
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 since
7 its establishment, the Center fulfills its mission as a
8 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 operations between the hours of midnight to
20 8:00 a.m., along with providing laboratory and imaging services.



1 The Center's emergency department is one of the most
2 heavily utilized on Oahu, serving twelve thousand patients
3 totaling 21,422 visits in 2019-2020. For the midnight to
4 8:00 a.m. period, there were 3,149 visits with more than sixty
5 per cent being patients covered under medicaid and ninety-three
6 per cent being residents of the Waianae coast. The most severe
7 pathology seen from midnight to 8:00 a.m. includes chest pain
8 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 8:00 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 8:00 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 a 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 provide the Waianae Coast
2 Comprehensive Health Center with a grant in order to assist the
3 Center in continuing twenty-four-hour, year-round emergency
4 department services to residents of the Waianae coast to ensure
5 emergency medical and disaster-related response services are
6 available for the fifty thousand residents of the Waianae coast.

7 SECTION 2. 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 as a
10 grant pursuant to chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to the
11 Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center for operation of its
12 twenty-four-hour emergency department.

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

15 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 2050.



Report Title:

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center; Grant; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds as a grant to the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center for operation of its twenty-four-hour emergency department. Effective 1/1/2050. (SD1)

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