

JAN 23 2025

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 the
2 2024 Homeless Counts by State, Hawaii is ranked fifth in the
3 nation for highest rates per capita of homelessness. The 2024
4 Oahu Point in Time Count reported that among homeless persons,
5 sheltered and unsheltered: forty per cent were chronically
6 homeless; twenty-six per cent self-reported substance abuse
7 problems; thirty-three per cent self-reported a mental illness;
8 fifty-five per cent reported one or more disabling conditions;
9 and thirty-six per cent reported a physical, developmental, or
10 other disability. The 2024 Bridging the Gap Point in Time Count
11 reported that of the 1,276 unsheltered individuals, forty per
12 cent reported a mental illness and thirty-four per cent reported
13 having a substance use disorder.

14 The legislature further finds that homeless individuals
15 suffering from behavioral health conditions are often high users
16 of hospital emergency departments, which costs the State's
17 health system millions of dollars each year for emergency



1 ambulance transportation and emergency mental health
2 evaluations. These frequent utilizers of emergency and homeless
3 services often present with co-occurring illnesses and need
4 specialized care that requires clinical expertise to evaluate
5 their physical and mental impairments and to assist in
6 overcoming barriers to accessing proper medical treatment and
7 resources to meet basic needs like food, hygiene, safety, and
8 transportation.

9 The legislature also finds that the 'Imi Ola Piha homeless
10 triage and treatment center, piloted by The Institute for Human
11 Services through a grant-in-aid since June 5, 2023, has been
12 successful in moving homeless individuals off the street by
13 facilitating the first step of detoxing from addiction to
14 alcohol and other drugs, including opioids and methamphetamine.
15 During its initial seventeen months of operation, through
16 collaboration with police, outreach specialists, and other
17 community providers, the eight-bed service site has triaged well
18 over four hundred referrals for treatment. Of the three hundred
19 sixty-five clients taken in, the triage and treatment center has
20 successfully detoxed three hundred fifty-four clients with
21 medically assisted withdrawal management and stabilized the



1 mental illness of one hundred thirty-four clients. The triage
2 and treatment center has also transitioned individuals who were
3 detoxed and stabilized into appropriate treatment and housing
4 situations, providing services for individuals residing in every
5 county throughout the State.

6 The lack of triage and treatment services has been a major
7 gap in the State's system of behavioral health care for homeless
8 persons and others with mental illness or substance use
9 disorders. When a person is ready and seeking treatment, they
10 should be able to access it immediately. This is particularly
11 true for those who suffer from substance use disorders for whom
12 the window of contemplation about the benefits of treatment is
13 often brief and fleeting. The safety and constant supervision
14 available in a triage and treatment center is in stark contrast
15 to the chaos and vulnerability individuals experience on the
16 street. Furthermore, trauma-informed services based in the
17 community foster active client participation and support, which
18 are critical to effective engagement in treatment and patient
19 retention and success for the individual upon exiting the
20 treatment center.

21 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:



- 1 (1) Support existing crisis intervention programs by
- 2 implementing a homeless triage and treatment center
- 3 program for homeless individuals and individuals at
- 4 risk of being homeless within the alcohol and drug
- 5 abuse division in the department of health; and
- 6 (2) Appropriate funds to the department of health to
- 7 implement a homeless triage and treatment center
- 8 program.

9 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
10 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
11 and to read as follows:

12 "§321- Alcohol and drug abuse division; homeless triage
13 and treatment center program; establishment. (a) The
14 department shall establish a homeless triage and treatment
15 center program within the alcohol and drug abuse division that
16 focuses on serving homeless individuals and individuals at risk
17 of homelessness with substance abuse issues or mental illness.
18 (b) The homeless triage and treatment center program
19 shall:
20 (1) Provide access to emergency food, shelter, housing
21 navigation, and supportive services;



1 (2) Collaborate with existing homeless outreach and case
 2 management services;

3 (3) Provide medical assessments;

4 (4) Provide substance abuse treatment and detoxification
 5 services;

6 (5) Provide behavioral health services; and

7 (6) Provide trauma-informed, cultural-based life skills
 8 groups for participants to maximize engagement and
 9 retention.

10 (c) The alcohol and drug abuse division shall work in
 11 cooperation with local hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, law
 12 enforcement agencies, and homeless service providers in
 13 establishing the homeless triage and treatment center program.

14 (d) The alcohol and drug abuse division may contract with
 15 facilities that provide comprehensive triage services to
 16 homeless individuals suffering from substance abuse issues or
 17 mental illness to carry out the homeless triage and treatment
 18 center program."

19 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
 20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 21 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and



1 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
2 year 2026-2027 to implement the homeless triage and treatment
3 center program pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

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

6 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

7 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

8

INTRODUCED BY:





S.B. NO. 1628

Report Title:

Homeless Triage and Treatment Center Program; Homelessness;
Substance Abuse; Mental Illness; Department of Health;
Appropriation

Description:

Requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Health to establish a homeless triage and treatment center program to serve homeless individuals and individuals at risk of homelessness with substance abuse issues or mental illness.

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

