
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

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

PART I

1
2 SECTION 1. (a) The legislature finds that homelessness is
3 one of the most pressing problems in Hawaii and requires a
4 robust, comprehensive solution to increase the pace at which the
5 State is gaining ground on addressing the issue. For the first
6 time in years, the homelessness rate in Hawaii went down in
7 2017. Hawaii is turning the tide on the homelessness crisis by
8 investing in proven programs like housing first and rapid
9 rehousing. The network of people and resources engaged in
10 addressing homelessness has begun to make more efficient use of
11 available resources by implementing a data-driven, collaborative
12 process that matches those experiencing homelessness with the
13 services they need. However, Hawaii continues to have the
14 highest per capita rate of homelessness of any state in the
15 United States, with an estimated 7,220 people living on the
16 streets and in shelters. Therefore, the legislature finds that



1 the State must increase the investment in and commitment to the
2 solution.

3 Addressing homelessness requires a multi-faceted approach
4 using proven interventions that are targeted to the particular
5 characteristics of the population being served and that address
6 the root causes of homelessness. First and foremost, Hawaii
7 needs more housing that is affordable to low-income families.
8 Hawaii has the highest housing costs in the nation and the
9 lowest wages after adjusting for the cost of living. The
10 greatest need for housing lies at the lowest ends of the income
11 scale. Specifically, the greatest demand is for housing that is
12 affordable to residents with incomes at thirty per cent or less
13 than the area median income, such as the housing provided
14 through the state low-income public housing program.

15 The Hawaii public housing authority manages hundreds of
16 units that are vacant due to the need for major repairs. These
17 units could rapidly be brought back into service and assist
18 homeless and extremely low-income families with housing
19 available for thirty per cent of their income.

20 In addition to affordable housing, Hawaii needs to sustain
21 programs that connect people experiencing homelessness with



1 critical services and housing programs, such as outreach, rapid
2 rehousing, the state rent supplement program, housing first,
3 Oahu's family assessment center, and law enforcement assisted
4 diversion.

5 Outreach is critically necessary to connect people to all
6 available housing options: emergency shelters, transitional
7 shelters, housing first, rapid rehousing with rent stipends, and
8 treatment. For many chronically homeless mentally ill persons,
9 it can take fifty or more individual outreach contacts, spread
10 out over several months or even years, to build up the trust
11 needed to move these individuals and families off the streets.
12 Outreach teams may also conduct wound care, distribute hygiene
13 kits or snacks, and offer to obtain identification documents.

14 Housing first programs are proven to be effective in
15 addressing homelessness for chronically homeless individuals,
16 including those who have an addiction or mental illness, or
17 both. The principles of housing first programs include:

- 18 (1) Providing robust support services for program
19 participants that are predicated on assertive
20 engagement rather than coercion;



- 1 (2) Granting chronically homeless individuals priority as
2 participants in housing first programs;
- 3 (3) Embracing harm-reduction approaches, in collaboration
4 with prevention and early intervention approaches,
5 which include a spectrum of multiple opportunity
6 strategies from safer use to abstinence, to reduce the
7 impact of substance use disorders, thereby providing
8 critical links to deepen the impact to populations at
9 greater risk; and
- 10 (4) Providing program participants with leases and tenant
11 protections as provided by law.

12 While housing first programs are relatively costly, they
13 are cost-effective. Providing housing and services under the
14 housing first program is less expensive than the alternative of
15 incurring costs for emergency and other services necessary for
16 unhoused persons who are chronically homeless.

17 The rapid rehousing and state rent supplement programs are
18 proven to be effective in securing and maintaining housing for
19 working individuals and families who are homeless. A
20 significant segment of homeless people have a stable source of
21 income and only need modest financial help and some housing



1 stabilization services instead of full scale subsidies and
2 intensive, ongoing case management. More than a quarter of the
3 State's households fall into homelessness simply because they
4 are short of money to pay for their rent but have no other
5 underlying issues. For these individuals and families, small
6 subsidies allow them to more rapidly secure housing and move out
7 of shelters into permanent housing.

8 Rapid rehousing provides struggling households with a
9 financial shot in the arm - typically a one-time payment to
10 cover delinquent rent, utility payments, or first month's rent
11 and security deposit. This one-time intervention is often all
12 families need to avoid homelessness or to quickly bounce back
13 from becoming homeless.

14 The state rent supplement program provides a sustained
15 subsidy to struggling households. Unlike the housing choice
16 voucher program, also known as the section 8 program, which
17 helps families at the lowest ends of the income scale by
18 bridging a wide affordability gap between income and housing
19 costs through subsidies, the state rent supplement program helps
20 households who are closer to financial self-sufficiency but
21 still have a narrow affordability gap to fill. The state rent



1 supplement program provides a small, time-limited subsidy,
2 warding off homelessness while providing time for families to
3 close the affordability gap and achieve self-sufficiency.
4 Financial case management and counseling are critical to
5 stabilize these families for future sustainability in permanent
6 housing.

7 Because individual subsidies under the rapid rehousing and
8 state rent supplement programs are relatively low, the programs
9 can resolve homelessness for a large number of individuals and
10 families relative to the total cost of the subsidy programs.

11 The family assessment center, which was opened on Oahu in
12 September 2016, has achieved extraordinary results over its
13 first year of operation. Out of fifty-four households served,
14 ninety-one per cent were successfully housed. The assessment
15 center provides comprehensive services to the households it
16 serves, including benefits reviews and determinations, health
17 assessments, service coordination, and housing placement. This
18 proven model can be replicated on the neighbor islands as an
19 effective way to move families with children to permanent
20 housing. For example, on Hawaii island, a large parcel of land
21 has been set aside to develop housing solutions for homelessness



1 in Kona, where the need for localized services is particularly
2 acute.

3 Finally, to adequately address homelessness, Hawaii needs
4 to disrupt the ineffective, destructive, and expensive revolving
5 cycle of substance abuse addiction that leads to homelessness,
6 arrest, incarceration, release, and back to addiction on the
7 streets. LEAD, or law enforcement assisted diversion, is a pre-
8 booking diversion program that grants police officers the
9 discretionary authority to redirect low-level offenders,
10 typically drug-involved and homeless, to case managers if the
11 offenders are willing.

12 (b) The purpose of this Act is to:

13 (1) Establish and appropriate funds for a three-year
14 housing homeless children pilot program to assist
15 homeless families with minors, or those families with
16 minors at imminent risk of homelessness due to
17 domestic violence, to obtain and maintain permanent
18 housing; and

19 (2) Appropriate funds to the Hawaii public housing
20 authority, department of human services, and
21 department of health to support the State's most



1 effective programs to end homelessness: public
2 housing, housing first, rapid rehousing, outreach
3 services programs to homeless persons, including
4 outreach services to runaway and homeless youth and
5 civil legal services, Oahu's family assessment center,
6 and the LEAD program.

7 **PART II**

8 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the Hawaii
9 public housing authority a three-year housing homeless children
10 pilot program. The purpose of this program is to assist
11 families with minors experiencing, or at imminent risk of,
12 homelessness due to domestic violence to obtain and maintain
13 permanent housing.

14 (b) The housing homeless children pilot program shall:

- 15 (1) Assist the participants with circumstances arising due
16 to domestic violence;
- 17 (2) Assist the participants with obtaining or maintaining
18 permanent housing, including time-limited rental
19 assistance in an amount to be determined by the Hawaii
20 public housing authority; and



1 (3) Provide the participants financial case management by
2 a United States Department of Housing and Urban
3 Development certified financial counseling
4 organization.

5 (c) The board of directors of the Hawaii public housing
6 authority shall adopt rules, pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii
7 Revised Statutes, necessary for the purposes of this section;
8 provided that the board of directors of the Hawaii public
9 housing authority shall develop interim rules without regard to
10 chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for assisting participants
11 in the housing homeless children pilot program.

12 (d) The board of directors of the Hawaii public housing
13 authority may employ, without regard to chapter 76, Hawaii
14 Revised Statutes, and at pleasure may dismiss, persons it finds
15 necessary for the performance of its functions and fix their
16 compensation.

17 (e) The Hawaii public housing authority may procure case
18 management and counseling services without regard to chapter
19 103D and 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for assisting
20 participants in the housing homeless children pilot program.



1 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
 2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
 3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
 4 Hawaii public housing authority to administer the housing
 5 homeless children pilot program and administrative costs to
 6 operate the program.

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

12 SECTION 5. The sums appropriated in sections 3 and 4 of
 13 this Act shall be expended by the Hawaii public housing
 14 authority for the purposes of this part.

15 PART III

16 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general
 17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
 18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
 19 department of human services to continue to administer housing
 20 first programs for chronically homeless individuals in the
 21 State.



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

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

16 (1) \$ of the sum appropriated shall be expended
 17 for outreach services to runaway and homeless youth;
 18 and

19 (2) \$ of the sum appropriated shall be expended
 20 for civil legal services.



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

6 SECTION 10. The sums appropriated in sections 6 through 9
7 of this Act shall be expended by the department of human
8 services for the purposes of this part.

9 PART IV

10 SECTION 11. There is appropriated out of the general
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
12 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
13 department of health to continue to administer homeless
14 outreach, counseling, and diversion for unsheltered persons
15 experiencing substance abuse, including through professional
16 case managers who employ basic core competencies for substance
17 abuse treatment; provided that \$ of the sum appropriated
18 shall be expended to continue administering the law enforcement
19 assisted diversion pilot program.

20 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
21 health for the purposes of this part.



Report Title:

Homelessness; Housing; Rapid Rehousing; State Rental Assistance; Housing First; Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes and appropriates funds for a three-year housing homeless children pilot program to assist families with minors experiencing, or at imminent risk of, homelessness due to domestic violence, to obtain and maintain permanent housing. Appropriates funds for public housing improvements and renovations and to support Department of Health and Department of Human Services programs to end homelessness. Provides that the Hawaii Public Housing Authority may procure case management and counseling services for the housing homeless children pilot program without adhering to the State Procurement Code. (SB2401 HD1)

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