

JAN 21 2022

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that thousands of Hawaii
2 residents have visual disabilities that hamper daily living and
3 may lead to isolation, limited productivity, loss of
4 independence, and lack of social integration. The department of
5 human services estimates that there are twelve thousand Hawaii
6 residents who are blind or have a significant visual impairment,
7 many of whom live on Oahu where access to opportunities and
8 services are better organized and readily available compared to
9 the neighbor islands.

10 The legislature further finds that state and local support
11 services for blind or visually impaired individuals, including
12 training, adjustments to blindness services, and transportation
13 services, are provided through economies of scale, and
14 therefore, tend to benefit residents in populated areas as
15 compared to those in sparsely populated areas. As such,
16 approximately two thousand neighbor island residents who are



1 blind or visually impaired are left with the choice of either
2 moving to Oahu or living without the opportunity to have full
3 and integrated lives in their existing communities.

4 Accordingly, the legislature finds that there is a need for a
5 supplemental service program that provides additional support
6 services to blind and visually impaired individuals residing on
7 neighbor islands.

8 The purpose of this Act is to require the department of
9 human services to establish a neighbor islands blind and
10 visually impaired service pilot program that supplements
11 existing statewide services by providing training and other
12 services to neighbor island residents who are blind or visually
13 impaired.

14 SECTION 2. (a) The department of human services shall
15 establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service
16 pilot program that provides training and other services to blind
17 and visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor
18 islands.

19 (b) The pilot program shall provide peer-to-peer outreach,
20 sight loss adjustment, peer counseling support, and mobility
21 training to program participants, including:



- 1 (1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program
2 needs;
- 3 (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that
4 existing services are identified and used to the
5 maximum extent possible;
- 6 (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group
7 counseling;
- 8 (4) Access to and training for use of telecommunications
9 services to receive current news, weather alerts, and
10 other vital public information;
- 11 (5) Awareness development and training for use of
12 computers, smart phones, and other communications
13 devices;
- 14 (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;
- 15 (7) Orientation and mobility training;
- 16 (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed
17 benefits, services, and individual rights; and
- 18 (9) Other services, including peer support needed for
19 program participants to sustain independence and
20 social integration.



1 The services of the pilot program pursuant to this subsection
2 shall be provided by volunteers, who shall be recruited,
3 assigned, and supervised by the department of human services or
4 an entity contracted by the department to organize and implement
5 the pilot program. All volunteers shall have the necessary
6 qualification, shall be chosen based on experience and training,
7 and shall utilize training methods consistent with the
8 structured discovery approach used by the new visions program
9 operated by the Ho'opono services for the blind branch within the
10 department of human services' division of vocational
11 rehabilitation.

12 (c) The pilot program shall also provide program
13 participants with special needs transportation assistance. The
14 department of human services shall work with neighbor island
15 transportation service providers and other individuals to
16 develop a special needs transportation assistance service
17 network to serve program participants.

18 (d) Applications for participation in the pilot program
19 shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department of
20 human services. The department shall establish procedures and
21 requirements for accepting program participants.



1 (e) The pilot program shall be authorized to extend and
2 supplement the existing services provided by the Ho'opono
3 services for the blind branch.

4 (f) The department of human services shall enter into a
5 contract with a nonprofit organization to recruit, train, and
6 supervise volunteer service corps members and to oversee the
7 pilot program, provided that existing department personnel may
8 be assigned to fulfill administrative and fiscal
9 responsibilities of the pilot program. Any nonprofit
10 organization contracted under this subsection shall have:

11 (1) The knowledge, experience, and qualifications
12 necessary to provide peer support services to program
13 participants;

14 (2) A management team, consisting of officers and
15 directors, of which a majority are blind or visually
16 impaired; and

17 (3) Membership chapters or organization subunits located
18 on the neighbor islands that will be served by the
19 pilot program.

20 (g) The department of human services shall submit a report
21 of its findings and recommendations pertaining to the neighbor



1 islands blind and visually impaired service program to the
2 legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of
3 the regular session of 2025. The report shall include:

4 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
5 accomplishments;

6 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the program; and

7 (3) Any proposed legislation.

8 (h) The department of human services shall adopt rules
9 pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, necessary to
10 carry out the purposes of this Act.

11 (i) As used in this Act:

12 "Department" means the department of human services.

13 "Pilot program" means the neighbor islands blind and
14 visually impaired service pilot program to be established
15 pursuant to this Act.

16 "Program participant" means a resident of a county with a
17 population less than five hundred thousand whose mobility or
18 ability to live independently is substantially limited due to
19 loss of sight and is participating in the pilot program.



1 "Special needs transportation" means transportation
2 provided to program participants at times or for trips when
3 public transportation is not a reasonable option.

4 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to
7 fund the establishment and operation of the neighbor islands
8 blind and visually impaired service pilot program, including
9 funding for the hiring of necessary staff, travel, and per diem
10 expenses; stipends for living expenses for pilot program
11 volunteers; provision of special transportation assistance for
12 program participants; and other necessary expenses associated
13 with the pilot program; provided that:

14 (1) The department of human services shall identify and
15 secure other sources of funding, including federal
16 funding, to provide for matching funds for the pilot
17 program; and

18 (2) Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall
19 be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion
20 of the base budget for any state or county agency



1 providing services for blind or visually impaired
2 persons.

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

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022, and
6 shall be repealed on June 30, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY:

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is highly cursive and difficult to decipher, but appears to contain the letters 'J', 'A', and 'D'.

S.B. NO. 2437

Report Title:

Deaf and Blind Task Force; Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program; Department of Human Services; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Ho'opono Services for the Blind Branch; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Human Services to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program that provides training and other services to blind or visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor islands. Requires the Department of Human Services to report to Legislature before the Regular Session of 2025. Appropriates funds. Repeals 06/30/2025.

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

