

JAN 23 2020

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that an urgent need
2 exists for greater access to mental health services at the
3 university of Hawaii. Nationally, the percentage of teenagers
4 and young adults aged twenty-six and younger who report mental
5 distress, depression, and suicidal ideation has increased
6 significantly over the past decade. As anxiety and depression
7 swells among students across the nation, student counseling
8 centers in Hawaii, like their mainland counterparts, are unable
9 to keep up with demand.

10 The legislature further finds that mental health counselors
11 in Hawaii have noted that the issues exhibited by students are
12 becoming more serious. For example, according to officials at
13 the university of Hawaii at Manoa, anxiety diagnoses among
14 students have surpassed depression diagnoses, and reported
15 suicidal ideations have increased. Despite this, students at
16 the university of Hawaii at Manoa are required to wait an
17 average of twenty-three days from their initial call for help to



1 the time that they meet with a licensed counselor. Further,
2 despite having the largest enrollment of students of any
3 community college in the university of Hawaii system, Leeward
4 community college does not have any psychologists on staff and
5 must refer any of its students in need to other university of
6 Hawaii campuses.

7 The legislature notes that the International Association of
8 Counseling Services recommends a ratio of one mental health
9 professional for every one thousand to one thousand five hundred
10 students. The university of Hawaii at Hilo and Kauai community
11 college are the only two university of Hawaii system campuses
12 that meet this recommended ratio. Most other campuses would
13 require at least five additional counselors per campus to meet
14 this recommended ratio.

15 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to increase student
16 access to mental health services by appropriating funds for
17 additional psychiatrist, psychologist, and counselor positions
18 across the university of Hawaii system.

19 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
21 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for



S.B. NO. 3068


1 additional psychiatrist, psychologist, and counselor positions
2 at all campuses of the university of Hawaii system.

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


5 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.

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INTRODUCED BY:















S.B. NO. 3068

Report Title:

UH; Mental Health Services; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to increase access to mental health services across the University of Hawaii system.

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