
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 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. In the 2024 Hawaii
18 Statewide Point in Time Count, eight hundred sixty-four
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 subject to the availability of program funds, flexible, rapid,
11 and youth-centered financial assistance to young adults
12 experiencing housing instability following a qualifying adverse
13 life event.

14 (b) The office of youth services shall enter into
15 contracts pursuant to chapter 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
16 with nonprofit organizations or execute memoranda of agreement
17 with government agencies that provide services to eligible
18 youth, as determined by the office, for the purpose of carrying
19 out the youth housing stability assistance pilot program with
20 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) An immediate stability need, including having
13 been served an eviction 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 based on individual need.
4 The amount of funding shall be adjusted to avoid duplication
5 with other assistance provided for the same housing
6 stabilization need and to ensure aggregate assistance does not
7 exceed the eligible youth's documented unmet need. Funds shall
8 be provided to an eligible youth, as follows:

- 9 (1) Assistance amounts shall be equitably determined based
10 on the youth's individual circumstances and the budget
11 developed during a housing or stabilization planning
12 conversation with a case manager or housing counselor;
- 13 (2) Funds shall be disbursed as quickly as practicable
14 following completion of a financial needs assessment
15 by a case manager or housing counselor;
- 16 (3) Funds shall not jeopardize eligibility for other
17 public assistance benefits;
- 18 (4) A youth experiencing a housing crisis shall
19 participate in ongoing counseling or case management
20 services to address the reason for the crisis;
21 provided that if a case manager or housing counselor



- 1 determines the incident was situational and not
2 chronic, ongoing counseling or case management shall
3 not be required; and
- 4 (5) Youth shall be supported in applying for other public
5 benefits, including the federal supplemental nutrition
6 assistance program, federal temporary assistance for
7 needy families program, or similar resources.
- 8 (f) Funds received by an eligible youth may be used for
9 stability-related needs, including but not limited to:
- 10 (1) Housing, including rent payments or mortgage payments;
11 (2) Utilities;
12 (3) Transportation, including for:
13 (A) A pass to use public transportation;
14 (B) Gas; and
15 (C) Vehicle repair and maintenance required for the
16 safe and legal operation of a vehicle;
- 17 (4) Food;
18 (5) Basic needs, including clothing, footwear, and laundry
19 services; and
20 (6) Childcare expenses, including for:
21 (A) Food;



- 1 (B) Clothing;
- 2 (C) Diapers; and
- 3 (D) Daycare or preschool expenses.

4 (g) Funds awarded to youth pursuant to this section may be
5 disbursed:

- 6 (1) Directly to a landlord, mortgagee, or utility,
7 including an internet service provider or other vendor
8 as determined by the administering agency, that is
9 intended to stabilize an immediate housing crisis,
10 including rent, deposits, or emergency needs in
11 accordance with subsection (f)(1) and (2); or
- 12 (2) Directly to youth for approved expenses, in accordance
13 with subsection (f)(3) to (6).

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

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



1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000, and
2 shall be repealed on June 30, 2031.



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. Effective 7/1/3000. Sunsets 6/30/2031. (SD1)

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