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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO RURAL AREAS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The 2010 Census results determined that Oahu no  
2 longer contains any areas that federally qualify as rural. This  
3 endangers Kahuku medical center's designation as a critical  
4 access hospital and disqualifies all communities on Oahu from  
5 participating in federal rural programs. Since 2010, rural  
6 communities in Hawaii have qualified for \$1,890,000 in federal  
7 grants from the Health Resources and Services Administration's  
8 Office of Rural Health Policy alone, with about half going to  
9 Oahu. With the release of the latest census figures,  
10 communities on Oahu no longer qualify for these and other  
11 federal programs.

12           While the federal definitions of rural will keep some  
13 communities from participating in federal programs, there are  
14 several federal programs that recognize state definitions of  
15 rural. The State of New Jersey, which has no areas within its  
16 state that meet any of the federal definitions of rural, still  
17 maintains a State Office of Rural Health and has eight areas  
18 that qualify as rural for federal programs due to the enactment



1 by the state of a definition for rural. New Jersey maintains  
2 that if a county's population density is below eight hundred  
3 people per square mile, the area is considered rural. Several  
4 states have rural definitions in order to protect and maintain  
5 services to remote communities within their state.

6 The purpose of this Act is to establish a definition of  
7 rural that would protect existing programs in remote areas of  
8 the State, such as the critical access hospital program in  
9 Kahuku, and expand opportunities for other communities that are  
10 perceived as rural within the State but no longer meet federal  
11 definitions to qualify as such.

12 SECTION 2. Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended by adding a  
13 new chapter to be appropriately designated and to read as  
14 follows:

15 **"CHAPTER**

16 **DESIGNATION OF RURAL AREAS FOR FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

17 § -1 **Rural areas and federal programs.** (a) The term  
18 "rural" under this section shall be strictly used to determine  
19 if an area qualifies for a federal program that requires that an  
20 area be defined or designated as rural under state or federal  
21 law. This section does not connote any land use functions for  
22 the area so designated or in any way affect the use or



1 definition of rural districts established pursuant to section  
2 205-2.

3 (b) An area that qualifies as rural pursuant to a federal  
4 definition shall be considered rural by the State for purposes  
5 of this section only.

6 (c) If an area does not qualify as rural pursuant to a  
7 federal definition, the area may use the following definitions  
8 for determining its rural status for the purposes of a federal  
9 program that accepts state definitions:

- 10 (1) Any island with a population density of fewer than  
11 five hundred people per square mile shall be  
12 considered rural; and
- 13 (2) If an island's population density exceeds five hundred  
14 people per square mile, an area within the island  
15 shall be considered rural if it is within a zip code  
16 tabulation area with a population density below eight  
17 hundred people per square mile as determined by the  
18 population of the last official census and using the  
19 entire zip code tabulation area as determined by the  
20 United States Census Bureau."

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1 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

Rural Areas; Federal Programs

**Description:**

Creates a state definition for a rural area for purposes of federal programs only so that certain areas that would not otherwise be considered rural pursuant to a federal definition will be eligible for federal funds designated for rural areas. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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

