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# 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:

9 (1) Require the department of human services to:

10 (A) Establish a neighbor islands blind and visually  
11 impaired service pilot program that supplements  
12 existing statewide services by providing training  
13 and other services to neighbor island residents  
14 who are blind or visually impaired;

15 (B) Establish a neighbor islands blind and visually  
16 impaired service pilot program working group to  
17 develop a pilot program implementation plan and  
18 submit the plan to the Legislature before the  
19 Regular Session of 2024; and



1 (C) Submit a report on the blind and visually  
2 impaired service pilot program to the legislature  
3 prior to the Regular Session of 2027; and

4 (2) Appropriate moneys to fund the establishment and  
5 operation of the neighbor islands blind and visually  
6 impaired service pilot program and working group.

7 SECTION 2. (a) The department shall establish a neighbor  
8 islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to  
9 provide training and other services to blind and visually  
10 impaired individuals residing on the neighbor islands.

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

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

16 (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that  
17 existing services are identified and used to the  
18 maximum extent possible;

19 (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group  
20 counseling;



- 1           (4) Access to and training for use of telecommunications
- 2                   services to receive current news, weather alerts, and
- 3                   other vital public information;
- 4           (5) Awareness development and training for the use of
- 5                   computers, smart phones, and other communications
- 6                   devices;
- 7           (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;
- 8           (7) Orientation and mobility training;
- 9           (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed
- 10                   benefits, services, and individual rights; and
- 11           (9) Other services, including peer support needed for
- 12                   program participants to sustain independence and
- 13                   social integration.

14 The services provided by the pilot program pursuant to this  
15 subsection shall be provided by volunteers, who shall be  
16 recruited, assigned, and supervised by the department or an  
17 entity contracted by the department to organize and implement  
18 the pilot program. All volunteers shall have the necessary  
19 qualifications, be chosen based on experience and training, and  
20 use training methods consistent with the structured discovery  
21 approach used by the new visions program operated by the Ho'opono



1 services for the blind branch within the department's division  
2 of vocational rehabilitation.

3 (c) The pilot program shall also provide program  
4 participants with special needs transportation assistance. The  
5 department shall work with neighbor island transportation  
6 service providers and other individuals and entities to develop  
7 a special needs transportation assistance service network to  
8 serve program participants.

9 (d) Applications for participation in the pilot program  
10 shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department. The  
11 department shall establish procedures and requirements for  
12 accepting program participants.

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

16 (f) The department shall enter into a contract with a  
17 nonprofit organization to recruit, train, and supervise  
18 volunteer service corps members and oversee the pilot program;  
19 provided that existing department personnel may be assigned to  
20 fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities of the pilot



1 program. Any nonprofit organization contracted under this  
2 subsection shall have:

3 (1) The knowledge, experience, and qualifications  
4 necessary to provide peer support services to program  
5 participants;

6 (2) A management team, consisting of officers and  
7 directors, of whom a majority are blind or visually  
8 impaired; and

9 (3) Membership chapters or organization subunits located  
10 on the neighbor islands that will be served by the  
11 pilot program.

12 (g) The department shall establish a neighbor islands  
13 blind and visually impaired service pilot program working group  
14 composed of neighbor island residents who are blind or visually  
15 impaired to make recommendations regarding the establishment and  
16 implementation of the pilot program. The department, in  
17 collaboration with the working group, shall develop a written  
18 implementation plan that includes a pilot program performance  
19 period and program budget, and shall submit the plan, including  
20 any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than



1 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of  
2 2024.

3 (h) The department shall submit a report of its findings  
4 and recommendations pertaining to the neighbor islands blind and  
5 visually impaired service pilot program to the legislature no  
6 later than thirty days prior to the convening of the regular  
7 session of 2027. The report shall include:

8 (1) A record of pilot program activities and  
9 accomplishments;

10 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the pilot  
11 program; and

12 (3) Any proposed legislation.

13 (i) The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter  
14 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and prescribe forms necessary to  
15 carry out the purposes of this Act.

16 (j) The pilot program shall cease to exist on July 30,  
17 2027.

18 (k) For purposes of this section:

19 "Department" means the department of human services.

20 "Neighbor island" means a county with a population less  
21 than five hundred thousand.



1 "Pilot program" means the neighbor islands blind and  
2 visually impaired service pilot program established pursuant to  
3 this Act.

4 "Program participant" means a resident of a neighbor island  
5 whose mobility or ability to live independently is substantially  
6 limited due to loss of sight and who is participating in the  
7 neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot  
8 program.

9 "Special needs transportation" means transportation  
10 provided to program participants at times or for trips when  
11 public transportation is not a reasonable option.

12 SECTION 3. 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 2023-2024 and  
15 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
16 year 2024-2025 to fund the establishment and operation of the  
17 neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot  
18 program and working group; provided that:

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





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

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

8           SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on June 30, 2050,  
9 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 supplements existing statewide services by  
providing training and other services to neighbor island  
residents who are blind or visually impaired; establish a  
working group to develop a pilot program implementation plan and  
submit the plan to the Legislature before the Regular Session of  
2024; and submit a report on the pilot program to the  
Legislature before the Regular Session of 2027. Appropriates  
funds. Repeals on 6/30/2027. Effective 6/30/2050. (SD1)

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

