A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that thousands of Hawaii residents experience visual disabilities that hamper daily living and that may lead to conditions of isolation, limited productivity, loss of independence, and lack of social integration. The department of human services estimates that there are twelve thousand state residents who are blind or have a significant visual impairment; many live on Oahu where access to opportunities and services are better organized and readily available compared to services provided on the neighbor islands.

The legislature further finds that training, adjustments to blindness services, and transportation services receive state and local support based on economies of scale. However, this approach leaves approximately two thousand neighbor island residents with the choice to either move to Oahu or live without the opportunity to have full and integrated lives in their current communities. The legislature also finds that a supplemental service plan is needed to provide additional
support services for neighbor island residents who are blind and
visually impaired.

The purpose of this Act is to establish a neighbor islands
blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide
services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor
island residents and supplement existing statewide services.

SECTION 2. (a) The department of human services shall
establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service
pilot program to provide services and training to blind and
visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor islands.

(b) The pilot program shall provide peer-to-peer outreach,
sight loss adjustment, peer counseling support, and mobility
training to participants, including:

(1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program
needs;

(2) Adjustment services, including individual and group
counseling;

(3) Communications development, including access
technology awareness and training;

(4) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;

(5) Orientation and mobility training; and
(6) Other services, including peer support, needed for participants to sustain independence and social integration.

The services provided under this subsection shall be provided by volunteers, who shall be recruited, assigned, and supervised by the department or an entity contracted by the department to organize and implement the pilot program. All volunteers shall be qualified and chosen based on experience and training and shall use training methods consistent with the structured discovery approach used in the new visions program operated by the Ho'opono services for the blind.

(c) The pilot program shall also provide special needs transportation assistance to participants. The department shall work with neighbor island transportation service providers and other individuals to create a special needs transportation assistance service network to serve participants.

(d) Applications for participation in the pilot program shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department. The department shall establish procedures and requirements for accepting participants into the pilot program.
(e) The pilot program shall be authorized to extend and supplement the services provided by the Hoʻopono services for the blind branch within the division of vocational rehabilitation of the department.

(f) The department shall enter into a contract with a nonprofit organization to manage the day-to-day operations of the pilot program; provided that any nonprofit organization contracted under this subsection shall:

1. Have the qualifications necessary to provide peer support services to participants;
2. Consist of a majority of officers and directors who are blind or visually impaired;
3. Have membership chapters or organization subunits located on neighbor islands that will be served by the pilot program.

(g) The department shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2021. The report shall include:

1. A record of pilot program activities and accomplishments;
(2) A recommendation on whether to extend the program; and

(3) Any proposed legislation.

(h) The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, necessary to implement the pilot program.

(i) As used in this section:

"Department" means department of human services.

"Participant" means an individual whose loss of sight results in a substantial limitation to mobility or living independently and who is a resident of a county with a population less than five hundred thousand and is participating in the pilot program.

"Pilot program" means the neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program established by this Act.

"Special needs transportation" means transportation at times or for trips when public transportation is not a reasonable option for a participant.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $500,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot
program established pursuant to this Act, including the hiring
of necessary staff, travel, and per diem expenses; stipends for
living expenses for pilot program volunteers; provision of
special transportation assistance for program participants; and
other necessary expenses associated with the pilot program;
provided that:

(1) The department of human services shall identify and
secure other sources of funding, including federal
funding, to provide for matching funds for the pilot
program; and

(2) Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall
be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion
of the base budget for any state or county agency
providing services for blind or visually impaired
persons.

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

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020, and
shall be repealed on June 30, 2022.
Report Title:
Deaf and Blind Task Force; Blind; Visually Impaired; Pilot Program; Appropriation

Description:
Requires DHS to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents. Appropriates funds. Repeals 06/30/2022. (SD1)

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