
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SOCIAL WORK.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii is facing a
2 shortage of social workers to help individuals in the State
3 manage their mental health and cope with stressors in their
4 everyday lives. This shortage is concerning since social
5 workers already have full caseloads and may be unable to provide
6 additional services, which may in turn intensify the need for
7 help and increase burnout among social workers. The demand for
8 social workers will likely continue to rise because individuals
9 experiencing depression, anxiety, life transitions, and other
10 mental health challenges will need social workers' support to
11 address difficult or stressful life situations.

12 The legislature further finds that some nonviolent
13 incarcerated individuals may have experienced the need for
14 social services or may have firsthand experience receiving
15 services from social workers. These individuals may be uniquely
16 qualified to enter the field of social work as assistants after
17 undergoing training. The legislature also finds that to address



1 the shortage of social workers and lack of social services in
2 the State, providing social work training to nonviolent
3 incarcerated individuals may help these individuals reintegrate
4 into society once their period of incarceration is over.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

6 (1) Require the department of corrections and
7 rehabilitation, in collaboration with the department
8 of human services, to develop and establish a social
9 work training program to assist nonviolent
10 incarcerated individuals in exploring a professional
11 pathway in the practice of social work and becoming
12 eligible to work as assistants to licensed social
13 workers; and

14 (2) Appropriate funds.

15 SECTION 2. Chapter 353H, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
16 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
17 and to read as follows:

18 **"§353H- Incarcerated individuals; social work training**
19 **program; established.** (a) The department shall develop and
20 establish a social work training program, in collaboration with
21 the department of human services, to assist nonviolent



1 incarcerated individuals in exploring a professional pathway in
2 the practice of social work and becoming eligible for employment
3 as assistants to licensed social workers.

4 (b) The department may coordinate with accredited
5 institutions of higher education, private entities, and
6 nonprofit organizations to provide training in social work to
7 participating individuals.

8 (c) The department shall establish rules pursuant to
9 chapter 91 to implement this section."

10 SECTION 3. The department of corrections and
11 rehabilitation and department of human services shall jointly
12 submit a report of the departments' progress in developing and
13 establishing the social work training program pursuant to
14 section 2 of this Act, along with findings, recommendations, and
15 any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than
16 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of
17 2026 and 2027.

18 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
20 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
21 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal



1 year 2026-2027 to develop and establish a social work training
2 program to assist certain nonviolent incarcerated individuals in
3 the area of social work pursuant to this Act.

4 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
5 of corrections and rehabilitation for the purposes of this Act.

6 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

7 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

8

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 16 2025



H.B. NO. 251

Report Title:

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; Department of Human Services; Social Work; Training Program; Nonviolent Incarcerated Individuals; Reports; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, to develop and establish a social work training program to assist nonviolent incarcerated individuals in the area of social work. Requires progress reports on the program to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

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