

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'



KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.G.A, M.P.H
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELA

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB787
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

SENATOR SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date and Time: Wednesday, January 28, 2026, 1:30 p.m. Location: Room 225 & Video

Fiscal Implications: The Department of Health ("Department") requests funding for this measure provided it does not supplant the requests outlined in the Governor's executive budget request.

Department Position: The Department supports this measure.

Department Testimony: The Adult Mental Health Division provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

The Department supports this measure, which appropriates funds to the Department to establish and operate a free statewide non-clinical mental health warm line to provide mental health support in non-emergency situations.

Warm lines are non-crisis, peer-delivered support services, typically by phone or text, intended to reduce social isolation, provide emotional support, promote coping and recovery, and divert non-emergency calls from crisis lines and emergency services. Peer-run warm lines have been associated with improved hope, empowerment, and self-efficacy; increased coping skills and emotional regulation; and reduced loneliness and perceived distress.

This measure identifies and addresses the need to integrate warm lines into Hawaii's broader mental health crisis continuum. Warm lines are an evidence-informed application of the evidence-based peer support modality as operationalized in a low-barrier, scalable format.

The Department anticipates the cost for starting up and operations in the first year at \$570,137. Startup costs support initial system configuration, workforce onboarding, policy development, and community launch activities necessary to establish a peer-run warm line. Operating costs were estimated based on a 12-hour-per-day, 7-days a week, warm line staffed by certified Peer Support Specialists with supervisory oversight and robust data analytics capacity.

TOTAL BUDGET SUMMARY

Budget Component	Amount
Startup Costs (one-time)	\$72,000
Year 1 Operating Costs	\$498,137
Total Year 1 Budget	\$570,137

Budget by Cost Type

One Time Startup Costs

Category	Cost
Call Center Platform Setup and Configuration	\$25,000
Initial Peer Certification and Onboarding/Training	\$25,000
Initial Marketing and Launch Outreach	\$10,000
Equipment and Initial Office Setup	\$12,000
Total Startup Costs	\$72,000

Annual Operating Costs

Category	Year 1 Cost with contract start date of January 1, 2027	Annual Recurring Cost
Peer Support Specialists (2 @ \$22/hour x 12 hours/day x 365 days/year)	\$96,360	\$192,720
Peer Supervisor (1 @ \$35/hour x 12 hours/day x 365 days/year)	\$76,650	\$153,300
Epidemiology Analyst (0.5 FTE)	\$25,750	\$51,500
Fringe	\$118,342	\$236,683
Subtotal Personnel	\$317,102	\$634,203
Telecommunications and Call Center	\$32,500	\$65,000
Toll-Free Line and Call Routing	\$6,000	\$12,000
IT Support, Cybersecurity, Data Systems	\$16,500	\$33,000
Ongoing Training and Continuing Education	\$19,000	\$38,000
Facilities, Utilities, and Insurance	\$40,500	\$81,000
Evaluation, Data Reporting, and Compliance	\$21,250	\$42,500
Administrative and Organizational Overhead (10% Indirect Costs)	\$45,285	\$90,570
Total Operating Costs	\$498,137	\$996,273

Offered Amendments: The Department respectfully requests the deletion of the appropriation for fiscal year 2025-2026 and an effective date of July 1, 2026.

The Department also requests an appropriation of \$570,137 for fiscal year 2026-2027 to fully fund implementation of the warm line.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

SUPPORT SB 787: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: Wednesday, 1/28/26; 1:30 pm; CR 225 & Videoconference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey and Committee on Health and Human Services:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **supports SB 787**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Health to establish and operate a **free, statewide mental health warm line** to provide non-emergency emotional support for community members experiencing psychological distress.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax-exempt, community-based organization that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for 78 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, individuals experiencing homelessness, veterans, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. As an organization committed to serving vulnerable populations and strengthening families, we have seen firsthand the urgent need for expanded mental health support. The challenges of the pandemic, social pressures, and economic uncertainties have heightened stress, anxiety, and depression, making it critical to provide innovative and easily accessible solutions.

The Legislature rightly recognizes a critical gap between crisis-level mental health services and the need for compassionate, nonclinical support. SB 787 helps fill this gap by giving people who are overwhelmed or isolated—but not in immediate danger—someone to talk to before their distress worsens. The warm line created by this bill is specifically designed for non-emergency situations and is staffed by trained peers or volunteers who offer understanding, resources, and encouragement.

SB 787 is important because it strengthens Hawai'i's mental health support system by offering early intervention before distress escalates, reducing unnecessary use of emergency and 988 crisis services, and providing a peer-based resource that helps reduce stigma and encourages access to support. It also enhances community resilience by giving people a place to turn for ongoing emotional support.

SB 787 appropriates funding to support equipment, training, and operational costs necessary to establish and operate this warm line statewide. Catholic Charities Hawai'i affirms that these investments are modest relative to the social, emotional, and economic benefits of strengthening early mental health supports.

If you have any questions, please contact our Vice President of Mission, Shellie Niles, at (808) 527-4813.

SB-787

Submitted on: 1/26/2026 7:12:24 PM
Testimony for HHS on 1/28/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Warm lines are a very good service that are complementary to things like crisis lines and should be funded.

SB-787

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 10:44:14 AM
Testimony for HHS on 1/28/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin "Shiloh" Martin	Testifying for Libertarian Party of Hawaii	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Shimabukuro, and committee members.

I am Austin Martin, Chair of the Libertarian Party of Hawaii, testifying in opposition to SB 787 (Establishing a Statewide Mental Health Warm Line).

In the latest episode of "how much the government cares about you" — SB 787 would create and fund a government-operated non-crisis mental health warm line. I am touched that some are signalling to "care" enough about voters' mental health to duplicate services already provided by private telehealth platforms, nonprofit organizations, and community groups — at much higher costs, while introducing state oversight that risks patient privacy through mandatory reporting or data collection requirements. It's a very sweet gesture, but seems deeply flawed. Operational costs will be borne by taxpayers with no opt-out mechanism.

Private and voluntary initiatives offer greater flexibility, lower stigma, and innovation unencumbered by bureaucratic constraints. I recommend rejecting this bill to avoid unnecessary expansion of state involvement in personal mental health support.

Mahalo for your kokua to this matter.

Austin Martin

Libertarian Party



United Self-Help

“People helping people to help themselves”

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

For SB787 Relating to the Department of Health
In support with reservations

Aloha Senators,

I am Bud Bowles, Executive Director of United Self-Help. Founded in 1984 we are a nonprofit focused on providing peer-led support, education and socialization for individuals experiencing mental illness.

We support having a warm line in Hawaii but have reservations about Dept of health creating and managing it. The DOH contracted the operation of a warm line to United Self-Help for many years.

It all started in 2004 when USH received a call from Dr. Tom Hester, former Director of the State Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD). A study conducted at Dr. Hester's behest had found that those suffering from mental health issues wanted three things: 1) The ability to live independently; 2) Better self-esteem; and 3) Someone with whom they could talk on their own level when they felt lonely. AMHD contracted USH to operate a warm line which USH did until the contract was suspended due to budgetary cuts. The warm line initially received about 150 calls per month but eventually grew to field about 600 calls per month.

Recognizing the need in the community, however, USH continued to operate the warm line and demand for this service has never abated. USH continues to support people who call insofar as staff and budgetary resources allow. The United Self-Help Warmline offers free, anonymous counseling and resource referrals for general mental health support completely by consumers of mental health services. The warmline is available statewide from 4:30 pm to 9:00pm. United Self Help has requested a state grant in aid to pay for continuing the warm line. It is a request for minimal funding. Additional funding would permit the extension of hours the warm line could be available.

We request that you support the Department of Health's request for state funding of a warm line. We also ask that you direct the department to contract for this service with existing experienced community programs.

277 Ohua Avenue
310 Paoakalani Ave. (mailing)
Honolulu, Hawaii
96815-3643
Ph: (808) 931-6444,947-5558
Warm Lines 947-5558
www.unitedselfhelp.org
director@unitedselfhelp.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wes Mun, president
Phyllis Dendle
Dan Eineker
Laretta Dubin, RN
Phillip Enomoto
Lydia Hardy Hemmings
Edna Magpantay-Monroe, RN
Susan King
Macey Luo Souza, MSN,
APRN-RX,PMHCNS-BC,HCPS.
Tom Strickland

Dennis Mee-Lee (exofficio)
Anson Rego , JD (ex officio)

Bud Bowles,MSW,CPRP, HCPS
Executive Director

AN EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY
EMPLOYER and 501c3

SB-787

Submitted on: 1/25/2026 4:59:17 PM
Testimony for HHS on 1/28/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kala‘e Kaluakini	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

SB787 Department Of Health; Warm Line; Mental Health; Appropriations

28th of January, 2026

1:30 at Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

In Support of Senate Bill 787

Aloha e Chair Buenaventura a me Vice Chair Mckelvey with the Committee of Health and Human Services

my name is Kala‘e Kaluakini, and I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 787

This bill is important to our community because it serves to bridge a gap in Mental Health service that does not necessarily call for emergencies such as the ones 988 Hawaii CARES Crisis line serves. As a local person from Maui, the mental health crisis that happened following the 2023 Lahaina Fire, ripped a window into the state of Mental Health in the state of Hawai‘i. According to a September 20224 research letter from Dr Rivera-Gonzales et al on the number of 988 calls in the year following the fire. We do not have the numbers

necessary to support the demand for Mental Health in the state. Coupled with the well known affordability crisis, has left many in the state overwhelmed enough as is. Therefore the establishment of a warm line that can provide a service to those who do not teeter on the verge of crisis but may still need help, can make it so they never get to that point. It is in our culture as Kanaka and Locals to look out for one another in times of need, this is one such way to do so.

Mahalo Nui Loa for your time Chair and Vice Chair and the HHS Committee

SB-787

Submitted on: 1/26/2026 9:46:43 AM
Testimony for HHS on 1/28/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Wakukawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support funding for the DOH to establish a warm line to provide support for those having a mental health situation that is a non-emergency.

in these times of uncertainty, many people need someone trained to listen, empathize and give practical advice. It could prevent callers from having more extreme emergency-type situations. Thus it would reduce 911 calls, crisis help line calls and ER or clinic visits.

This warm line could be used by children who can call or text. They could share their experiences with bullying, loneliness or interpersonal issues. Kupuns could also use this line to combat loneliness, isolation while managing chronic medical conditions that may affect access to social networks.

Let us be proactive in solutions to societal issues rather than just addressing them when they get to the level of an emergency.

SB-787

Submitted on: 1/24/2026 11:03:00 AM
Testimony for HHS on 1/28/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose the idea of using our state taxes to create a so called "warm line".

SB-787

Submitted on: 1/26/2026 8:08:49 PM
Testimony for HHS on 1/28/2026 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Veronica Moore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: January 26, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 787

Measure Title: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

Report Title: DOH; Warm Line; Mental Health; Appropriations (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 787. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore