

JAN 20 2023

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 The legislature also finds that many blind or visually impaired
8 individuals live on Oahu where access to opportunities and
9 services are better organized and readily available compared to
10 the neighbor islands.

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



1 approximately two thousand neighbor island residents who are
2 blind or visually impaired are left with the choice of either
3 moving to Oahu or living without the opportunity to have full
4 and integrated lives in their existing communities.

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

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

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



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

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

6 (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that
7 existing services are identified and used to the
8 maximum extent possible;

9 (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group
10 counseling;

11 (4) Access to and training for use of telecommunications
12 services to receive current news, weather alerts, and
13 other vital public information;

14 (5) Awareness development and training for use of
15 computers, smart phones, and other communications
16 devices;

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

18 (7) Orientation and mobility training;

19 (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed
20 benefits, services, and individual rights; and



1 (9) Other services, including peer support needed for
2 program participants to sustain independence and
3 social integration.

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

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

20 (d) Applications for participation in the pilot program
21 shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department. The



1 department shall establish procedures and requirements for
2 accepting program participants.

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

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

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

16 (2) A management team, consisting of officers and
17 directors, of which a majority are blind or visually
18 impaired; and

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



1 (g) The department shall establish a neighbor islands
2 blind and visually impaired service pilot program working group
3 composed of neighbor island residents who are blind or visually
4 impaired to make recommendations regarding the establishment and
5 implementation of the pilot program. The department, in
6 collaboration with the working group, shall develop a written
7 implementation plan that includes a pilot program performance
8 period and program budget, and shall submit the plan, including
9 any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than
10 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
11 2024.

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

- 17 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
18 accomplishments;
- 19 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the program; and
- 20 (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) For purposes of this section:

5 "Department" means the department of human services.

6 "Neighbor island" means a county with a population less
7 than five hundred thousand.

8 "Pilot program" means the neighbor islands blind and
9 visually impaired service pilot program established pursuant to
10 this Act.

11 "Program participant" means a resident of a neighbor island
12 whose mobility or ability to live independently is substantially
13 limited due to loss of sight and who is participating in the
14 pilot 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 \$25,000 or so much
20 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and the
21 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year



1 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 1, 2023, and
15 shall be repealed on June 30, 2027.

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INTRODUCED BY: _____

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink is written over a horizontal line. The signature is highly cursive and difficult to decipher, but it appears to be a name with a prominent initial.

S.B. NO. 614

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.

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

