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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE WAIANAEO COAST COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CENTER  
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Waianae Coast  
2 Comprehensive Health Center (Center) was established in 1972 to  
3 provide primary care services for the federally designated and  
4 medically underserved Waianae coast with operating funds granted  
5 through the department of health and human services.

6           The legislature further finds that today, as was true from  
7 its establishment, the Center continues to fulfill its mission  
8 as a community-owned and community-operated nonprofit medical  
9 facility serving an ever expanding Waianae coast community of  
10 some fifty thousand residents. The Center serves thirty-seven  
11 thousand patients annually through its main center in Waianae;  
12 satellite clinics in Waianae and Nanakuli; school-based sites in  
13 Waianae and Nanakuli; and satellite clinics in Kapolei, Ewa, and  
14 Waipahu. The majority of patients served are native Hawaiian  
15 (forty-seven per cent), followed by Asian and other Pacific  
16 Islanders (twenty-eight per cent). Sixty-five per cent of



1 patients are at one hundred per cent of the federal poverty  
2 level or below; seven per cent are uninsured; and fifty-eight  
3 per cent are receiving coverage under QUEST, the State's  
4 medicaid program.

5 The vision of the founders of the Center, to offer  
6 comprehensive health services, has guided the development of the  
7 services and activities of the Center's patient-centered health  
8 care home. The Center achieves its mission by not only serving  
9 patients who seek services but also by incorporating the goal of  
10 improving the overall health status of the community it serves.

11 Emergency medical services, while not a core service  
12 supported by department funding, was identified by the community  
13 as a vital service for the Waianae coast. The Center began  
14 offering emergency medical services on a limited basis in 1976  
15 through private funding. From 1986, with assistance from the  
16 legislature, the Center's emergency department has been able to  
17 be open twenty-four hours per day on a year-round basis.  
18 Subsidy funding from the legislature has supported the Center's  
19 emergency department in operating between the hours of midnight  
20 to eight a.m., along with providing laboratory and imaging  
21 services.



1           The Center's emergency department is one of the most  
2 heavily utilized on Oahu, serving twelve thousand patients  
3 through a total of 21,422 visits in 2019-2020. For the midnight  
4 to eight a.m. period, there were 3,149 visits with more than  
5 sixty per cent being patients covered under medicaid and ninety-  
6 three per cent being residents of the Waianae coast. The most  
7 severe pathology seen from midnight to eight a.m. includes chest  
8 pain and congestive heart failure; respiratory distress; trauma;  
9 labor; and mental illness or substance abuse issues.

10           The Center's participation and role in the statewide  
11 Emergency Medical System is substantial. With recognition by  
12 the State as a trauma support facility, the Center serves as a  
13 safety net for the residents of the Waianae coast. The Center  
14 is connected to the State Emergency Management System, which  
15 connects all Hawaii hospitals and the emergency medical services  
16 system. The Center's emergency department is rated as a Type II  
17 facility (out of three types) for hospital capability for  
18 readiness. The Center's emergency department is used by the  
19 Honolulu police department and child protective services. The  
20 Honolulu police department brings individuals in custody to the  
21 emergency department for medical care. Child protective



1 services uses the emergency department for pre-placement  
2 physical exams when children are removed from their parents or  
3 guardians.

4 As the primary medical provider on the Waianae coast, the  
5 Center fills a major role in providing health services to the  
6 community, which allows the State to focus its limited resources  
7 in other areas. The twenty-four-hour emergency services  
8 provided by the Center addresses the unique challenges of the  
9 community that are presented by being on the most western point  
10 of Oahu, such as isolation caused by road closures, natural  
11 disasters, and traffic; in addition, the Center addresses more  
12 universal health challenges, such as the need to stabilize  
13 trauma victims and the need to stabilize patients to avoid  
14 hospitalization. Increased homelessness, economic conditions,  
15 and behavioral health conditions have also increased the demand  
16 for emergency medical services on the Waianae coast, but this  
17 increase in demand has not been matched by an increase in State  
18 funding.

19 The Center's operating costs for the midnight to eight a.m.  
20 period was \$5,551,000 in 2019-2020. However, the funding level  
21 the legislature has provided to the Center since 1986 to the



1 present has remained at \$1,468,000. The difference between  
2 current legislative support provided through the department of  
3 health and the actual cost to operate services between midnight  
4 to eight a.m. is expected to be \$4,403,000 for the fiscal year  
5 ending June 30, 2022.

6 There are many factors that contribute to the inability of  
7 the Center to support itself financially, such as:

- 8 (1) The emergency department services a low-income,  
9 uninsured, and underinsured population;
- 10 (2) The emergency department serves the large homeless  
11 population on the Waianae coast;
- 12 (3) The economic base of the community is not able to  
13 support medical services on a fee-for-service basis  
14 and must absorb the cost of uninsured and underinsured  
15 patients;
- 16 (4) Due to the Center's status as a federally qualified  
17 health center, the Center is not allowed the benefit  
18 of hospital-based emergency departments to bill an  
19 emergency department facility fee for emergency  
20 patients covered under the federal Medicaid, Medicare,  
21 and Tri-care programs. Patients under these federal



1 programs make up seventy per cent of the Center's  
2 base;

3 (5) The State's uninsured funding is capped at \$100 per  
4 visit for uninsured primary care visits and does not  
5 cover the full cost of the uninsured emergency  
6 department visits; and

7 (6) Other rural communities receive a large state subsidy  
8 for emergency services through the state hospital  
9 system, however, the Center does not receive  
10 proportionate support.

11 The legislature recognizes that a dependable, multi-year  
12 financial commitment by the State in supporting emergency  
13 medical services at the Center is the most effective way to  
14 ensure that residents throughout the Waianae coast receive  
15 appropriate medical care and that the community is served during  
16 a disaster. Although the federal medicaid Medical Assistance  
17 Percentage reimbursement is a potential source of funding, the  
18 legislature recognizes that failure to increase state funding to  
19 the Center to bring funding levels in line with increased  
20 demands for services may result in the Center having to reduce  
21 hours of vital services to the Waianae coast community.



1           The purpose of this Act is to assist the Center in  
2 continuing twenty-four-hour, year-round emergency department  
3 services to residents of the Waianae coast to ensure emergency  
4 medical and disaster-related response services are available for  
5 the fifty thousand residents of the Waianae coast.

6           SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,400,000 or so much  
8 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to the  
9 Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center for operation of its  
10 twenty-four-hour emergency department.

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

13           SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

14

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 24 2022



# H.B. NO. 2058

**Report Title:**

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center for operation of its twenty-four-hour emergency department.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

