
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. The legislature finds that homelessness is one
3 of the most pressing problems in Hawai'i, and it requires a
4 robust, comprehensive solution to increase the pace at which the
5 State is gaining ground on addressing homelessness. For the
6 first time in years, the homelessness rate in Hawai'i went down
7 in 2017. Hawai'i is turning the tide on the homelessness crisis
8 by 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 to make more efficient use of available
14 resources. However, Hawai'i continues to have the highest per
15 capita rate of homelessness of any state in the United States,
16 with an estimated 7,220 people living on the streets and in



1 shelters - the State must increase the investment in and
2 commitment to the 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, Hawai'i
7 needs more housing that is affordable to low-income families.
8 Hawai'i has the highest housing costs in the nation and the
9 lowest wages after adjusting for cost of living. The greatest
10 need for housing lies at the lowest ends of the income scale -
11 housing that is affordable to residents with incomes at thirty
12 per cent or below of the area median income, such as the housing
13 provided through the state low-income public housing program.

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

19 In addition to affordable housing, Hawai'i needs to sustain
20 programs that connect people experiencing homelessness with
21 critical services and housing programs, such as outreach, rapid



1 rehousing, the state rent supplement program, housing first,
2 Oahu's family assessment center, and law enforcement assisted
3 diversion.

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

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

- 17 (1) Providing robust support services for program
18 participants that are predicated on assertive
19 engagement rather than coercion;
- 20 (2) Granting chronically homeless individuals priority as
21 program participants in housing first programs;



1 (3) Embracing harm-reduction approaches, in collaboration
2 with prevention and early intervention approaches, to
3 reduce the impact of substance use disorders, which
4 includes a spectrum of multiple opportunity strategies
5 from safer use to abstinence providing critical links
6 to deepen the impact to populations at greater risk;
7 and

8 (4) Providing program participants with leases and tenant
9 protections as provided by law.

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

15 The rapid rehousing and state rent supplement programs are
16 proven to be effective in securing and maintaining housing for
17 working individuals and families who are homeless. A
18 significant segment of homeless people have a stable source of
19 income and only need modest financial help and some "housing
20 stabilization" services instead of full scale subsidies and
21 intensive, ongoing case management. More than a quarter of the



1 State's households fall into homelessness simply because they
2 are short of money to pay for their rent but have no other
3 underlying issues. For these individuals and families, small
4 subsidies allow them to more rapidly secure housing and move out
5 of shelters into permanent housing.

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

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



1 close the affordability gap and achieve self-sufficiency.
2 Financial case management and counseling are critical to
3 stabilize these families for future sustainability in permanent
4 housing.

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

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



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

10 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 11 (1) Establish and appropriate funds for a three-year
12 housing homeless children pilot program to assist
13 families with minors, or those families with minors at
14 imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic
15 violence, to obtain and maintain permanent housing;
16 and
- 17 (2) Appropriate funds to the Hawaii public housing
18 authority, department of human services, and
19 department of health to support the State's most
20 effective programs to end homelessness: public
21 housing, housing first, rapid rehousing, outreach



1 services programs to homeless persons, including
2 outreach services to runaway and homeless youth and
3 civil legal services, Oahu's family assessment center,
4 and the LEAD program.

5 **PART II**

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

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

13 (1) Assist homeless families with minor children or those
14 families with minor children at imminent risk of
15 homelessness due to domestic violence;

16 (2) Assist with obtaining or maintaining permanent
17 housing, including time-limited rental assistance in
18 an amount to be determined by the Hawaii public
19 housing authority; and



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

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

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

16 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$800,000 or so much
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
19 Hawaii public housing authority to administer the housing
20 homeless children pilot program and administrative costs to
21 operate the program.



1 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$35,000,000 or so
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
4 the Hawaii public housing authority to provide public housing
5 improvements and renovations statewide.

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

9 **PART III**

10 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,750,000 or so much
12 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
13 department of human services to continue to administer housing
14 first programs for chronically homeless individuals in the
15 State.

16 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,750,000 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 the rapid
20 rehousing program to assist homeless individuals or families in
21 obtaining or maintaining permanent housing and to cover housing



1 stabilization services and administrative costs to operate the
2 program.

3 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,200,000 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; provided that:

- 10 (1) \$300,000 of the sum appropriated shall be expended for
11 outreach services to runaway and homeless youth; and
12 (2) \$310,000 of the sum appropriated shall be expended for
13 civil legal services.

14 SECTION 9. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$680,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
17 department of human services to continue to administer the
18 family assessment center on Oahu for homeless families.

19 SECTION 10. The sums appropriated in sections 7 to 9 of
20 this Act shall be expended by the department of human services
21 for the purposes of this part.



PART IV

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2 SECTION 11. There is appropriated out of the general

3 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much

4 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the

5 department of health to continue to administer homeless

6 outreach, counseling, and diversion for unsheltered persons

7 experiencing substance abuse, including through professional

8 case managers who employ basic core competencies for substance

9 abuse treatment; provided that \$250,000 of the sum appropriated

10 shall be expended to continue administering the law enforcement

11 assisted diversion pilot program.

12 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of

13 health for the purposes of this part.

PART V

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15 SECTION 12. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2018;

16 provided that section 2 be repealed on June 30, 2021.

17



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, or those families with minors at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic violence, to obtain and maintain permanent housing. Appropriates funds to the Hawaii public housing authority, department of human services, and department of health to support the State's most effective programs to end homelessness: public housing improvements and renovations statewide, housing first, rapid rehousing, outreach services programs to homeless persons, including outreach services to runaway and homeless youth and civil legal services, Oahu's family assessment center, and the LEAD program. (SD1)

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