources
15 and its construction agency to ensure that an ohana
16 zone's infrastructure needs are met and minimize
17 adverse impacts to the environment, including to
18 nearshore resources such as corals, reef fish, and
19 seabirds.

20 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so



1 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
2 the establishment of the ohana zones program and expenses
3 related to facility construction, provision of services,
4 staffing, and administrative costs.

5 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the agency
6 designated by the governor pursuant to section 2 of this Act for
7 the purposes of this Act.

8 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
10 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
11 the Hawaii public housing authority to provide public housing
12 improvements and renovations statewide.

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

15 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
17 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
18 the department of human services to continue to administer
19 housing first programs for chronically homeless individuals in
20 the State.



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

3 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
5 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
6 the department of human services to continue to administer the
7 rapid rehousing program to assist homeless individuals or
8 families in obtaining or maintaining permanent housing and to
9 cover housing stabilization services and administrative costs to
10 operate the program.

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

13 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
15 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
16 the Hawaii public housing authority to administer a housing
17 homeless children pilot program to assist one hundred currently
18 homeless families with minor children or families with minor
19 children at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic
20 violence in obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, by
21 providing time-limited rental assistance of up to \$



1 per month and financial case management by a United States
2 Department of Housing and Urban Development certified financial
3 counseling organization.

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

6 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
8 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
9 the department of human services to continue to administer the
10 outreach services program to homeless persons, including but not
11 limited to individuals and families with children and
12 unaccompanied homeless youth, including \$ for civil
13 legal services.

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

16 SECTION 9. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
19 the department of health to continue to administer outreach,
20 counseling, and diversion for unsheltered homeless persons
21 experiencing substance abuse, including \$ to continue



1 administering the law enforcement assisted diversion pilot
2 program.

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

5 SECTION 10. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
7 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
8 the department of human services to continue to administer the
9 family assessment center for homeless families.

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

12 SECTION 11. (a) There is established within the
13 department of health for administrative purposes a pilot program
14 to be known as the emergency department homelessness assessment
15 pilot program. The department of health, in consultation with
16 the Hawaii interagency council on homelessness and any other
17 appropriate agency, shall serve as the administrator of the
18 pilot program.

19 (b) The pilot program shall place social workers or social
20 worker designees, who are employed by a participating hospital,



1 in the participating hospital's emergency department. These
2 social workers or social worker designees shall:

- 3 (1) Identify patients experiencing homelessness or
4 patients at risk of experiencing homelessness;
- 5 (2) Assess the patient's current circumstances; and
- 6 (3) Refer those patients to appropriate and available
7 social services with the goal of reducing costs
8 associated with chronic use of hospital emergency
9 departments.

10 (c) The department of health shall work with each
11 participating hospital under the emergency department
12 homelessness assessment pilot program to collect and analyze
13 data to be included in a report that contains a summary and
14 explanation of the data regarding the efficacy of emergency
15 department intervention by social workers and social worker
16 designees in mitigating the number of unnecessary emergency
17 department visits by patients experiencing homelessness or
18 patients at risk of experiencing homelessness. The report shall
19 contain findings and recommendations, including any proposed
20 legislation, for continuation, modification, or termination of
21 the pilot program. The department of health shall submit the



1 report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the
2 convening of the regular session of 2019.

3 (d) The emergency department homelessness assessment pilot
4 program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2019.

5 SECTION 12. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
7 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
8 the department of health to establish the emergency department
9 homelessness assessment pilot program.

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

12 SECTION 13. (a) There is established within the
13 department of health for administrative purposes a pilot program
14 to be known as the medical respite pilot program. The
15 department of health, in consultation with the Hawaii
16 interagency council on homelessness and any appropriate agency,
17 shall serve as the administrator of the pilot program.

18 (b) A participating community human services provider, in
19 partnership with a hospital in the pilot program, shall provide
20 emergency housing for eligible individuals experiencing
21 homelessness discharged from the participating hospital and



1 provide, at minimum, meals, case management, medical, nursing,
2 and psychiatric care. The medical respite facilities shall
3 comply with the department of health's standards of
4 accessibility, sanitation, and other requirements as determined
5 by the department for facilities of similar use.

6 (c) The department of health shall submit a report to the
7 legislature of its findings and recommendations, including any
8 proposed legislation, from the pilot program no later than
9 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
10 2019.

11 (d) The medical respite pilot program shall cease to exist
12 on June 30, 2019.

13 SECTION 14. There is appropriated out of the general
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
15 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
16 the department of health to establish the medical respite pilot
17 program.

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

20 SECTION 15. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Homelessness; Housing; DHS; DOH; HPHA; Outreach; Rapid Rehousing; Housing Homeless Children Pilot Program; Housing First; Ohana Zones; Oahu Family Assessment Center; Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program; Emergency Department Homelessness Assessment Pilot Program; Medical Respite Pilot Program; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes an Ohana Zones program to provide housing to homeless individuals and families based on principles similar to the housing first program and appropriates unspecified funds for the program. Appropriates unspecified funds to the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health to continue to administer various housing and homelessness programs. Appropriates unspecified funds to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority for public housing improvements and renovations statewide and a housing homeless children pilot program. Establishes and appropriates funds to the Department of Health for an emergency department homelessness assessment pilot program and medical respite pilot program. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD2)

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