
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 homelessness is one
2 of the most pressing problems in Hawaii, and it requires a
3 robust, comprehensive effort to increase the pace at which
4 Hawaii addresses homelessness. In 2017, for the first time in
5 years, Hawaii's homelessness rate decreased. Hawaii is turning
6 the tide on the homelessness crisis by investing in proven
7 programs such as housing first and rapid rehousing. The network
8 of people and resources engaged in addressing homelessness has
9 begun to make more efficient use of available resources by
10 implementing a data-driven, collaborative process that matches
11 individuals experiencing homelessness with the services they
12 need to make more efficient use of available resources.
13 However, Hawaii continues to have the highest per-capita rate of
14 homelessness of any state in the United States, with an
15 estimated 7,220 people living on the streets and in shelters.
16 Given the magnitude of Hawaii's homelessness problem, the State



1 needs to increase its investment in, and commitment to, a
2 solution.

3 The legislature further finds that addressing homelessness
4 requires a multi-faceted approach using proven interventions
5 that are targeted to particular characteristics of the homeless
6 population and address the root causes of homelessness. First
7 and foremost, Hawaii needs more housing that is affordable to
8 low-income families. Hawaii has the highest housing costs in
9 the nation, and the lowest wages after adjustment for the cost
10 of living. The greatest need is for housing that is affordable
11 to residents with incomes at thirty per cent or below the area
12 median income, the lowest end of the income scale. Much like
13 housing provided through the State's low-income public housing
14 program, housing for this income demographic will require
15 significant government subsidies to build. The Hawaii public
16 housing authority manages hundreds of units that are vacant due
17 to the need for major repairs, and these units could be rapidly
18 brought back into service to assist homeless and extremely low-
19 income families.

20 The legislature further finds that in addition to
21 affordable housing, Hawaii needs to sustain programs that



1 connect people experiencing homelessness with critical services
2 and housing, programs such as outreach, rapid rehousing, the
3 State's rent supplement program, housing first, Oahu's family
4 assessment center, law enforcement assisted diversion, and
5 substance abuse treatment.

6 Moreover, the legislature recognizes that outreach is
7 critically necessary to connect people to all available housing
8 options such as emergency shelters, transitional shelters,
9 housing first, rapid rehousing with rent stipends, and other
10 assistance. For many chronically homeless mentally ill persons,
11 it may take fifty or more individual outreach contacts, over
12 several months or years, to establish trust and move them off
13 the streets. Outreach teams may also perform wound care,
14 distribute hygiene kits or snacks, and offer to obtain
15 identification documents. Housing first programs have proven to
16 be effective in addressing homelessness for chronically homeless
17 individuals, including those who have an addiction, mental
18 illness, or both.

19 The legislature recognizes that the success of housing
20 first programs is attributable to its principles, which include:



- 1 (1) Moving chronically homeless individuals into housing
- 2 directly from the streets and shelters without a
- 3 precondition of accepting or complying with treatment;
- 4 (2) Providing robust support services for program
- 5 participants that are predicated on assertive
- 6 engagement rather than coercion;
- 7 (3) Granting chronically homeless individuals priority as
- 8 program participants in housing first programs;
- 9 (4) Embracing a harm reduction approach to addictions
- 10 rather than mandating abstinence while supporting
- 11 program participants' commitment to recovery; and
- 12 (5) Providing program participants with leases and tenant
- 13 protections as provided by law.

14 The legislature finds that, while costly, housing first
15 programs are cost-effective. Providing housing and services
16 under the housing first program is less costly than the
17 alternative of providing emergency services and other necessary
18 services for unhoused chronically homeless persons.

19 The legislature also finds that rapid rehousing and the
20 State's rent supplement program have proven effective in
21 securing and maintaining housing for working homeless



1 individuals and families. A significant segment of the homeless
2 population has a stable source of income and only requires
3 modest financial help and some housing stabilization services
4 instead of full-scale subsidies and intensive, ongoing case
5 management. More than a quarter of Hawaii households fall into
6 homelessness simply because they lack money to pay rent, but
7 they have no other underlying issues. For these individuals and
8 families, a small subsidy may allow them to rapidly move out of
9 shelters and into permanent homes. Rapid rehousing provides
10 struggling households with a one-time payment to cover
11 delinquent rent, utility payments, or first month's rent and
12 security deposit. This one-time financial intervention is often
13 all that families need to avoid homelessness or quickly bounce
14 back from becoming homeless. In contrast, the State's rent
15 supplement program provides a "shallow" but sustained subsidy to
16 struggling households. Unlike the "deep" Section 8 subsidy
17 program, which helps families at the lowest end of the income
18 scale by bridging a wide affordability gap between income and
19 housing costs, the State's rent supplement program helps
20 households that are closer to financial self-sufficiency but
21 that still have a narrow affordability gap to fill. The program



1 provides a small time-limited subsidy that wards off
2 homelessness while providing time for families to close the
3 affordability gap and achieve self-sufficiency. Financial case
4 management and counseling are critical to stabilizing these
5 families for future sustainability in permanent housing.
6 Because individual subsidies under the rapid rehousing and state
7 rent supplement programs are relatively low, the programs may
8 resolve homelessness for a large number of individuals and
9 families relative to the total cost of the subsidy programs.

10 Additionally, the legislature finds that the family
11 assessment center, which was opened on Oahu in September 2016,
12 has achieved extraordinary results over its first year of
13 operation. Out of fifty-four households served, ninety-one per
14 cent were successfully housed. The assessment center offers
15 comprehensive services including benefit reviews and
16 determinations, health assessments, service coordination, and
17 housing placement. This proven model can be replicated on the
18 neighbor islands as an effective way to move families with
19 children rapidly to permanent housing. For example, on the
20 island of Hawaii, a large parcel of land has been set aside to



1 develop housing solutions for homelessness in Kona, where the
2 need for localized services is particularly acute.

3 Finally, to adequately address homelessness, the
4 legislature recognizes that Hawaii needs to disrupt the
5 ineffective, destructive, and expensive cycle of substance abuse
6 addiction that leads to homelessness, arrest, incarceration,
7 release, and a return to addiction and living on the streets.
8 The law enforcement assisted diversion program is a pre-booking
9 diversion program that grants police officers the discretionary
10 authority to redirect low-level offenders, who are typically
11 drug-involved and homeless, to case managers if the offender
12 consents to being assisted.

13 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate moneys to the
14 Hawaii public housing authority, the department of human
15 services, and the department of health to support the State's
16 most effective efforts to end homelessness: public housing,
17 outreach, rapid rehousing and the state's rent supplement
18 program, housing first, Oahu's family assessment center, the law
19 enforcement assisted diversion program, and civil legal
20 services.



1 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$35,000,000 or so
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for
4 the Hawaii public housing authority to provide public housing
5 improvements and renovations statewide.

6 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii public
7 housing authority for the purposes of this Act.

8 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,750,000 or so much
10 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
11 department of human services to continue to administer housing
12 first programs for chronically homeless individuals in the
13 State.

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

16 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,750,000 or so much
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
19 department of human services to continue to administer the rapid
20 rehousing program to assist homeless individuals or families in
21 obtaining or maintaining permanent housing and to cover housing



1 stabilization services and administrative costs to operate the
2 program.

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

5 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$800,000 or so much
7 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
8 Hawaii public housing authority to administer a state rent
9 supplement pilot program to assist one hundred currently
10 homeless families with minor children or families with minor
11 children at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic
12 violence in obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, by
13 providing time-limited rental assistance up to \$500 per month
14 and financial case management by a United States Department of
15 Housing and Urban Development certified financial counseling
16 organization.

17 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii public
18 housing authority for the purposes of this Act.

19 SECTION 6. No later than , the Hawaii public
20 housing authority shall adopt interim rules, which shall be
21 exempt from chapter 91, to address the amount of rental



1 assistance and other program requirements for purposes of the
2 state rent supplement pilot program funded pursuant to section 5
3 of this Act. The interim rules shall remain in effect until
4 , or until rules are adopted pursuant to chapter 91 to
5 effectuate the pilot program, whichever occurs first. The
6 Hawaii public housing authority may amend the interim rules and
7 the amendments shall be exempt from chapter 91; provided that
8 the interim rules and any amendments to the interim rules shall
9 remain in effect until , or until rules are adopted
10 pursuant to chapter 91 to effectuate the pilot program,
11 whichever occurs first.

12 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,200,000 or so much
14 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
15 department of human services to continue to administer the
16 outreach services program to homeless persons, including, but
17 not limited to, individuals and families with children and
18 unaccompanied homeless youth, including \$310,000 for civil legal
19 services.

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



1 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
4 department of health to continue to administer outreach,
5 counseling, and diversion for unsheltered homeless persons
6 experiencing substance abuse, including \$250,000 to continue
7 administering the law enforcement assisted diversion pilot
8 program.

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

11 SECTION 9. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$680,000 or so much
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the
14 department of human services to continue to administer the
15 family assessment center for homeless families.

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

18 SECTION 10. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 2050.



Report Title:

Homelessness; Housing; Outreach; Rapid Rehousing; State Rent Supplement; Housing First; Oahu Family Assessment Center; Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority for public housing improvements and renovations, and to administer a Rent Supplement Program. Appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to administer the Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, and Family Assessment Center programs, and conduct outreach. Appropriates funds to the Department of Health to conduct outreach and counseling, and administer the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Pilot Project. (HB1766 HD1)

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