
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, 3000.



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 various housing and homelessness programs. Appropriates unspecified funds to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority for public housing improvements and renovations statewide and a rent supplement pilot program. (HB2281 HD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

