
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE HAWAII OPIOID
INITIATIVE TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF
LIMITED ACCESS TO PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES FOR
OPIOID AND OTHER SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS.

1 WHEREAS, opioids are a class of drugs that include the
2 illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and
3 prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone, hydrocodone,
4 codeine, and morphine; and

5
6 WHEREAS, while opioids are generally safe when taken for a
7 short period of time as prescribed by a physician, regular use
8 of opioid pain killers, even as prescribed by a physician, can
9 lead to dependence; and

10
11 WHEREAS, because opioid pain relievers produce euphoria in
12 addition to pain relief, they are prone to misuse and can easily
13 lead to overdoses and deaths; and

14
15 WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
16 formally declared an opioid epidemic in 2011; and

17
18 WHEREAS, according to the American Society of Addiction
19 Medicine, more than 2,500,000 Americans have an opioid use
20 disorder; and

21
22 WHEREAS, the opioid epidemic is the deadliest drug crisis
23 in United States history, claiming more than 200,000 lives, or
24 more than three times the number of United States military
25 deaths in the Vietnam War; and

26
27 WHEREAS, in 2016 alone, drug overdoses claimed more lives
28 than motor vehicle accidents or gun violence, and every three



1 weeks the opioid epidemic causes about the same number of deaths
2 as occurred in the September 11, 2001, terrorism attacks; and
3

4 WHEREAS, Hawaii is also experiencing the effects of the
5 opioid epidemic, with two hundred seventy-five individuals dying
6 from opioid overdoses between 2012 and 2016 and about two
7 thousand more suffering from nonfatal overdoses; and
8

9 WHEREAS, all substance use disorders including opioid use
10 disorders are understood to be chronic illnesses that require a
11 broad spectrum of treatment interventions; and
12

13 WHEREAS, the American Society of Addiction Medicine
14 provides a framework for determining levels of care for
15 substance use disorders across six dimensions of functioning and
16 that this framework is an industry standard; and
17

18 WHEREAS, the Department of Health has initiated a
19 comprehensive opioid and substance abuse action plan that
20 follows a policy framework and includes stakeholders from a
21 broad array of the community, and that the framework has six
22 workgroups that review and assess the status of the substance
23 abuse prevention and treatment care system and how to improve
24 access and effectiveness; and
25

26 WHEREAS, section 321-193, Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires
27 in part that the Department of Health shall:
28

- 29 (1) Coordinate all substance abuse programs including
30 rehabilitation, treatment, education, research and
31 prevention activities;
32
- 33 (2) Prepare, administer, and supervise the implementation
34 of a state plan for substance abuse which may consist
35 of a plan for alcohol abuse prevention and a plan for
36 drug abuse prevention;
37
- 38 (3) Identify all funds, programs, and resources available
39 in the State, public and private, and from the federal
40 government which are being used or may be used to
41 support substance abuse prevention, rehabilitation,
42 treatment, education, and research activities; and
43



- 1 (4) Encourage and coordinate the involvement of private
2 and public agencies in the assessment of substance
3 abuse problems, needs, and resources; and
4

5 WHEREAS, the Legislature seeks to evaluate the current
6 substance abuse system of care in relationship to:
7

- 8 (1) Specific opioid and other substance abuse prevention
9 and treatment services or providers that could be
10 covered under current healthcare plans;
11
12 (2) The extent of the coverage currently available;
13
14 (3) Target groups that would benefit from expanded or
15 targeted coverage under healthcare plans;
16
17 (4) Limits on utilization, if any; and
18
19 (5) Standards of care; and
20

21 WHEREAS, the Legislature believes that sufficient health
22 insurance coverage specifically for persons suffering from
23 substance abuse disorders will prevent the loss of precious
24 lives, ensure that those persons receive needed treatment, and
25 help to eradicate the current epidemic of opioid overdoses in
26 Hawaii; and
27

28 WHEREAS, the Department of Health in partnership with other
29 stakeholders involved in the opioid plan is best positioned to
30 continue efforts to examine and report to the Legislature:
31

- 32 (1) The extent to which opioid and other substance use
33 disorder treatment or services are generally utilized
34 by a significant portion of the population;
35
36 (2) The extent to which insurance coverage for these
37 services are already generally available;
38
39 (3) If coverage is not generally available, the extent to
40 which the lack of coverage results in persons being
41 unable to obtain necessary health care treatment; and
42
43 (4) If the coverage is not generally available, the extent
44 to which the lack of coverage results in unreasonable



1 financial hardship on those persons needing treatment,
2 and on other components of the social and medical care
3 system such as emergency departments; and
4

5 WHEREAS, anecdotal evidence suggests that patients
6 currently face a variety of gaps and barriers when seeking
7 insurance coverage for opioid and other substance dependence
8 treatment; and
9

10 WHEREAS, the Legislature is concerned that these gaps and
11 barriers may prevent patients from receiving necessary opioid
12 and other substance abuse treatment, resulting in those patients
13 relapsing and suffering fatal or near fatal overdoses; and
14

15 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Opioid Initiative found that, in
16 addition to a growing opioid crisis, the State continues to
17 struggle with the negative impacts of other substance abuse
18 problems, including methamphetamine, alcohol, cannabis and
19 tobacco, resulting in high cost to the emergency medical care
20 system; and
21

22 WHEREAS, the high medical costs from opioid related
23 overdoses and from the disabling effects of other substance use
24 disorders could be avoided if patients are able to receive
25 sufficient drug treatment in a timely manner; now, therefore,
26

27 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
28 Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
29 of 2018, the Senate concurring, that the Department of Health,
30 through utilization of the current framework of the Hawaii
31 Opioid Initiative's working groups, is requested to conduct an
32 assessment and provide a report on:
33

34 (1) The extent to which substance use disorder treatment
35 or services are generally utilized by a significant
36 portion of the population;
37

38 (2) The extent to which insurance coverage for these
39 services are already generally available;
40

41 (3) If coverage is not generally available, the extent to
42 which the lack of coverage results in persons being
43 unable to obtain necessary health care treatment; and
44



1 (4) If the coverage is not generally available, the extent
2 to which the lack of coverage results in unreasonable
3 financial hardship on those persons needing treatment;
4 and
5

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
7 requested to submit findings and recommendations to the
8 Legislature, including any necessary legislation, twenty days
9 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2019; and
10

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
12 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Human
13 Services, Director of Public Safety, and the Insurance
14 Commissioner, who in turn is requested to transmit copies to
15 each insurer in the State that issues health insurance policies.
16
17
18

