
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. According to the United States Department of
2 Housing and Urban Development's 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment
3 Report, Hawaii ranked first among all states for the number of
4 individuals experiencing homelessness per capita. There are an
5 estimated fifty-one individuals experiencing homelessness for
6 every ten thousand people in Hawaii.

7 The physical toll that homelessness takes on individuals is
8 painfully apparent. The emotional and spiritual burdens of
9 homelessness are less obvious but no less troublesome. In terms
10 of the hierarchy of needs model developed by humanist
11 psychologist Abraham Maslow, because individuals experiencing
12 homelessness are focused on finding shelter to satisfy their
13 physiological and safety needs, such individuals are not able to
14 address their need for belonging, esteem, and achievement. As a
15 result, homelessness is a barrier to individuals' achievement of
16 their full potential.



1 In addition to the harm that homelessness inflicts on
2 individuals, there are hidden costs of homelessness that are
3 borne by the community. The over-utilization of emergency
4 department services for non-emergency conditions by individuals
5 experiencing homelessness puts upward pressure on medical costs
6 for everyone. When hospital bills go unpaid, institutions are
7 usually able to shoulder the costs in the short-term. For
8 example, Queen's Medical Center reported that it absorbed about
9 \$40,000,000 over the past four years in unpaid expenses for
10 emergency department and hospital services rendered to patients
11 experiencing homelessness. Eventually, however, hospitals are
12 forced to recover costs by passing the unpaid costs on to
13 customers who are able to pay.

14 Based on publicly available statistics, the outlook at
15 emergency departments is worsening. Hawaii Health Information
16 Corporation estimated that Hawaii's hospitals statewide had
17 around fifteen thousand nine hundred emergency department visits
18 by patients experiencing homelessness in 2015. By the end of
19 fiscal year 2016, Queen's Medical Center's emergency department
20 alone logged almost eleven thousand visits by individuals
21 experiencing homelessness. Further, between September 1, 2016,



1 and November 30, 2016, at the Queen's Medical Center, thirty-
2 nine individuals experiencing homelessness accounted for
3 approximately seven hundred thirty-four emergency department
4 visits. The situation is so critical that emergency department
5 personnel worry that the surge of unnecessary over-utilization
6 of an emergency department could bankrupt a hospital.

7 The legislature finds that it is in the public's interest
8 to explore methods to mitigate the increasing cost of medical
9 care due to the unnecessary use of emergency department visits
10 by patients experiencing homelessness.

11 Additionally, the legislature finds that identifying
12 patients experiencing and at risk for homelessness in emergency
13 departments and conducting individualized assessments of those
14 patients may increase the likelihood that those patients will
15 receive referrals to services that address their particular
16 situations. The legislature further finds that providing these
17 patients with referrals to appropriate social services and other
18 necessary services, such as preventative medical care and mental
19 health treatment, may decrease the number of unnecessary,
20 repeated emergency department visits by patients experiencing
21 homelessness.



1 The purpose of this Act is to establish a pilot program to
2 place multidisciplinary teams that include physicians, advanced
3 practice registered nurses, social workers, social worker
4 designees, and patient navigators, in emergency departments to
5 identify individuals experiencing or at risk for homelessness
6 and provide individualized assessments and referrals for wrap-
7 around social services with a goal of reducing costs associated
8 with chronic use of emergency departments.

9 SECTION 2. Definitions. For purposes of this Act:

10 "Advanced practice registered nurse" means a person
11 licensed as an advanced practice registered nurse under chapter
12 457, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

13 "Emergency department" means a department in a hospital
14 designated to provide critical care to stabilize and support a
15 patient's condition due to sudden illness or injury.

16 "Governing body" means the policy making authority, whether
17 an individual or a group, that exercises general direction over
18 the affairs of a facility and establishes policies concerning
19 its operation and the welfare of the individuals it serves.

20 "Homeless" means the same as in section 346-361, Hawaii
21 Revised Statutes.



1 "Hospital" means any institution with an organized medical
2 staff which admits patients for inpatient care, diagnosis,
3 observation, and treatment.

4 "License" means a license issued by the relevant department
5 regulating the profession at issue that certifies that an
6 individual practicing the profession is in compliance with all
7 existing state and federal laws and rules.

8 "Medical staff" means physicians and other individuals
9 licensed by the State, who are permitted by law and who have
10 been authorized by the governing body to provide patient care
11 services within a facility.

12 "Multidisciplinary team" means a team of physicians,
13 advanced practice registered nurses, social workers, social
14 worker designees, patient navigators, and other individuals
15 necessary to identify individuals experiencing or at risk of
16 experiencing homelessness and provide individualized assessments
17 and referrals for social services.

18 "Patient navigator" means an individual who assists
19 patients through the continuum of healthcare as it pertains to
20 their specific disease, ensuring that any and all barriers to
21 that care are resolved.



1 "Physician" means a doctor of medicine or osteopathy
2 licensed by the Hawaii medical board pursuant to chapter 453,
3 Hawaii Revised Statutes.

4 "Social worker" means the same as in section 467E-1, Hawaii
5 Revised Statutes.

6 "Social worker designee" means a staff person other than a
7 social worker but with similar professional qualifications, such
8 as nursing, psychology, psychiatry, counseling, or human
9 development, and two years of social work supervised experience
10 in a health care setting working directly with individuals and
11 who is supervised by means of consultation with a social worker.

12 SECTION 3. (a) There is established within the department
13 of health for administrative purposes a pilot program to be
14 known as the emergency department homelessness assessment pilot
15 program. The department of health, in consultation with Hawaii
16 interagency council on homelessness and any other appropriate
17 agency, shall serve as the administrator of the pilot program.

18 (b) A participating hospital in the pilot program shall
19 place multidisciplinary teams in its emergency departments. The
20 multidisciplinary teams shall identify patients experiencing
21 homelessness or patients at risk of experiencing homelessness,



1 assess the patients' current circumstances, and refer those
2 patients to appropriate and available social services with a
3 goal of reducing costs associated with chronic use of emergency
4 departments.

5 The individuals on a multidisciplinary team who provide
6 services as part of this pilot program shall not be employees of
7 the State. The individuals on a multidisciplinary team shall be
8 either employees of the participating hospital or individuals
9 who are otherwise permitted by law and the governing body of a
10 hospital to provide social services in the hospital.

11 (c) Each participating hospital shall submit qualitative
12 and quantitative data as determined by the department of health
13 to the department of health to demonstrate whether there is any
14 correlation between interventions by a multidisciplinary team
15 and the repeated use of emergency departments by patients
16 experiencing homelessness.

17 (d) The department of health shall submit a report to the
18 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
19 the regular session of 2019. The report shall contain a summary
20 and explanation of the data submitted by participating hospitals
21 regarding the efficacy of emergency department intervention by a



1 multidisciplinary team in mitigating the number of unnecessary
2 emergency department visits by patients experiencing
3 homelessness or patients at risk of experiencing homelessness.
4 The report shall also contain findings and recommendations,
5 including any proposed legislation, for continuation,
6 modification, or termination of the pilot program.

7 (e) The emergency department homelessness assessment pilot
8 program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2019.

9 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
11 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 to the
12 department of health for implementation of the emergency
13 department homelessness assessment pilot program, including all
14 program costs and hiring of necessary staff.

15 The department of health shall reimburse participating
16 hospitals for expenses directly related to the emergency
17 department homelessness assessment pilot program; provided that
18 no funds shall be disbursed to participating hospitals unless
19 matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the participating
20 hospital. All funds designated as matching funds by the



1 participating hospital shall be funds expended by the
2 participating hospital for the pilot program.

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

5 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Emergency Department Homelessness Assessment Pilot Program

Description:

Establishes the Emergency Department Homelessness Assessment Pilot Program to identify a possible correlation between multidisciplinary team interventions and the use of hospital emergency departments by individuals experiencing homelessness and makes an appropriation. (HB1761 HD1)

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