
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that air medical services
2 are an essential component of Hawaii's emergency medical systems
3 of care, health care infrastructure, and all-hazards disaster
4 preparedness. Hawaii's geographic isolation, multi-island
5 structure, rural communities, and limited access to specialty
6 and tertiary care on neighbor islands make timely air medical
7 transport critical to providing equitable access to lifesaving
8 care.

9 The legislature further finds that demand for emergency
10 aeromedical and interfacility air medical transport services has
11 increased substantially over the past decade, with annual flight
12 volumes exceeding pre-2020 levels by more than one thousand
13 transports. However, statutory authority, governance
14 structures, and department of health staffing dedicated to air
15 medical services have not kept pace, resulting in fragmented
16 coordination, prolonged transport times, and inefficient
17 systems.



1 The legislature recognizes that the emergency medical
2 services and injury prevention systems branch of the department
3 of health lacks permanent, dedicated air medical staffing to
4 support statewide coordination, regulatory oversight, quality
5 improvement, data governance, and disaster readiness.

6 The legislature further finds that statewide air medical
7 performance data demonstrate persistent delays that exceed
8 nationally recognized benchmarks for rural and remote emergency
9 care, reflecting structural gaps in coordination and governance
10 rather than performance issues with isolated providers.

11 The legislature acknowledges that nationally recognized
12 best practices emphasize centralized governance, clinically
13 driven coordination, continuous quality improvement, and
14 integration with trauma, stroke, cardiac, acute care, emergency
15 medical systems, and disaster response. In an island state, air
16 medical services are a core public health, public safety, and
17 emergency preparedness function.

18 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a
19 statewide air medical services program.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new section to part XVIII to be
3 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

4 "§321- Statewide air medical services program; staffing
5 and authority. (a) There is established within the
6 department's emergency medical services and injury prevention
7 system branch a statewide air medical services program to
8 provide governance, coordination, oversight, quality
9 improvement, and disaster readiness for the State's emergency
10 aeromedical and interfacility air medical transport services.

11 (b) The department shall establish the following permanent
12 positions, who shall be exempt from chapter 76, to carry out the
13 purposes of this section:

14 (1) A state air medical director, who shall be a physician
15 licensed in the State with experience in emergency
16 medicine, trauma care, or critical care transport, who
17 shall provide statewide clinical and medical oversight
18 of air medical services;

19 (2) A state air medical program manager, who shall be
20 responsible for program administration; policy
21 development; system planning; interagency



1 coordination; and integration of air medical services
2 with emergency medical services, trauma systems, and
3 health care facilities; and

4 (3) An air medical coordinator, who shall support
5 operational coordination, data oversight, compliance
6 monitoring, performance improvement activities, and
7 coordination with licensed air medical providers,
8 county emergency medical services agencies, hospitals,
9 and emergency management partners.

10 (c) The positions established pursuant to subsection (b)
11 shall be permanent and recurring and shall not be contingent
12 upon temporary programs, pilot projects, or time-limited
13 funding.

14 (d) The statewide air medical services program, under the
15 direction of the director of health, may:

16 (1) Provide statewide clinical governance and medical
17 direction for emergency aeromedical and interfacility
18 air medical services;

19 (2) Develop, adopt, and implement statewide air medical
20 policies, procedures, and clinical protocols
21 consistent with nationally recognized standards;



- 1 (3) Coordinate emergency air medical and interfacility air
2 medical transport services across counties to improve
3 timeliness, health equity, and access to care;
- 4 (4) Oversee the participation of licensed air medical
5 providers in data-based quality improvement programs;
- 6 (5) Support statewide disaster preparedness, response, and
7 recovery activities involving air medical transport,
8 including multi-island and mass-casualty incidents;
9 and
- 10 (6) Coordinate with county emergency medical services
11 agencies, hospitals, trauma centers, stroke centers,
12 acute care facilities, emergency management agencies,
13 and other public and private partners.
- 14 (e) As a condition of licensure, all air medical providers
15 operating within the State shall cooperate with and participate
16 in statewide air medical coordination, data reporting, and
17 quality improvement activities as required by the department.
- 18 (f) The statewide air medical services program shall
19 coordinate with the state emergency medical services advisory
20 committee and may establish advisory or quality improvement



1 committees as necessary to fulfill its statutory
2 responsibilities.

3 (g) The department shall establish and assess annual air
4 medical ambulance licensure and accreditation fees for all air
5 medical providers operating within the State. The fees shall be
6 reasonable, non-refundable, and sufficient to fully cover the
7 costs associated with:

8 (1) Administration and oversight of the statewide air
9 medical services program;

10 (2) Licensure, accreditation verification, compliance
11 monitoring, and enforcement activities;

12 (3) Statewide air medical coordination and quality
13 improvement initiatives;

14 (4) Data collection, analysis, and reporting requirements;
15 and

16 (5) Coordination and integration with state and county
17 emergency management, emergency medical services, and
18 disaster preparedness partners.

19 The fees collected pursuant to this subsection shall be
20 deposited into the emergency medical services special fund
21 established pursuant to section 321-234 and shall be used solely



1 for the purposes of administering and supporting the statewide
2 air medical services program and staff, and its emergency
3 management coordination functions.

4 (h) The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91
5 necessary to implement this section."

6 SECTION 3. Section 321-234, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
7 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

8 "(b) The moneys in the special fund shall be distributed
9 as follows:

10 (1) Beginning with fiscal year 2021-2022, \$3,500,000 shall
11 be distributed each fiscal year to a county operating
12 a county emergency medical services system pursuant to
13 part XI of chapter 46 for the operation of that
14 system; ~~and~~

15 (2) Fees remitted pursuant to section 321- shall be
16 used solely for the purposes of administering and
17 supporting the statewide air medical services program
18 and staff, and its emergency management coordination
19 functions; and

20 ~~[-2-]~~ (3) The remainder shall be distributed to the
21 department for operating the system established



1 pursuant to this chapter, including enhanced and
2 expanded services, and shall not be used to supplant
3 funding for emergency medical services authorized
4 prior to July 1, 2004."

5 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
6 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

7 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



Report Title:

DOH; State Emergency Medical Services System; Statewide Air Medical Services Program; Positions; Emergency Medical Services Special Fund

Description:

Establishes the Statewide Air Medical Services Program within the Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Systems Branch to coordinate and strengthen air medical services. Establishes the positions of an air medical director, an air medical program manager, and an air medical coordinator. Specifies that annual licensure and accreditation fees are to be deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund for costs of the program. (CD1)

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