
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH COURT.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the worsening
2 problem of homelessness on Oahu has led to residents being cited
3 or arrested for drinking liquor in public, being in public parks
4 after hours, trespassing, illegal camping on sidewalks and other
5 public areas, and other non-violent or status offenses. Many of
6 those cited are unable to attend court or have misplaced their
7 paperwork due to the transient and unstable nature of
8 homelessness. When a person fails to appear for court and has
9 no known address, courts are left with no option but to issue a
10 bench warrant.

11 Under Act 55, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017, the judiciary,
12 the office of the public defender, and the department of the
13 prosecuting attorney of the city and county of Honolulu
14 established a community outreach court project. The goal of the
15 community outreach court is to assist non-violent offenders who
16 are charged with offenses that disproportionately impact the
17 homeless community by making court attendance more accessible



1 through holding court in community locations where offenders are
2 found, resolving any active charges, and utilizing alternative
3 sentences such as community service work in cases where prior
4 court judgments could not be satisfied and offenders lack the
5 present ability to pay fines and fees. By resolving these
6 cases, the participants are in a better position to obtain basic
7 necessities such as jobs, income assistance, and housing. The
8 community outreach court social worker assesses offenders for
9 participation in programs deemed appropriate based upon an
10 offender's need for mental health services, substance abuse
11 treatment, sustenance, shelter, or other appropriate available
12 social services and assists the offenders in obtaining and
13 voluntarily participating in these referred services.

14 The legislature finds that the community outreach court
15 program has been successful. Since its inception, the program
16 has addressed over ten thousand cases, recalled over nine
17 hundred bench warrants, lifted more than seven thousand driver
18 license stoppers and provided assistance to over six hundred
19 participants at community-based sites in the judicial districts
20 where participants may live or have access to mental health
21 services, substance abuse treatment, sustenance, shelter, or



1 other social services and who have completed more than seven
2 thousand community service work hours.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to permanently
4 establish and appropriate funds for the community outreach court
5 as a division of the district court of the first circuit.

6 SECTION 2. The Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended by
7 adding a new chapter to be appropriately designated and to read
8 as follows:

9 "CHAPTER

10 COMMUNITY OUTREACH COURT

11 § -1 **Definitions.** As used in this chapter:

12 "Community outreach court" means a division of the district
13 court of the first circuit that shall address cases brought
14 before it for non-violent, nonfelony offenders in which the
15 prosecuting attorney and public defender have reached plea
16 agreements.

17 "Prosecuting attorney" means:

- 18 (1) The prosecuting attorney for the city and county of
19 Honolulu;



1 (2) Any deputy prosecuting attorney of the department of
2 the prosecuting attorney of the city and county of
3 Honolulu;

4 (3) The attorney general; and

5 (4) Any deputy attorney general of the department of the
6 attorney general.

7 "Public defender" means the public defender and any deputy
8 public defender of the office of the public defender, including
9 any court-appointed private attorney appearing on behalf of a
10 defendant based on a conflict with the office of the public
11 defender.

12 § -2 **Community outreach court; establishment.** (a) The
13 community outreach court shall be established as a division of
14 the district court of the first circuit.

15 (b) The community outreach court shall be held at any duly
16 designated location within the first judicial circuit by any
17 designated judge of the community outreach court.

18 § -3 **Jurisdiction.** (a) The community outreach court
19 shall have concurrent jurisdiction with all district courts of
20 the first circuit to consider and adjudicate nonviolent,
21 nonfelony criminal and traffic offenses, including traffic



1 infractions under chapter 291D, charged to offenders deemed
2 appropriate, after application and acceptance, for participation
3 in the community outreach court.

4 (b) In any case in which it has jurisdiction, the
5 community outreach court shall exercise general equity powers as
6 authorized by law. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed
7 to limit the jurisdiction and authority of any judge designated
8 as a judge of the community outreach court on matters within the
9 scope of this chapter.

10 § -4 **Principles and components of the court.** The
11 community outreach court shall include the following components:

- 12 (1) Emphasis on the early identification and timely
13 placement of eligible offenders;
- 14 (2) Cooperation between the prosecuting attorney and
15 public defender to resolve cases;
- 16 (3) Alternative sentencing of offenders, such as community
17 service and participation in programs based upon the
18 offender's need for mental health services, substance
19 abuse treatment, sustenance, shelter, or other social
20 services and willingness to voluntarily participate in
21 those programs;



1 (4) Establishment of a coordinated strategy by the
2 community outreach court to respond to an offender's
3 compliance or noncompliance with the offender's
4 sentence; and

5 (5) Encouragement by the community outreach court of
6 partnerships between the court, public agencies,
7 community-based organizations, and other entities to
8 promote the court's effectiveness.

9 § -5 **Court process.** (a) The court shall hold hearings
10 at community sites to dispose of cases for which the prosecuting
11 attorney and public defender have negotiated and reached plea
12 agreements on the disposition of the defendants.

13 (b) Only cases involving nonviolent, nonfelony offenses
14 under state law and city ordinance shall be heard and disposed
15 of by the community outreach court.

16 (c) The public defender shall engage a social service or
17 health care professional to provide outreach services to
18 defendants charged with nonviolent, nonfelony offenses who:

19 (1) Are willing to participate in the court;

20 (2) Are willing to be represented by the public defender;

21 and



1 (3) May benefit from participation in the court.

2 After consulting with the social service or health care
3 professional, the public defender shall develop a list of the
4 defendants who are potential participants in the court and
5 transmit the list to the prosecuting attorney.

6 (d) The prosecuting attorney shall review the list and may
7 select from the list those defendants who the prosecuting
8 attorney determines may be appropriate for participation in the
9 court. The prosecuting attorney or representative of the
10 attorney general shall enter into plea agreement negotiations
11 with the public defender for disposition of defendants' cases
12 that the prosecuting attorney determines are appropriate.

13 (e) The plea agreement for a defendant may include a fine,
14 community service, court-ordered treatment, other court-ordered
15 condition, or any other action that the court has the authority
16 to take and deems appropriate.

17 (f) At the hearing, the court may finalize the plea
18 agreement by court order or judgment; provided that the court
19 shall not be bound by the proposed disposition in the plea
20 agreement."



1 SECTION 3. Act 55, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017, is
2 repealed.

3 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
5 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
6 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
7 year 2026-2027 to establish permanent positions in support of
8 the community outreach court, including:

9 (1) \$ each for two full-time equivalent (2.0
10 FTE) court clerk positions;

11 (2) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
12 court bailiff position;

13 (3) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
14 adult client services branch judicial clerk V
15 position; and

16 (4) \$ each for three full-time equivalent (3.0
17 FTE) adult client services social worker positions.

18 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary
19 for the purposes of this Act.

20 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so



1 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
2 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
3 year 2026-2027 for two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) deputy
4 sheriff positions to support the community outreach court.

5 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary
6 for the purposes of this Act.

7 SECTION 6. 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 2025-2026 and
10 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
11 year 2026-2027 for permanent positions in support of the
12 community outreach court, including:

13 (1) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
14 deputy public defender;

15 (2) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
16 paralegal; and

17 (3) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
18 social service or mental health care professional
19 assigned to the office of the public defender.

20 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the office of
21 the public defender for the purposes of this Act.



1 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
 2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
 4 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
 5 year 2026-2027 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) deputy
 6 attorney general tasked with duties for the community outreach
 7 court.

8 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
 9 of the attorney general for the purposes of this Act.

10 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
 11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
 13 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
 14 year 2026-2027 for the operations of the community outreach
 15 court, including:

- 16 (1) \$ for security through a contracted service
 17 provider;
- 18 (2) \$ for facilities and associated costs,
 19 including for use of the Waianae Public Library;
- 20 (3) \$ for equipment, including laptops and a
 21 mobile hotspot for internet access;



1 (4) \$ for transportation costs, including a van
2 and associated parking costs; and

3 (5) \$ for other miscellaneous operational needs,
4 including driver permit workbooks, printer cartridges,
5 pencils, erasers, pens, markers, paper towels, and
6 other office supplies.

7 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary
8 for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 9. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
12 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
13 year 2026-2027 as a grant-in-aid for permanent positions in the
14 office of the prosecuting attorney of the city and county of
15 Honolulu in support of the community outreach court, including:

16 (1) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
17 deputy prosecuting attorney;

18 (2) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
19 paralegal; and

20 (3) \$ for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
21 legal assistant.



1 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the office of
2 the prosecuting attorney of the city and county of Honolulu for
3 the purposes of this Act.

4 SECTION 10. This Act does not affect rights and duties
5 that matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that
6 were begun before its effective date.

7 SECTION 11. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

8

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 16 2025



H.B. NO. 280

Report Title:

Judiciary; Community Outreach Court; Homelessness;
Appropriations

Description:

Permanently establishes and appropriates funds for the Community Outreach Court as a division of the District Court of the First Circuit.

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

