

JAN 19 2024

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 the State of Hawaii
2 is ranked fourth in the nation for highest rates of homelessness
3 according to 2022 Homeless Counts by State. The 2023 Oahu Point
4 in Time Count reported that among homeless persons: thirty-six
5 per cent were chronically homeless; thirty-one per cent suffer
6 from substance abuse problems; thirty-nine per cent reported a
7 mental illness; sixty-two per cent reported one or more
8 disabling conditions; and twenty-eight per cent reported a
9 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 "Triage" is recognized as an evidence-based practice to end
4 the cycle of homelessness and provides assessment of a person's
5 disorders, need for medication-assisted detoxification, and
6 timely psychiatric treatment. The lack of a triage service has
7 been a major gap in the State's system of behavioral health care
8 for homeless persons and others with mental illness or substance
9 abuse issues. When a person is ready and seeking treatment,
10 they should be able to access it immediately. This is
11 particularly true for those who suffer from substance use
12 disorders for whom the window of contemplation about the
13 benefits of treatment is often brief and fleeting. The safety
14 and constant supervision available in a triage center is a stark
15 contrast to the chaos and vulnerability individuals experience
16 on the street. Trauma informed services in the community
17 fosters active client participation and support, which are
18 critical to effective engagement in treatment and in patient
19 retention.

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



1 and 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 HTC has detoxed sixty-
7 three clients and stabilized the mental illness of thirty-five
8 clients. The HTC has also transitioned those detoxed and
9 stabilized into housing or shelter, enabling continued treatment
10 in the community.

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

21 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:



1 (1) Establish a triage center program for homeless
2 individuals within the statewide office of
3 homelessness and housing solutions in the department
4 of human services; and

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

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to part XVIII to be
9 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

10 "§346- Statewide office of homelessness and housing
11 solutions; triage center program; establishment. (a) The
12 department of human services shall establish a triage center
13 program within the statewide office of homelessness and housing
14 solutions that focuses on serving homeless individuals with
15 substance abuse issues or mental illness.

16 (b) The triage center program shall provide:

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

20 (2) Case management services;

21 (3) Medical assessments;



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

5 (c) The statewide office of homelessness and housing
6 solutions shall work in cooperation with local hospitals,
7 rehabilitation facilities, law enforcement agencies, and
8 homeless service providers in establishing the triage center
9 program.

10 (d) The statewide office of homelessness and housing
11 solutions may contract with facilities that provide
12 comprehensive triage services to homeless individuals suffering
13 from mental or substance abuse problems to carry out the triage
14 center program."

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



1 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
2 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
3 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
4 ceiling are that:

- 5 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
- 6 serve the public interest; and
- 7 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
- 8 addressed by this Act.

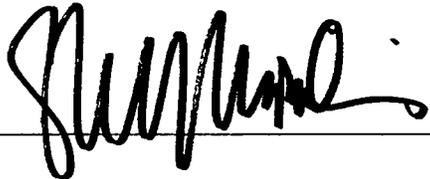
9 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 to
12 implement the triage center program established pursuant to
13 section 2 of this Act.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
15 human services for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

17 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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INTRODUCED BY:  _____



S.B. NO. 2885

Report Title:

DHS; Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions;
Homeless Triage Center Program; Expenditure Ceiling;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a Homeless Triage Center Program within the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions in the Department of Human Services. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation.

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