
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, according to 2022
2 Homeless Counts by State, the State ranked fourth in the nation
3 for the highest rate of homelessness. The 2023 Oahu Point in
4 Time Count reported that among homeless persons, thirty-six per
5 cent were chronically homeless; thirty-one per cent suffer from
6 substance abuse problems; thirty-nine per cent reported a mental
7 illness; sixty-two per cent reported one or more disabling
8 conditions; and twenty-eight per cent reported a physical,
9 developmental, or other disability.

10 The legislature further finds that homeless individuals
11 suffering from behavioral health conditions are often high users
12 of the hospital emergency departments, which costs the State's
13 health system millions of dollars each year for emergency
14 ambulance transportation and emergency mental health
15 evaluations. Providing appropriate care for these individuals
16 requires clinical expertise to evaluate their physical and
17 mental impairments and assist in overcoming barriers to access



1 proper medical treatment and resources to meet the basic needs
2 like food, hygiene, safety, and transportation.

3 "Triage" is recognized as an evidence-based practice to end
4 the cycle of homelessness and provides an assessment of a
5 person's disorders, need for medication-assisted detoxification,
6 and timely psychiatric treatment. The lack of a triage service
7 has been a major gap in the State's system of behavioral health
8 care for homeless persons and others having mental illness or
9 substance abuse issues. When a person is ready and seeking
10 treatment, they should be able to access it immediately. This
11 is particularly true for those who suffer from substance use
12 disorders for whom the window of contemplation about the
13 benefits of treatment is often brief and fleeting. The safety
14 and constant supervision available in a triage center are a
15 stark contrast to the chaos and vulnerability individuals
16 experience on the street. Trauma-informed services in the
17 community foster active client participation and support, which
18 are critical to effective engagement in treatment and in patient
19 retention.

20 The legislature also finds that the 'Imi Ola Piha Homeless
21 Triage Center, piloted by the Institute for Human Services and



1 operating since June 5, 2023, has been successful in moving
2 homeless from the street to permanent housing. Within six
3 months of operation, through collaborating with police, outreach
4 specialists, and other community providers, the eight-bed
5 service site has triaged over one hundred fifty referrals. Of
6 the eighty-three clients in intake, the Homeless Triage Center
7 has detoxed sixty-three clients and stabilized the mental
8 illness of thirty-five clients. The Homeless Triage Center has
9 also transitioned those detoxed and stabilized into housing or
10 shelter, enabling continued treatment in the community.

11 The successful pilot program can do more to reduce the cost
12 of restoring homeless persons to normalcy and independence.
13 According to Oahu's 2023 Point in Time Count, there are 1,602
14 homeless persons reporting substance abuse or mental health
15 issues. The average cost of detoxification per year is \$1,536
16 for outpatients and \$58,810 for residential patients, while the
17 costs for emergency transport and treatment total \$3,633 per
18 year. Saving 1,602 patients from outpatient rehab visits or
19 diverting them from emergency medical treatment could save the
20 State upwards of \$2,460,672 and \$5,820,066, respectively.

21 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:



1 (1) Establish within the statewide office of homelessness
2 and housing solutions in the department of human
3 services a working group to develop a homeless triage
4 and treatment center program that focuses on serving
5 homeless individuals having substance abuse issues or
6 mental illness; and

7 (2) Appropriate funds to the department of human services.

8 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the statewide
9 office of homelessness and housing solutions a working group to
10 develop a homeless triage and treatment center program that
11 focuses on serving homeless individuals with substance abuse
12 issues or mental illness who are in need of medication-assisted
13 detox treatment and withdrawal management services.

14 (b) The homeless triage and treatment center program shall
15 provide:

16 (1) Access to emergency food, shelter, housing navigation,
17 and supportive services, twenty-four hours per day,
18 seven days per week;

19 (2) Case management services;

20 (3) Medical assessments;

21 (4) Substance abuse treatment and detoxification services;



- 1 (5) Behavioral health services; and
- 2 (6) Trauma-informed, cultural-based life skills groups for
- 3 shelter guests to maximize engagement and retention.
- 4 (c) The homeless triage and treatment center program's
- 5 costs shall be covered by insurance whenever possible, using the
- 6 State as a payor of last resort.
- 7 (d) The working group shall consist of the following
- 8 members:
- 9 (1) The governor's senior advisor for mental health and
- 10 the justice system, who shall serve as co-chair of the
- 11 working group;
- 12 (2) The governor's coordinator on homelessness, who shall
- 13 serve as co-chair of the working group;
- 14 (3) One representative of the judiciary;
- 15 (4) One representative from the department of health;
- 16 (5) One representative from the department of human
- 17 services;
- 18 (6) Two members who shall be appointed by the president of
- 19 the senate;
- 20 (7) Two members who shall be appointed by the speaker of
- 21 the house of representatives;



1 (8) A representative of Partners in Care, Oahu's Continuum
2 of Care, to be invited by the co-chairs of the working
3 group;

4 (9) A representative of the Institute for Human Services,
5 to be invited by the co-chairs of the working group;
6 and

7 (10) A representative of Bridging the Gap, Continuum of
8 Care of Hawaii Island, Maui, and Kauai, to be invited
9 by the co-chairs of the working group.

10 (e) The working group shall submit a report of its
11 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
12 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
13 to the convening of the regular session of 2025.

14 (f) The members of the working group shall serve without
15 compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses, including
16 travel expenses, necessary for the performance of their duties.

17 (g) The working group shall cease to exist on .

18 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
19 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,
20 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the
21 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,



1 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
2 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
3 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes
4 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
5 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
6 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
7 ceiling are that:

8 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
9 serve the public interest; and

10 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
11 addressed by this Act.

12 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
14 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for
15 the establishment of the working group and implementation of the
16 homeless triage and treatment center program established
17 pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

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



1 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

DHS; Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions;
Homeless Triage and Treatment Center Program; Working Group;
Appropriation; Expenditure Ceiling

Description:

Establishes a working group to develop a Homeless Triage and
Treatment Center Program within the Statewide Office of
Homelessness and Housing Solutions in the Department of Human
Services. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

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