

JAN 19 2022

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that health outcomes and
2 well-being are not equal across Hawaii. Life expectancy is used
3 internationally as a standard summary measure of population
4 health and Hawaii is nationally ranked as having the highest
5 life expectancy amongst the states. Life expectancy rates
6 however, in Hawaii vary as much as 14.4 years when calculated by
7 ZIP Code Tabulation Areas. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-
8 19) pandemic has had a devastating effect on communities already
9 experiencing disparities in health and life expectancy. In the
10 United States, COVID-19 became the third leading cause of death,
11 and life expectancy from 2018 to 2020 is estimated to have
12 decreased by 1.87 years. The decrease in life expectancy was
13 experienced by the most marginalized populations, with Hispanic
14 and non-Hispanic Black people experiencing decreases three times
15 greater than the non-Hispanic White population.

16 While state life expectancy rates have not been calculated,
17 in Hawaii, COVID-19 risks exacerbated conditions for people with



1 existing health disparities and economic disadvantages. Native
2 Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Filipinos were at higher risk
3 of COVID-19 exposure based on over-representation in the
4 essential workforce, large households, and preexisting higher
5 rates of chronic disease and smoking. From March 8, 2020, to
6 January 31, 2021, it is estimated that Pacific Islanders
7 represented twenty-four per cent of all COVID-19 cases, despite
8 representing only four per cent of the State's overall
9 population.

10 The legislature further finds that the State's department
11 of health has a duty to advance health equity. Chapter 321,
12 Hawaii Revised Statutes, describing the general powers and
13 duties of the agency, was amended by Act 157, Session Laws of
14 Hawaii 2014. Chapter 321-1(a) states, "[t]he department of
15 health shall have general charge, oversight, and care of the
16 health and lives of the people of the State, and shall pursue as
17 a goal, the achievement of health equity. The department shall
18 consider social determinants of health in the assessment of
19 state needs for health." Health equity is defined as, "assuring
20 equal opportunity for all people in the State to attain their
21 full health potential," and the social determinants of health



1 defined as, "the complex, integrated, and overlapping social
2 structures and economic systems that contribute to health
3 inequities. These social structures and economic systems
4 include the social environment, physical environment, health
5 services, and structural and societal factors."

6 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 7 (1) Establish an office of health equity within the
8 department of health;
- 9 (2) Provide positions for the office of health equity; and
- 10 (3) Authorize the creation of office of health equity
11 external advisory groups.

12 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
13 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
14 and to read as follows:

15 "§321- Office of Health Equity. (a) There is
16 established within the department of health an office of health
17 equity. The purpose of the office of health equity shall be to
18 advance health equity by serving as catalysts for change to
19 improve the social determinants of health that affect a wide
20 range of health, functioning, quality of life opportunities and
21 outcomes. The advancement of health equity shall include the



1 following higher level activities by collaborating with multi-
2 sector partners:

3 (1) Assess and monitor population health and identify
4 significant health disparities;

5 (2) Identify and engage stakeholders on policies, systems,
6 and environmental improvements to eliminate
7 inequities;

8 (3) Evaluate and monitor efforts using short- and long-
9 term measures; and

10 (4) Reassess strategies with stakeholders.

11 (b) The goals of the office of health equity shall
12 include:

13 (1) Establishing a public health framework based on
14 addressing the social determinants of health;

15 (2) Establishing data standards and practices to support
16 the advancement of health equity;

17 (3) Building capacity internally within the department and
18 externally with stakeholders for assessing, and
19 advancing policies, systems, and environmental change
20 to improve population health; and



1 (4) Supporting and developing an inclusive and diverse
2 workforce in the department.

3 (c) The office of health equity shall also appoint and
4 convene advisory groups at the discretion of the director of
5 health that may include a:

6 (1) Policy advisory group to deliberate, develop, and
7 support the adoption and implementation of policies,
8 systems, and environmental change improvements, and to
9 comprise no more than eighteen individuals from three
10 major areas:

11 (A) Leaders from organizations representing the
12 social determinants of health and committed to
13 addressing health disparities;

14 (B) Persons with specialized knowledge, training, and
15 skills in advancing health equity; and

16 (C) Community-based organizations of people
17 experiencing health inequities; and

18 (2) Community network advisory group to identify community
19 needs and barriers to health and well-being, and
20 recommend solutions across the domains in the social
21 determinants of health: economic stability; education



1 access and quality; health care access and quality;
 2 neighborhood and built environment; and social and
 3 community context. The participants shall include
 4 representatives of organizations and representing
 5 populations disproportionately impacted by health
 6 disparities and inequities."

7 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
 8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to
 10 carry out the purposes of this Act, including the establishment,
 11 hiring, and filling of positions and contractors to carry out
 12 the purposes set forth in section 2 of this Act.

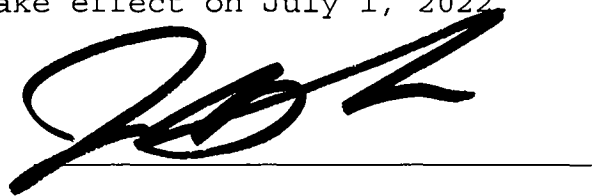
13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
 14 health for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

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INTRODUCED BY:




S.B. NO. 2031

Report Title:

Health Equity; Department of Health; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Office of Health Equity within the Department of Health. Appropriates funds.

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