

ACT 287

H.B. NO. 705

A Bill for an Act Relating to the Executive Office on Aging.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that low-income subsidy programs, including medicare, medicaid, and medicare savings programs such as medicare part D extra help, can help reduce out-of-pocket costs for individuals with limited income by offsetting their medical and prescription drug costs, such as premiums, deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, and lifetime late enrollment penalties. The legislature further finds that although individuals with low income, those who speak English as a second language, or those who live in rural areas may qualify for these programs, they may have no or limited access to the benefits, as they may not be aware of or need assistance with the application or eligibility renewal process.

The legislature further finds that the executive office on aging of the department of health provides free information and one-on-one counseling on medicare. Since 2022, the executive office on aging has been receiving a significantly higher volume of referrals from med-QUEST to assist uninsured or

underinsured individuals who are losing their medicaid eligibility and need to find other health coverage. The overflow and referrals are made to community partners within forty-eight hours to help with food, housing, utilities, employment, and other needs.

The legislature also finds that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the med-QUEST division of the department of human services paused disenrollments based on eligibility issues and all medicaid members received continuous uninterrupted coverage through March 2023, regardless of their change in eligibility. Following the 2023 Maui wildfires, the med-QUEST division again paused all eligibility disenrollments statewide until the end of 2023. However, the med-QUEST division has resumed its annual eligibility redetermination process, and therefore, people have been or will be receiving notices and forms to renew their coverage.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Establish within the executive office on aging a medi-medi project to assist underserved populations in the State who may qualify for various low-income subsidy programs to gain access to their benefits;
- (2) Appropriate funds to the executive office on aging for staff and operating expenses related to administering the medi-medi project; and
- (3) Require and appropriate funds for the executive office on aging to develop a one-year pilot project to make available the medi-medi project to kupuna and families living in a disadvantaged community, specifically the Kalihi valley catchment areas.

SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the advocacy, education, and outreach section of the executive office on aging a medi-medi project to assist older adults, medicare beneficiaries, individuals with disabilities, and other underserved populations who may qualify for various low-income subsidy programs, including medicare, medicaid, and medicare savings programs such as medicare part D extra help, to gain access to their benefits.

(b) The medi-medi project shall:

- (1) Develop and implement a community outreach program;
- (2) Streamline the application process for various low-income subsidy programs; and
- (3) Provide referrals and assistance to other low-income programs.

(c) The executive office on aging shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations regarding the medi-medi project, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$121,016 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the executive office on aging, to be expended as follows:

- (1) \$71,016 for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to implement and administer the medi-medi project; and
- (2) \$50,000 for operating expenses, including education and outreach.

The sums appropriated shall be expended by the executive office on aging for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. (a) The legislature finds that the medi-medi project will be able to supplement programs that provide health assessments and wraparound support to kupuna and their families. Additionally, by providing a medi-medi project to kupuna and their families in impoverished communities, the medi-medi project can be expanded to these populations to serve disparate populations living in persistent poverty who are potentially eligible or are enrolled in Medicaid.

The purpose of this section is to require and appropriate funds for the executive office on aging to develop a one-year pilot project to provide the medi-medi project to kupuna and families living in a disadvantaged community, specifically the Kalihi valley catchment areas.

(b) The executive office on aging shall develop a one-year pilot project to provide the medi-medi project to kupuna and families living in a disadvantaged community, specifically the Kalihi valley catchment areas.

(c) The executive office on aging shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations regarding the pilot project, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2027.

SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 for the executive office on aging to develop a pilot project to provide the medi-medi project to kupuna and families living in a disadvantaged community, specifically the Kalihi valley catchment areas.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the executive office on aging for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Approved July 3, 2025.)