
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that according to the
2 2022 Homeless Counts by State, the State of Hawaii is ranked
3 fourth in the nation for highest rates of homelessness. The
4 2023 Oahu Point in Time Count reported that among homeless
5 persons: thirty-six per cent were chronically homeless; thirty-
6 one per cent suffer from substance abuse problems; thirty-nine
7 per cent reported a mental illness; sixty-two per cent reported
8 one or more disabling conditions; and twenty-eight per cent
9 reported a physical, developmental, or other disability.

10 The legislature further finds that homeless individuals
11 suffering from behavioral health conditions are often high users
12 of the hospital emergency departments, which costs the State's
13 health system millions of dollars each year for emergency
14 ambulance transportation and emergency mental health
15 evaluations. Providing appropriate care for these individuals
16 requires clinical expertise to evaluate their physical and
17 mental impairments and to assist in overcoming barriers to



1 access proper medical treatment and resources to meet the basic
2 needs like food, hygiene, safety, and transportation.

3 The legislature notes that triage is recognized as an
4 evidence-based practice to end the cycle of homelessness and
5 provides assessment of a person's disorders, need for
6 medication-assisted detoxification, and timely psychiatric
7 treatment. The lack of a triage service has been a major gap in
8 the State's system of behavioral health care for homeless
9 persons and others with mental illness or substance abuse
10 issues. When a person is ready and seeking treatment, they
11 should be able to access it immediately. This is particularly
12 true for those who suffer from substance use disorders for whom
13 the window of contemplation about the benefits of treatment is
14 often brief and fleeting. The safety and constant supervision
15 available in a triage center are a stark contrast to the chaos
16 and vulnerability individuals experience on the street. Trauma-
17 informed services in the community fosters active client
18 participation and support, which are critical to effective
19 engagement in treatment and in patient retention.

20 The legislature also finds that the 'Imi Ola Piha Homeless
21 Triage Center, piloted by the Institute for Human Services and



1 operating since June 5, 2023, has been successful in moving
2 homeless from the street to permanent housing. Within six
3 months of operation, through collaborating with police, outreach
4 specialists, and other community providers, the eight-bed
5 service site has triaged over one hundred fifty referrals. Of
6 the eighty-three clients in intake, the Homeless Triage Center
7 has detoxed sixty-three clients and stabilized the mental
8 illnesses of thirty-five clients. The Homeless Triage Center
9 has also transitioned those detoxed and stabilized into housing
10 or shelter, enabling continued treatment in the community.

11 The legislature additionally finds that a successful pilot
12 program can do more to reduce the cost of restoring homeless
13 persons to normalcy and independence. According to Oahu's 2023
14 Point in Time Count, there are 1,602 homeless persons reporting
15 substance abuse or mental health issues. The average cost of
16 detoxification per year is \$1,536 for outpatients and \$58,810
17 for residential patients, while the cost for emergency transport
18 and treatment total \$3,633 per year. Saving 1,602 patients from
19 outpatient rehab visits or diverting them from emergency medical
20 treatment could save the State upwards of \$2,460,672 and
21 \$5,820,066, respectively.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

2 (1) Establish a homeless triage center program for
3 homeless individuals within the alcohol and drug abuse
4 division in the department of health; and

5 (2) Appropriate funds to the department of health to
6 implement the triage center program.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to part XVI to be appropriately
9 designated and to read as follows:

10 "§321- Alcohol and drug abuse division; homeless triage
11 center program; establishment. (a) The department shall
12 establish a triage center program within the alcohol and drug
13 abuse division that focuses on serving homeless individuals with
14 substance abuse issues or mental illness.

15 (b) The triage center program shall provide:

16 (1) Access to emergency food, shelter, housing navigation,
17 and supportive services, twenty-four hours per day,
18 seven days per week;

19 (2) Case management services;

20 (3) Medical assessments;

21 (4) Substance abuse treatment and detoxification services;



1 (5) Behavioral health services; and
 2 (6) Trauma-informed, cultural-based life skills groups for
 3 shelter guests to maximize engagement and retention.

4 (c) The alcohol and drug abuse division shall work in
 5 cooperation with local hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, law
 6 enforcement agencies, and homeless service providers in
 7 establishing the homeless triage center program.

8 (d) The alcohol and drug abuse division may contract with
 9 facilities that provide comprehensive triage services to
 10 homeless individuals suffering from substance abuse issues or
 11 mental illness to carry out the homeless triage center program."

12 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
 13 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,
 14 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the
 15 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,
 16 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
 17 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
 18 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes
 19 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
 20 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act



1 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
2 ceiling are that:

3 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
4 serve the public interest; and

5 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
6 addressed by this Act.

7 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 to
10 implement the homeless triage center program established
11 pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

12 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
13 health for the purposes of this Act.

14 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

15 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

DOH; Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division; Homeless Triage Center Program; Appropriation; Expenditure Ceiling

Description:

Establishes a Homeless Triage Center Program within the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division in the Department of Health. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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