
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 and young
2 adults between the ages eighteen and twenty-four are at a unique
3 risk for housing and financial instability due to a combination
4 of developmental, social, and environmental factors. This age
5 range, known as emerging adulthood, is a well-documented
6 developmental phase marked by major life transitions, including
7 leaving the family home, attending college, entering the
8 workforce, or joining the military. During this time, the human
9 brain is still undergoing significant development, particularly
10 in areas responsible for judgment, impulse control, and long-
11 term planning. In addition, many young adults have limited
12 experience living independently and are adjusting to the sudden
13 absence of parental or guardian 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 864
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 pilot 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 five-year youth housing stability assistance pilot
4 program to enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations or
5 execute memoranda of agreement with government agencies to
6 support eligible youth with financial assistance.

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

13 (b) The office of youth services shall enter into
14 contracts pursuant to chapter 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
15 with nonprofit organizations or execute memoranda of agreements
16 with government agencies that provide services to eligible
17 youth, as determined by the office, for the purpose of carrying
18 out the youth housing stability assistance pilot program with
19 the nonprofit organization's or government agency's clients.



1 (c) An individual shall be eligible for assistance under
2 the youth housing stability assistance pilot program if the
3 individual:

- 4 (1) Is between eighteen and twenty-four years of age; and
- 5 (2) Has experienced at least one qualifying event within
6 the previous five years, including but not limited to:
 - 7 (A) Homelessness;
 - 8 (B) Exit from the foster care system;
 - 9 (C) Domestic violence;
 - 10 (D) Family violence;
 - 11 (E) Sex trafficking or related exploitation; and
 - 12 (F) In immediate stability need; served eviction
13 notice.

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

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



1 (e) Each eligible youth may receive up to \$10,000 in
2 assistance, limiting payments to the amount necessary as
3 determined on a case-by-case basis by the administering agency
4 based on individual need. The amount of funding shall be
5 adjusted to avoid duplication with other assistance provided for
6 the same housing stabilization need and to ensure aggregate
7 assistance does not exceed the eligible youth's documented unmet
8 need. Funds shall be provided to an eligible youth, as follows:

9 (1) Funds shall be a single payment to a landlord,
10 mortgagee, or utility, including an internet service
11 provider or other vendor as determined by the
12 administering agency, that is intended to stabilize an
13 immediate housing crisis, including rent, deposits, or
14 emergency needs;

15 (2) Assistance amounts shall be equitably determined based
16 on the youth's individual circumstances and the budget
17 developed during a housing or stabilization planning
18 conversation with a case manager or housing counselor;

19 (3) Funds shall be disbursed as quickly as practicable
20 following completion of a financial needs assessment
21 by case manager or housing counselor;



- 1 (4) Funds shall not jeopardize eligibility for other
- 2 public assistance benefits;
- 3 (5) A youth experiencing a housing crisis shall
- 4 participate in ongoing counseling or case management
- 5 services to address the reason for the crisis;
- 6 provided that if a case manager or housing counselor
- 7 determines the incident was situational and not
- 8 chronic, ongoing counseling or case management shall
- 9 not be required; and
- 10 (6) Youth shall be supported in applying for other public
- 11 benefits, including the federal supplemental nutrition
- 12 assistance program, federal temporary assistance to
- 13 needy families program, or similar resources.
- 14 (f) Funds received by an eligible youth may be used for
- 15 stability-related needs, including but not limited to:
- 16 (1) Housing, including rent payments or mortgage payments;
- 17 (2) Utilities;
- 18 (3) Transportation, including for:
- 19 (A) A pass to use public transportation;
- 20 (B) Gas; and



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

3 (4) Food;

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

6 (6) Childcare expenses, including for:

7 (A) Food;

8 (B) Clothing;

9 (C) Diapers; and

10 (D) Daycare or preschool expenses.

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

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

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

16 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
19 the establishment and administration of the youth housing
20 stability assistance pilot program established pursuant to this
21 Act.



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

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



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 five-year Youth Housing Stability Assistance Pilot Program to enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations or execute memoranda of agreement with government agencies to support eligible youth with financial assistance. Appropriates funds. (HD1)

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