

**ACT 252**

S.B. NO. 2370

A Bill for an Act Relating to Homelessness.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that homelessness in Hawaii is a long-term problem. The legislature acknowledges that homelessness requires greater collaboration and coordination among diverse government entities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based organizations. In pursuit of this goal, the legislature enacted Act 105, Session Laws of Hawaii 2012 (Act 105). Act 105, in part, formally established the Hawaii interagency council on homelessness, which had been temporarily created through Executive Order No. 11-21. Act 105 allowed the council to continue identifying critical strategic goals and initiatives that would mitigate homelessness while ensuring that persons experiencing homelessness could obtain permanent housing and become reintegrated into the community. As one of its statutory duties, on September 10, 2012, the council adopted a unified statewide ten-year plan. At that time, the point-in-time count, or the annual one-day unduplicated count of sheltered and unsheltered individu-

als and families experiencing homelessness, totaled 7,921 statewide. Eight years later, in 2020, the point-in-time count totaled 6,458.

While the Hawaii interagency council on homelessness has a ten-year plan, the legislature further finds that the State lacks a long-term commitment to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness. The legislature also finds that various state agencies and programs that address homelessness have been built up on a piecemeal basis and have approached homelessness in a similar manner. There is no central agency tasked with reducing and preventing homelessness through the coordination of effort between state and local government agencies and private entities.

The legislature recognizes that year-to-year funding, rather than consistent funding in the base budget, creates uncertainty for the staff of a program. For example, in 2019, the legislature enacted Act 81, Session Laws of Hawaii 2019, which appointed the governor's coordinator on homelessness to administer and enforce the duties and responsibilities of the council. The coordinator is currently funded as a special project under the department of human services, while the coordinator's full-time staff of four are not permanent employees. In addition, year-to-year funding among agencies and providers for homeless services threatens already potentially sporadic and fragmented services, instead of providing consistent support that will help permanently house persons experiencing homelessness in the State.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Establish the office on homelessness and housing solutions;
- (2) Appropriate funds for the administration of the office on homelessness and housing solutions; and
- (3) Establish five full-time equivalent (5.0 FTE) permanent positions to carry out the objectives of the office on homelessness and housing solutions.

SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new subpart to part XVIII to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“ . STATEWIDE OFFICE ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SOLUTIONS

**§346-A Definitions.** As used in this subpart, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Coordinator” means the governor's coordinator on homelessness as provided in section 346-381.5.

“Office” means the statewide office on homelessness and housing solutions.

**§346-B Statewide office on homelessness and housing solutions; establishment.** There is established within the department of human services, for administrative purposes only, the statewide office on homelessness and housing solutions that shall:

- (1) Work with state, county, and community agencies to develop solutions to prevent and end homelessness in the State through transitional and permanent housing and supportive or assisted services, or both; and
- (2) Develop and test innovative solutions to prevent and end homelessness in the State.

**§346-C Administration.** (a) The office shall be headed by the governor's coordinator on homelessness, appointed pursuant to section 346-381.5, for the proper administration and enforcement of this subpart.

(b) The coordinator shall report directly to the governor and appoint staff as may be necessary.

(c) The employees of the office shall be appointed without regard to chapter 76.

**§346-D Duties and responsibilities.** The office shall:

- (1) Identify and address gaps in the homeless service system by:
  - (A) Developing a standard strategy for coordinated entry, needs assessment, and allocation of services and housing types to create pathways to permanent assisted and independent housing;
  - (B) Working with state departments and agencies to develop and maintain multi-year strategic and tactical plans and road maps as a part of the Hawaii interagency council on homelessness' unified ten-year statewide plan;
  - (C) Coordinating matters relating to homelessness and affordable housing between state and county agencies and private entities; and
  - (D) Developing and testing innovative solutions to prevent and end homelessness through collaboration with appropriate agencies;
- (2) Provide administrative support for the Hawaii interagency council on homelessness in developing the council's unified ten-year statewide plan to address homelessness in all counties of the State; and
- (3) Establish and maintain a statewide homelessness and housing data clearinghouse, which may include information on persons experiencing homelessness and available services, shelters, and housing.

**§346-E Annual report.** The coordinator shall submit an annual progress report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session. The report shall include:

- (1) Performance metrics relating to reducing the number of persons experiencing homelessness in the State;
- (2) Performance metrics relating to housing and services inventory gaps, including but not limited to the number of persons experiencing homelessness served and placed into permanent housing and the cost per person served; and
- (3) Performance metrics to evaluate the State's performance on homeless services, housing, care coordination, and other needed services to end homelessness in the State."

SECTION 3. Chapter 346, part XVIII, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending its title to read as follows:

**"~~[[[PART XVIII.]] HAWAII INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON] STATEWIDE HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SOLUTIONS"~~**

SECTION 4. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by designating sections 346-381, 346-381.5, 346-382, and 346-383 under part XVIII as subpart A and inserting a title before section 346-381 to read as follows:

**"A. Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness"**

SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$50,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for

fiscal year 2022-2023 for the administration of the statewide office on homelessness and housing solutions; provided that:

- (1) Each county may provide support for programs within its county; and
- (2) Five full-time equivalent (5.0 FTE) permanent positions shall be established to carry out the objectives of the statewide office on homelessness and housing solutions established by section 3 of this Act.

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

SECTION 6. In codifying the new sections added by section 3 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating the new sections in this Act.

SECTION 7. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect upon its approval; provided that section 5 shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

(Approved July 7, 2022.)