
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that youth ages eighteen
2 to twenty-five are at a unique risk for housing and financial
3 instability due to a combination of developmental, social, and
4 environmental factors. This age range, known as emerging
5 adulthood, is a well-documented developmental phase marked by
6 major life transitions, including leaving the family home,
7 attending college, entering the workforce, or joining the
8 military. During this time, the human brain is still undergoing
9 significant development, particularly in areas responsible for
10 judgment, impulse control, and long-term planning. In addition,
11 many young adults have limited experience living independently
12 and are adjusting to the sudden absence of parental or guardian
13 oversight.

14 The legislature further finds that even for well-supported
15 youth, this period of emerging adulthood can be challenging. In
16 Hawaii, however, where the cost of living is among the highest
17 in the nation, housing instability becomes far more likely. For



1 vulnerable youth -- those experiencing homelessness,
2 transitioning out of foster care, fleeing domestic or family
3 violence, or leaving unsafe home environments -- the challenges
4 are compounded. These young people often face the transition to
5 independence with no financial safety net and without the
6 supportive structures that many of their peers rely on.

7 The legislature additionally finds that, nationally, as
8 many as 4,200,000 youth and young adults experience homelessness
9 each year, with roughly half encountering homelessness for the
10 first time in their lives. Homelessness is deeply traumatic for
11 young people, yet across the country, and especially in Hawaii,
12 communities often lack sufficient resources for youth who are
13 unsafely or unstably housed, couch surfing, doubled up, or
14 living in situations of crisis.

15 The legislature also finds that in Hawaii, which has one of
16 the highest homelessness rates per capita in the United States,
17 these gaps are even more pronounced. According to the 2024
18 Hawaii Statewide Point in Time Count, approximately 1,140
19 unaccompanied youth and young adults were identified across the
20 islands; however, this figure does not include couch surfing
21 youth, who are often invisible in formal counts. Furthermore,



1 youth who are doubled up or couch surfing are routinely told
2 they are not literally homeless and therefore do not qualify for
3 many housing assistance programs or eviction-prevention
4 resources. Finally, local service providers report that many
5 Hawaii youth resort to sleeping in cars, staying temporarily
6 with unsafe acquaintances, or entering adult emergency shelters
7 -- environments that are not designed for young adults -- simply
8 to become eligible for help.

9 The legislature notes that by the time youth enter
10 homelessness systems, they have often already been exposed to
11 significant trauma, exploitation, and instability. Preventing a
12 young person from ever reaching that point can dramatically
13 improve long-term outcomes, including education, employment,
14 physical health, and mental well-being.

15 The legislature recognizes that homelessness is not only
16 traumatic, but also expensive. A 2010 United States Department
17 of Housing and Urban Development study found that individuals
18 utilizing emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent
19 supportive housing for an average of four to twelve months
20 incurred system costs ranging from \$3,103 to \$14,418 per
21 household, with substantially higher costs for families, ranging



1 from \$6,574 to \$38,742. Given inflation, increased service
2 demands, and Hawaii's high operating costs, true expenses in
3 2025 are significantly higher.

4 The legislature further notes that in Hawaii, the statewide
5 average cost of an emergency shelter bed was more than \$27,500
6 per year in 2015, with annual family shelter costs often
7 exceeding \$80,000. Furthermore, given the State's unique
8 challenges, including remote island geography, limited land
9 availability, and high construction and staffing costs, mean
10 per-person and per-family shelter costs exceed those of most
11 states in the country. Finally, preventing youth from falling
12 into homelessness is consistently shown to be far more cost-
13 effective than supporting them after they enter the shelter
14 system or experience long-term instability.

15 The legislature believes that the establishment of a youth
16 housing stability assistance program represents a fiscally
17 responsible investment that will offer immediate, flexible, and
18 youth-centered financial stabilization. Preventing homelessness
19 upfront can reduce reliance on emergency shelters, lessen strain
20 on state-funded services, and support healthier long-term
21 outcomes for Hawaii's emerging adults.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the
2 department of human services' office of youth services to
3 establish a two-year youth housing stability assistance pilot
4 program to award funds to certain agencies to support eligible
5 youth with financial assistance.

6 SECTION 2. (a) The department of human services' office
7 of youth services shall establish and administer a two-year
8 youth housing stability assistance pilot program to provide
9 flexible, rapid, and youth-centered financial assistance to
10 young adults experiencing housing instability following a
11 qualifying adverse life event.

12 (b) The office of youth services shall award funds to
13 qualified nonprofit organizations or government agencies that
14 provide services to eligible youth, as determined by the office,
15 for the purpose of carrying out the youth housing stability
16 assistance pilot program with the nonprofit organization's or
17 government agency's clients.

18 (c) An individual shall be eligible for assistance under
19 the youth housing stability assistance pilot program if the
20 individual:

21 (1) Is between eighteen and twenty-five years of age; and



(2) Has experienced at least one qualifying event within the previous five years, including but not limited to:

- (A) Homelessness;
- (B) Exit from the foster care system;
- (C) Domestic violence;
- (D) Family violence;
- (E) Sex trafficking or related exploitation; and
- (F) In immediate stability need; served eviction notice.

(d) Acceptable documentation to confirm eligibility by an individual for the youth housing stability assistance pilot program includes but is not limited to:

- (1) Homeless verification letters;
- (2) Department of education Form MV1;
- (3) Letters from shelters or service organizations;
- (4) Police reports; and
- (5) Medical records.

(e) Each eligible youth may receive up to \$10,000 in assistance, with final award amounts determined on a case-by-case basis by the administering agency based on individual need.

Funds shall be provided to an eligible youth, as follows:



- 1 (1) Funds shall be a single payment intended to stabilize
2 an immediate housing crisis, including rent, deposits,
3 or emergency needs;
- 4 (2) Assistance amounts shall be equitably determined based
5 on the youth's individual circumstances and the budget
6 developed during a housing or stabilization planning
7 conversation;
- 8 (3) Funds shall be disbursed as quickly as practicable and
9 no later than twenty-four hours to forty-eight hours
10 following completion of a financial needs assessment
11 by case manager; and
- 12 (4) Participation in ongoing services shall not be
13 required beyond the housing conversation; however,
14 youth shall be supported in applying for other public
15 benefits including the federal supplemental nutrition
16 assistance program, federal temporary assistance to
17 needy families program, or similar resources.
- 18 (f) Funds received by an eligible youth may be used for
19 stability-related needs, including but not limited to:
- 20 (1) Housing, including rent payments or mortgage payments;
21 (2) Utilities;



1 (3) Transportation, including for:

2 (A) A pass to use public transportation;

3 (B) Gas; and

4 (C) Vehicle repair and maintenance required for the
5 safe and legal operation of a vehicle;

6 (4) Food;

7 (5) Basic needs, including clothing, footwear, and laundry
8 services; and

9 (6) Childcare expenses, including for:

10 (A) Food;

11 (B) Clothing;

12 (C) Diapers; and

13 (D) Daycare or preschool expenses.

14 (g) Funds awarded pursuant to this section shall be
15 administered by participating agencies and may be disbursed:

16 (1) Directly to vendors on behalf of eligible youth; or

17 (2) Directly to youth for approved basic-needs expenses,
18 in accordance with participating agency policies.

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 2026-2027 for



1 the establishment and administration of the youth housing
2 stability assistance pilot program established pursuant to this
3 Act.

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

6 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, and
7 shall be repealed on June 30, 2028.

8

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 26 2026



H.B. NO. 2167

Report Title:

Office of Youth Services; Youth Homelessness; Youth Housing
Stability Assistance Pilot Program; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Office of Youth Services to establish a two-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to award funds to certain nonprofit organizations and government agencies to support eligible youth with financial assistance. Appropriates funds.

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