
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 within the department of human services an
18 ohana zones program to provide housing to homeless
19 individuals and families based on principles similar
20 to the housing first program; and



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

12 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department
13 of human services an ohana zones program to provide housing to
14 homeless individuals and families based on principles similar to
15 the housing first program. The number and locations of the
16 ohana zones shall be determined by the department.

17 (b) The department of human services shall develop and
18 implement the ohana zones program, which, at a minimum, shall
19 provide the following facilities and services at each ohana zone
20 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 department of human services shall coordinate with
5 public or private entities, as appropriate, to develop and
6 implement the ohana zones program.

7 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
10 the establishment of the ohana zones program and expenses
11 related to facility construction, provision of services,
12 staffing, and administrative costs.

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

15 SECTION 4. 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 Hawaii public housing authority to provide public housing
19 improvements and renovations statewide.

20 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii public
21 housing authority 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 \$ or so
 3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
 4 the department of human services to continue to administer
 5 housing first programs for chronically homeless individuals in
 6 the State.

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

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

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

19 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
 20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 21 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for



1 the Hawaii public housing authority to administer a housing
 2 homeless children pilot program to assist one hundred currently
 3 homeless families with minor children or families with minor
 4 children at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic
 5 violence in obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, by
 6 providing time-limited rental assistance of up to \$
 7 per month and financial case management by a United States
 8 Department of Housing and Urban Development certified financial
 9 counseling organization.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

18 SECTION 11. (a) There is established within the
19 department of health for administrative purposes a pilot program
20 to be known as the emergency department homelessness assessment
21 pilot program. The department of health, in consultation with



1 the Hawaii interagency council on homelessness and any other
2 appropriate agency, shall serve as the administrator of the
3 pilot program.

4 (b) The pilot program shall place social workers or social
5 worker designees, who are employed by a participating hospital,
6 in the participating hospital's emergency department. These
7 social workers or social worker designees shall:

8 (1) Identify patients experiencing homelessness or
9 patients at risk of experiencing homelessness;

10 (2) Assess the patient's current circumstances; and

11 (3) Refer those patients to appropriate and available
12 social services with the goal of reducing costs
13 associated with chronic use of hospital emergency
14 departments.

15 (c) The department of health shall work with each
16 participating hospital under the emergency department
17 homelessness assessment pilot program to collect and analyze
18 data to be included in a report that contains a summary and
19 explanation of the data regarding the efficacy of emergency
20 department intervention by social workers and social worker
21 designees in mitigating the number of unnecessary emergency



1 department visits by patients experiencing homelessness or
2 patients at risk of experiencing homelessness. The report shall
3 contain findings and recommendations, including any proposed
4 legislation, for continuation, modification, or termination of
5 the pilot program. The department of health shall submit the
6 report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the
7 convening of the regular session of 2019.

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

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

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

17 SECTION 13. (a) There is established within the
18 department of health for administrative purposes a pilot program
19 to be known as the medical respite pilot program. The
20 department of health, in consultation with the Hawaii



1 interagency council on homelessness and any appropriate agency,
2 shall serve as the administrator of the pilot program.

3 (b) A participating community human services provider, in
4 partnership with a hospital in the pilot program, shall provide
5 emergency housing for eligible individuals experiencing
6 homelessness discharged from the participating hospital and
7 provide, at minimum, meals, case management, medical, nursing,
8 and psychiatric care. The medical respite facilities shall
9 comply with the department of health's standards of
10 accessibility, sanitation, and other requirements as determined
11 by the department for facilities of similar use.

12 (c) The department of health shall submit a report to the
13 legislature of its findings and recommendations, including any
14 proposed legislation, from the pilot program no later than
15 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
16 2019.

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

19 SECTION 14. There is appropriated out of the general
20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
21 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for



1 the department of health to establish the medical respite pilot
2 program.

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

5 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 within the Department of Human Services 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. Takes effect on 7/1/3000. (SD1)

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