
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 for decades,
2 policies and practices within the State of Hawai'i and its
3 counties have increasingly relied on criminalization,
4 enforcement, and displacement to address homelessness, including
5 the use of anti-camping laws, park exclusions, encampment
6 sweeps, and other punitive measures. These approaches have
7 failed to reduce homelessness and have instead left individuals
8 and families experiencing homelessness with fewer lawful places
9 to exist, rest, and meet basic human needs.

10 The legislature further finds that such policies have
11 contributed to cycles of instability, trauma, and mistrust,
12 particularly among those who have experienced repeated
13 displacement, citation, or arrest for activities essential to
14 survival. As a result, many individuals experiencing
15 homelessness avoid government systems and service providers out
16 of fear, creating barriers to care, housing, and recovery.



1 The legislature recognizes that homelessness is not a
2 crime, but a condition arising from complex factors including
3 housing shortages, rising costs of living, economic instability,
4 health challenges, and systemic inequities. Addressing
5 homelessness requires compassionate, humane, and evidence-based
6 responses that prioritize dignity, safety, and voluntary
7 participation.

8 The legislature further finds that access to basic
9 sanitation, nutrition, and personal safety is foundational to
10 human dignity and public health. The absence of safe and
11 welcoming places to shower, eat, rest, and receive services
12 undermines individual well-being and hinders successful
13 connections to housing, healthcare, employment, and behavioral
14 health supports.

15 The legislature acknowledges that trust is essential to
16 effective service delivery. Individuals who have experienced
17 homelessness often require consistent, non-punitive, and trauma-
18 informed environments in order to rebuild trust and willingly
19 engage with assistance. Safe spaces that are not contingent
20 upon law enforcement involvement or coercion are critical to
21 fostering that trust.



1 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to establish a
2 Homelessness Sanctuary Program to provide voluntary, low-
3 barrier, and safe spaces where unhoused women and young children
4 may meet basic needs, including access to showers, meals,
5 hygiene facilities, and supportive services, and may be
6 connected to housing, healthcare, and other resources. The
7 program is intended to replace fear with stability, exclusion
8 with inclusion, and punishment with pathways toward recovery and
9 self-sufficiency.

10 SECTION 2. The Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended by
11 adding a new chapter to be appropriately designated and to read
12 as follows:

13 **"CHAPTER HOMELESSNESS SANCTUARY PILOT PROGRAM"**

14 (a) There is established a homelessness sanctuary pilot
15 program to provide a safe location on designated lands for
16 unhoused women and young children, under the age of ten. The
17 program shall be administered by the coordinator on homelessness
18 in coordination with the department of human services and the
19 city and county of Honolulu.

20 (b) The coordinator on homelessness shall designate a
21 specific location for the homelessness sanctuary pilot program.



1 The state, county, federal, or private partners having
2 jurisdiction over the land shall work with the coordinator on
3 homelessness to:

- 4 (1) Ensure that the location has sufficient infrastructure
5 to support the pilot program; and
6 (2) Minimize adverse impacts to the environment, including
7 nearshore resources such as corals, reef fish, and
8 seabirds.

9 (c) The location designated pursuant to subsection (b)
10 shall serve as a safe location for unhoused women and young
11 children, under the age of ten, to reside and access services.

12 The coordinator on homelessness, department of human services,
13 and city and county of Honolulu shall:

- 14 (1) Open the location for habitation and provision of
15 services;
16 (2) Coordinate to provide the following accommodations at
17 the designated location:
18 (A) A central tent for shelter;
19 (B) A parking area at which residents may:
20 (i) Park their vehicles; and







- (9) Gardening;
 - (10) Childcare to allow residents with children to seek and maintain employment;
 - (11) Transportation for children to attend school; and
 - (12) Transportation for residents to access bus and rail services that allow residents to more easily access their places of employment.

8 Subject to available funds, the coordinator on homelessness
9 and the coordinator's partner agencies may offer facilities and
10 services identified by residents as high priority needs or
11 desires under this subsection.

12 (e) The coordinator on homelessness may work with
13 volunteers, qualified churches, nonprofit organizations,
14 businesses, and other entities pursuant to chapter 103D, Hawaii
15 Revised Statutes, for the purposes of this Act.

16 (f) No later than twenty days prior to the convening of
17 the next regular session after program initiation and each year
18 thereafter, the coordinator on homelessness shall submit a
19 report to the legislature that includes:

20 (1) Progress the State has made in establishing the
21 homelessness sanctuary pilot program;



- 1 (2) As applicable, the number of unhoused women and young
- 2 children, under the age of ten, served by the program;
- 3 (3) An evaluation of the homelessness sanctuary pilot
- 4 program to determine whether the objectives of the
- 5 program have been met or exceeded;
- 6 (4) An assessment of the impact of the homelessness
- 7 sanctuary pilot program on the homelessness problem in
- 8 Hawaii;
- 9 (5) An accounting of the expenditure of moneys
- 10 appropriated by this Act, including a summary of any
- 11 contracts entered into pursuant to subsection (e);
- 12 (6) A recommendation of whether the homelessness sanctuary
- 13 pilot program should be extended or made permanent;
- 14 and
- 15 (7) Any other findings and recommendations, including any
- 16 proposed legislation.
- 17 (g) The homelessness sanctuary pilot program shall cease
- 18 to exist thirty-six months from its implementation.
- 19 (h) As used in this section:
- 20 "County" means the city and county of Honolulu.



1 "Designated location" means the location on state, county,
2 federal, or private land designated for the homelessness
3 sanctuary pilot program pursuant to subsection (b).

4 "Homeless" and "unhoused" have the same meaning as in
5 section 346-361, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

6 "Pet animal" has the same meaning as in section 711-1100,
7 Hawaii Revised Statutes.

8 "Resident" means a unhoused person who lives at or receives
9 services from the homelessness sanctuary pilot program.

10 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$5,000,000 or so much
12 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the
13 homelessness sanctuary pilot program.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
15 human services for the purposes of this Act; provided that the
16 appropriation made by this section shall not lapse at the end of
17 the fiscal year for which the appropriation is made; provided
18 further that all moneys from the appropriation unencumbered as
19 of June 30, 2029, shall lapse as of that date.

20 SECTION 4. Beginning with fiscal year 2027-2028, and each
21 fiscal year thereafter, the department of human services shall



1 establish the homelessness pilot program as a separate line item
2 within the department's budget.

3 SECTION 5. Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary,
4 the governor may transfer all or a portion of the appropriation
5 in this section to other state or county agencies for
6 expenditures incurred to implement the homelessness sanctuary
7 pilot program.

8 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon approval.

9

INTRODUCED BY:


JAN 28 2026



H.B. NO. 2509

Report Title:

Unhoused; At-Risk; Women and Young Children; Coordinator on Homelessness; Sanctuary Pilot Program; DHS; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a three-year homelessness sanctuary pilot program to be administered by the Coordinator on Homelessness on designated land for the pilot program, which shall serve as a safe location for unhoused women and young children, under the age of ten, to reside and access services. Requires the Coordinator on Homelessness and the Coordinator's partner agencies to provide certain facilities and services to the designated location. Requires reporting to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

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