

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, according to a
2 ten-year study by the Centers for Disease Control and
3 Prevention, nearly all indicators of children and adolescent
4 mental health worsened between 2013 and 2023. Disasters like
5 the coronavirus 2019 pandemic and the Maui wildfires in August
6 2023 have increased rates of depression and anxiety in the
7 State's youth.

8 The legislature further finds that prevention activities
9 related to the promotion of mental health, such as early
10 intervention, mental health education, and coping strategies,
11 are critical to preventing the escalation of mental health
12 disorders in the State's communities, potentially reducing the
13 need for more intensive services in the future.

14 Digital platforms that can be accessed with mobile devices
15 can provide a powerful public health service, especially for
16 youth, by:



S.B. NO. 2679

- (1) Expanding the reach of mental health education and prevention by making it more convenient and inclusive, especially for children and adolescents in remote or underserved areas where in-person programs may be limited;
- (2) Reducing stigma by making it easier for youth to explore resources without fear of judgment;
- (3) Enhancing engagement and interactivity by allowing youth to guide their own learning;
- (4) Tailoring content to the needs of the user;
- (5) Providing a cost-effective way to reach a large audience;
- (6) Addressing lower-level needs so the behavioral health workforce, which is scarce, can focus on youth with the highest level of need;
- (7) Providing information that is continuously updated to reflect the latest research and resources; and
- (8) Collecting critical data about community mental health needs.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish and appropriate funds for a digital youth mental health platform



1 pilot project that will enable the child and adolescent mental
2 health division of the department of health to develop and make
3 publicly available a digital platform designed to help young
4 people address and manage mental health challenges.

5 SECTION 2. (a) The child and adolescent mental health
6 division of the department of health shall implement and
7 administer a digital youth mental health platform pilot project.
8 The pilot project shall commence on July 1, 2026, and end on
9 June 30, 2027.

10 (b) Under the pilot project, the child and adolescent
11 mental health division shall contract for the following
12 services:

13 (1) Development, management, and hosting services for the
14 digital youth mental health platform. The child and
15 adolescent mental health division shall oversee the
16 development of the platform that is evidence-based,
17 peer-reviewed, confidential, and responsive. The
18 platform shall provide:

- 19 (A) County specific resources;
20 (B) Mental health education;
21 (C) Self-care strategies;



(D) Healthy coping strategies; and

(E) Data regarding mental health needs in the State;

and

(2) Communication and marketing services. The child and adolescent mental health division shall manage the communications and marketing services, which include:

(A) Development of a communications and marketing plan;

(B) Creation of ad campaign materials inclusive of print, radio, digital, and television ads and the respective media buys;

(C) Planning and management of community and outreach events; and

(D) Social media campaign and management.

(c) Procurement for development, management, and hosting services and communication and marketing services for the purposes of this Act shall be exempt from chapters 103D and 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

(d) The child and adolescent mental health division shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, regarding the digital youth mental



1 health platform pilot project to the legislature no later than
2 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
3 2027.

4 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000 or so much
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the
7 implementation and administration of the digital youth mental
8 health platform pilot project.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 health for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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INTRODUCED BY: Karl Rhoads



S.B. NO. 2679

Report Title:

Keiki Caucus; DOH; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division;
Digital Youth Mental Health Platform Pilot Project; Report;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes and appropriates funds for a one-year Digital Youth Mental Health Platform Pilot Project that will enable the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division of the Department of Health to develop and make publicly available a digital platform designed to help young people address and manage mental health challenges. Requires a report to the Legislature.

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