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

10           The legislature further finds that these 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, health care, 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           Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a  
2 three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Program to provide voluntary,  
3 low-barrier, and safe spaces where basic needs of unhoused  
4 primary caregivers and children can be met, including access to  
5 showers, meals, hygiene facilities, and supportive services, and  
6 where they can be connected to housing, health care, and other  
7 resources. The program is intended to replace fear with  
8 stability, exclusion with inclusion, and punishment with  
9 pathways toward recovery and self-sufficiency.

10           SECTION 2. (a) There is established a homelessness  
11 sanctuary pilot program to provide a safe location on designated  
12 lands for unhoused primary caregivers and children under the age  
13 of eighteen. The program shall be administered by the  
14 coordinator on homelessness in coordination with the department  
15 of human services and the city and county of Honolulu.

16           (b) The coordinator on homelessness shall designate a  
17 specific location for the homelessness sanctuary pilot program.  
18 The state, county, federal, or private partners having  
19 jurisdiction over the land shall work with the coordinator on  
20 homelessness to:



1 (1) Ensure that the location has sufficient infrastructure  
2 to support the pilot program; and

3 (2) Minimize adverse impacts to the environment, including  
4 nearshore resources such as corals, reef fish, and  
5 seabirds.

6 (c) The location designated pursuant to subsection (b)  
7 shall serve as a safe location for unhoused primary caregivers  
8 and children under the age of eighteen to reside and access  
9 services. The coordinator on homelessness, department of human  
10 services, and city and county of Honolulu shall:

11 (1) Open the location for habitation and provision of  
12 services;

13 (2) Coordinate to provide the following accommodations at  
14 the designated location:

15 (A) A central tent for shelter;

16 (B) A parking area at which residents may:

17 (i) Park their vehicles; and

18 (ii) Sleep in their vehicles, if the residents  
19 choose to do so;

20 (C) Restroom and shower facilities;

21 (D) Lockers and storage space;



- 1 (E) Laundry facilities;
- 2 (F) Solid waste collection and disposal;
- 3 (G) Open land area with sufficient space for facility
- 4 activities;
- 5 (H) Perimeter fencing; and
- 6 (I) Onsite security;
- 7 (3) Allow for residents to set up additional individual
- 8 tents as needed;
- 9 (4) Partner with nonprofit organizations and other
- 10 entities to provide at least one meal per day to each
- 11 resident;
- 12 (5) Allow residents to be accompanied by pet animals; and
- 13 (6) Establish volunteer and employment opportunities for
- 14 residents; provided that:
  - 15 (A) Residents employed under this paragraph shall be
  - 16 paid not less than the minimum wage; and
  - 17 (B) Volunteer and employment opportunities, to the
  - 18 extent possible, shall focus on clean-up
  - 19 activities, vegetation control, painting, and
  - 20 other tasks for which the state and county
  - 21 governments are experiencing a backlog; and



1           (7) To the extent possible, establish a zero-tolerance  
2           policy for illegal drugs, violence, sexual misconduct,  
3           and obscenities.

4           (d) The coordinator on homelessness shall survey residents  
5 to determine other facilities and services that residents need  
6 or desire, including:

7           (1) Medical attention;

8           (2) Mental health services;

9           (3) Domestic abuse treatment;

10          (4) Assistance in obtaining birth certificates or state  
11          identification cards;

12          (5) Assistance enrolling in med-QUEST and the coordinated  
13          entry system;

14          (6) Case management with a social worker;

15          (7) Workshop areas for job training;

16          (8) Education opportunities;

17          (9) Gardening;

18          (10) Childcare to allow residents with children to seek and  
19          maintain employment;

20          (11) Transportation for children to attend school; and



1           (12) Transportation for residents to access bus and rail  
2           services that allow residents to more easily access  
3           their places of employment.

4           Subject to available funds, the coordinator on homelessness  
5           and the coordinator's partner agencies may offer facilities and  
6           services identified by residents as high priority needs or  
7           desires under this subsection.

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

12          (f) No later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
13          the Regular Sessions of 2027, 2028, and 2029, the coordinator on  
14          homelessness shall submit a report to the legislature that  
15          includes:

16               (1) Progress the State has made in establishing the  
17               homelessness sanctuary pilot program;

18               (2) As applicable, the number of unhoused primary  
19               caregivers and children under the age of eighteen  
20               served by the program;



- 1           (3) An evaluation of the homelessness sanctuary pilot
- 2                   program to determine whether the objectives of the
- 3                   program have been met or exceeded;
- 4           (4) An assessment of the impact of the homelessness
- 5                   sanctuary pilot program on the homelessness problem in
- 6                   the State;
- 7           (5) An accounting of the expenditure of moneys
- 8                   appropriated by this Act, including a summary of any
- 9                   contracts entered into pursuant to subsection (e);
- 10          (6) A recommendation of whether the homelessness sanctuary
- 11                   pilot program should be extended or made permanent;
- 12                   and
- 13          (7) Any other findings and recommendations, including any
- 14                   proposed legislation.
- 15          (g) The homelessness sanctuary pilot program shall cease
- 16 to exist thirty-six months from its implementation.
- 17          (h) For the purposes of this section:
- 18                "County" means the city and county of Honolulu.
- 19                "Designated location" means the location on state, county,
- 20 federal, or private land designated for the homelessness
- 21 sanctuary pilot program pursuant to subsection (b).



1 "Homeless" and "unhoused" have the same meaning as the term  
2 "homeless" is defined in section 346-361, Hawaii Revised  
3 Statutes.

4 "Pet animal" has the same meaning as defined in section  
5 711-1100, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

6 "Resident" means an unhoused person who lives at or  
7 receives services from the homelessness sanctuary pilot program.

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

12 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
13 human services for the purposes of this Act; provided that the  
14 appropriation made by this section shall not lapse at the end of  
15 the fiscal year for which the appropriation is made; provided  
16 further that all moneys from the appropriation unencumbered as  
17 of June 30, 2028, shall lapse as of that date.

18 SECTION 4. Beginning with fiscal year 2027-2028, and each  
19 fiscal year thereafter, the department of human services shall  
20 establish the homelessness pilot program as a separate line item  
21 within the department's budget.



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

6           SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on January 30, 2050;  
7 provided that sections 2 to 5 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.



**Report Title:**

Coordinator on Homelessness; DHS; City and County of Honolulu;  
Primary Caregivers and Children; Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot  
Program; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes a three-year Homelessness Sanctuary Pilot Program to be administered by the Coordinator on Homelessness, in coordination with the Department of Human Services and the City and County of Honolulu, on designated land for the pilot program, which shall serve as a safe location for unhoused primary caregivers and children under the age of eighteen 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 reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 1/30/2050. (SD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

