
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.

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

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

10 The legislature further finds that state and local support
11 services for blind or visually impaired individuals, including
12 training, adjustment to blindness services, and transportation
13 services, are provided through economies of scale, and therefore
14 tend to benefit residents in populated areas as compared to
15 those in sparsely populated areas. As such, approximately two
16 thousand neighbor island residents who are blind or visually



1 impaired are left with the choice of either moving to Oahu or
2 living without the opportunity to have full and integrated lives
3 in their existing communities.

4 Accordingly, the legislature finds that there is a need for
5 a supplemental service program that provides additional support
6 services to blind and visually impaired individuals residing on
7 neighbor islands.

8 The purpose of this Act is to require the department of
9 human services to establish and fund a neighbor islands blind
10 and visually impaired service pilot program and working group to
11 supplement existing statewide services by providing training and
12 other services to neighbor island residents who are blind or
13 visually impaired.

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

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



- 1 (1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program
2 needs;
- 3 (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that
4 existing services are identified and used to the
5 maximum extent possible;
- 6 (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group
7 counseling;
- 8 (4) Access to and training for use of telecommunications
9 services to receive current news, weather alerts, and
10 other vital public information;
- 11 (5) Awareness development and training for the use of
12 computers, smart phones, and other communications
13 devices;
- 14 (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;
- 15 (7) Orientation and mobility training;
- 16 (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed
17 benefits, services, and individual rights; and
- 18 (9) Other services, including peer support needed for
19 program participants to sustain independence and
20 social integration.



1 The services provided by the pilot program pursuant to this
2 subsection shall be provided by volunteers, who shall be
3 recruited, assigned, and supervised by the department or an
4 entity contracted by the department to organize and implement
5 the pilot program. All volunteers shall have the necessary
6 qualifications, be chosen based on experience and training, and
7 use training methods consistent with the structured discovery
8 approach used by the new visions program operated by the Ho'opono
9 services for the blind branch within the department's division
10 of vocational rehabilitation.

11 (c) The pilot program shall also provide program
12 participants with special needs transportation assistance. The
13 department shall work with neighbor island transportation
14 service providers and other individuals and entities to develop
15 a special needs transportation assistance service network to
16 serve program participants.

17 (d) Applications for participation in the pilot program
18 shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department. The
19 department shall establish procedures and requirements for
20 accepting program participants.



1 (e) The pilot program shall be authorized to extend and
2 supplement the existing services provided by the Ho'opono
3 services for the blind branch.

4 (f) The department shall enter into a contract with a
5 nonprofit organization to recruit, train, and supervise
6 volunteer service corps members and oversee the pilot program;
7 provided that existing department personnel may be assigned to
8 fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities of the pilot
9 program. Any nonprofit organization contracted under this
10 subsection shall have:

11 (1) The knowledge, experience, and qualifications
12 necessary to provide peer support services to program
13 participants;

14 (2) A management team, consisting of officers and
15 directors, of whom a majority are blind or visually
16 impaired; and

17 (3) Membership chapters or organization subunits located
18 on the neighbor islands that will be served by the
19 pilot program.

20 (g) The department shall establish a neighbor islands
21 blind and visually impaired service pilot program working group



1 composed of neighbor island residents who are blind or visually
2 impaired to make recommendations regarding the establishment and
3 implementation of the pilot program. The department, in
4 collaboration with the working group, shall develop a written
5 implementation plan that includes a pilot program performance
6 period and program budget, and shall submit the plan, including
7 any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than
8 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
9 2024.

10 (h) The department shall submit a report of its findings
11 and recommendations pertaining to the neighbor islands blind and
12 visually impaired service pilot program to the legislature no
13 later than thirty days prior to the convening of the regular
14 session of 2027. The report shall include:

- 15 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
16 accomplishments;
- 17 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the pilot
18 program; and
- 19 (3) Any proposed legislation.



1 (i) The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter
2 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and prescribe forms necessary to
3 carry out the purposes of this Act.

4 (j) The pilot program shall cease to exist on July 30,
5 2027.

6 (k) For purposes of this section:

7 "Department" means the department of human services.

8 "Neighbor island" means a county with a population less
9 than five hundred thousand.

10 "Program participant" means a resident of a neighbor island
11 whose mobility or ability to live independently is substantially
12 limited due to loss of sight and who is participating in the
13 neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot
14 program.

15 "Special needs transportation" means transportation
16 provided to program participants at times or for trips when
17 public transportation is not a reasonable option.

18 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
20 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and
21 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal



1 year 2024-2025 to fund the establishment and operation of the
2 neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot
3 program and working group; provided that:

4 (1) The department of human services shall include funding
5 for the pilot program in its regular budget request
6 submitted in 2024; and

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

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

14 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 30, 3000,
15 and shall be repealed on June 30, 2027.



Report Title:

Deaf and Blind Task Force; Department of Human Services; Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Ho'opono Services for the Blind Branch; Working Group; Implementation Plan; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the department of human services to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program that provides training and other services to blind or visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor islands. Requires the department of human services to establish a working group and submit an implementation plan to the legislature before the regular session of 2024. Requires the department to report to the legislature prior to the regular session of 2027. Appropriates funds. Repeals on 6/30/2027. Effective 7/30/3000. (HD2)

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