
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 The legislature also finds that many blind or visually impaired
8 individuals live on Oahu where access to opportunities and
9 services are better organized and readily available compared to
10 the neighbor islands.

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



1 approximately two thousand neighbor island residents who are
2 blind or visually impaired are left with the choice of either
3 moving to Oahu or living without the opportunity to have full
4 and integrated lives in their existing communities.

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

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

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



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

4 (1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program
5 needs;

6 (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that
7 existing services are identified and used to the
8 maximum extent possible;

9 (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group
10 counseling;

11 (4) Access to and training for use of telecommunications
12 services to receive current news, weather alerts, and
13 other vital public information;

14 (5) Awareness development and training for use of
15 computers, smart phones, and other communications
16 devices;

17 (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;

18 (7) Orientation and mobility training;

19 (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed
20 benefits, services, and individual rights; and



1 (9) Other services, including peer support needed for
2 program participants to sustain independence and
3 social integration.

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

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



1 (d) Applications for participation in the pilot program
2 shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department of
3 human services. The department shall establish procedures and
4 requirements for accepting program participants.

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

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

15 (1) The knowledge, experience, and qualifications
16 necessary to provide peer support services to program
17 participants;

18 (2) A management team, consisting of officers and
19 directors, of which a majority are blind or visually
20 impaired; and



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

4 (g) The department of human services shall submit a report
5 of its findings and recommendations pertaining to the neighbor
6 islands blind and visually impaired service program to the
7 legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of
8 the regular session of 2025. The report shall include:

9 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
10 accomplishments;

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

12 (3) Any proposed legislation.

13 (h) The department of human services shall adopt rules
14 pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and prescribe
15 forms necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

16 (i) As used in this Act:

17 "Department" means the department of human services.

18 "Neighbor island" means a county with a population less
19 than five hundred thousand.



1 "Pilot program" means the neighbor islands blind and
2 visually impaired service pilot program established pursuant to
3 this Act.

4 "Program participant" means a resident of a neighbor island
5 whose mobility or ability to live independently is substantially
6 limited due to loss of sight and who is participating in the
7 pilot program.

8 "Special needs transportation" means transportation
9 provided to program participants at times or for trips when
10 public transportation is not a reasonable option.

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



1 (1) The department of human services shall identify and
2 secure other sources of funding, including federal
3 funding, to provide for matching funds for the pilot
4 program; and

5 (2) Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall
6 be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion
7 of the base budget for any state or county agency
8 providing services for blind or visually impaired
9 persons.

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

12 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050, and
13 shall be repealed on June 30, 2025.



Report Title:

Deaf and Blind Task Force; Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program; DHS; 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 to report to the Legislature before the Regular Session of 2025. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. Repeals 6/30/2025. (SD2)

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