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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. This Act is recommended by the governor for  
2 immediate passage in accordance with section 9 of article VII of  
3 the Constitution of the State of Hawaii.

4 SECTION 2. Act 9, Session Laws of Hawaii 2020,  
5 appropriated a certain designated sum to the department of human  
6 services to provide funds for the general assistance program  
7 under the benefit, employment and support services division for  
8 the fiscal period beginning July 1, 2020, and ending June 30,  
9 2021.

10 A critical funding emergency exists. Pursuant to section  
11 346-53(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the general assistance  
12 program operates as a block grant program. Currently, depending  
13 upon the amount appropriated by the legislature, the monthly  
14 maximum allowance a general assistance recipient may receive is  
15 determined by dividing the amount of the appropriation by the  
16 number of general assistance recipients; though per section



1 346-71(d), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the maximum allowance shall  
2 not exceed sixty-two and one-half per cent of the standard of  
3 need. The current monthly general assistance amount is \$388 or  
4 forty-one per cent of the standard of need. The standard of  
5 need is based upon the 2006 federal poverty level.

6 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of individuals  
7 receiving general assistance benefits increased more than  
8 thirty-one per cent from February through October 2020. Based  
9 upon the October caseload of 6,814, the department projects the  
10 general assistance program will expend all appropriated funds  
11 before the end of the current fiscal year and the department  
12 will be unable to maintain the current monthly general  
13 assistance allowance of \$388 to projected caseload of 6,834  
14 general assistance recipients.

15 The current monthly allowance of \$388 is barely enough to  
16 cover living expenses for disabled individuals on a fixed income  
17 who have no other viable means of support. Stopping the grant  
18 payment or reducing the amount of the grant payment for these  
19 recipients poses a real threat to their health and safety.  
20 Additional funds are urgently needed to prevent the reduction of  
21 general assistance payments in the fourth quarter of fiscal year



1 2020-2021. The department anticipates that the high monthly  
2 caseload will continue, and the department projects an  
3 \$8,400,000 shortfall for state fiscal year 2020-2021.

4 Act 196, Session Laws of Hawaii 2015, the legislature  
5 established the interim assistance reimbursement special fund to  
6 receive federal reimbursements paid to the State by the United  
7 States Social Security Administration for general assistance  
8 payments. Reimbursements paid after the end of the fiscal year  
9 are retained by the department and deposited into the interim  
10 assistance reimbursement special fund to meet shortfalls in the  
11 general assistance program in the event of economic downturn.

12 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn, the  
13 department withdrew \$202,222.97 from the interim assistance  
14 reimbursement special fund to meet program shortfalls in the  
15 last quarter of the state fiscal year 2019-2020.

16 For the current state fiscal year, the department  
17 anticipates withdrawing the entire \$3,000,000 from the interim  
18 assistance reimbursement special fund and that withdrawals may  
19 begin in December 2020.

20 The department requires an emergency appropriation of  
21 \$5,400,000 for state fiscal year 2020-2021.



1 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$5,400,000 or so much  
3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 to be used  
4 for general assistance payments.

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

7 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

General Support for General Assistance Payments (HMS 204);  
Emergency Appropriation

**Description:**

Makes an emergency appropriation from the general revenues of the State of Hawaii for fiscal year 2020-2021 to address the budget shortfall for the general support for the general assistance program (HMS 204) in the department of human services. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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