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## 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  
8 of living. The greatest need is for housing that is affordable  
9 to residents at the lowest end of the income scale, with incomes  
10 at 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" Section 8 subsidy  
20 program, which helps families at the lowest end of the income  
21 scale by bridging a wide affordability gap between income and



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

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



1 children rapidly to permanent housing. For example, on the  
2 island of Hawaii, a large parcel of land has been set aside to  
3 develop housing solutions for homelessness in Kona, where the  
4 need for localized services is particularly acute.

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

15 The purpose of this Act is to:

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



1 department of health to support the State's most  
2 effective efforts to end homelessness: public  
3 housing, outreach, rapid rehousing and the State's  
4 rent supplement program, housing first, Oahu's family  
5 assessment center, the law enforcement assisted  
6 diversion program, and civil legal services.

7 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department  
8 of human services an ohana zones program to provide housing to  
9 homeless individuals and families based on principles similar to  
10 housing first. The number and locations of the ohana zones  
11 shall be determined by the department.

12 (b) The department of human services shall develop and  
13 implement the program, which, at a minimum, shall provide the  
14 following facilities and services at each ohana zone site:

- 15 (1) Secure dwelling spaces that:
- 16 (A) May be private or communal;
  - 17 (B) Have access to toilets, showers, and other  
18 hygiene facilities; and
  - 19 (C) Have access to an area for food storage and meal  
20 preparation;





- 1           (2) Medical and social support services, which shall be
- 2                 onsite to the extent practicable;
- 3           (3) Onsite childcare;
- 4           (4) Transportation to school, employment, and any
- 5                 appointments related to medical care or supportive
- 6                 services that are not available onsite; and
- 7           (5) Any other facilities or services necessary to make the
- 8                 ohana zone site a suitable destination to which:
  - 9                   (A) Hospitals may directly discharge qualified
  - 10                   patients; and
  - 11                   (B) Law enforcement agencies may divert, in lieu of
  - 12                   arrest, persons apprehended during "sweeps" of
  - 13                   homeless encampments.
- 14           (c) The department of human services shall coordinate with
- 15                 public or private state or county entities, as appropriate, to
- 16                 develop and implement the ohana zones program.

17           SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                 or so much  
19 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the  
20 establishment of the ohana zones program and expenses related to

1 facility construction, provision of services, staffing, and  
2 administrative costs.

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

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

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

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

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

20 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general  
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much



1 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the  
2 department of human services to continue to administer the rapid  
3 rehousing program to assist homeless individuals or families in  
4 obtaining or maintaining permanent housing and to cover housing  
5 stabilization services and administrative costs to operate the  
6 program.

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

9 SECTION 7. 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 Hawaii public housing authority to administer a state rent  
13 supplement pilot program to assist one hundred currently  
14 homeless families with minor children or families with minor  
15 children at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic  
16 violence in obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, by  
17 providing time-limited rental assistance of up to \$ per  
18 month and financial case management by a United States  
19 Department of Housing and Urban Development certified financial  
20 counseling organization.



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

3           SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general  
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$           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 the  
7 outreach services program to homeless persons, including but not  
8 limited to individuals and families with children and  
9 unaccompanied homeless youth, including \$           for civil  
10 legal services.

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

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



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

3 SECTION 10. There is appropriated out of the general  
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ 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 the  
7 family assessment center for homeless families.

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

10 SECTION 11. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

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# H.B. NO. 2281

**Report Title:**

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

**Description:**

Establishes within the Department of Human Services an Ohana Zones program to provide housing to homeless individuals and families based on principles similar to Housing First 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 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 unspecified funds to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority for public housing improvements and renovations statewide and a rent supplement pilot program.

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