
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WAIANAEO COAST COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CENTER EMERGENCY ROOM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Waianae Coast
2 Comprehensive Health Center (Center) was established in 1972 to
3 provide primary care services for the federally designated and
4 medically underserved Waianae coast with operating funds granted
5 through the department of health and human services.

6 The legislature further finds that today, as was true from
7 its establishment, the Center continues to fulfill its mission
8 as a community-owned and community-operated nonprofit medical
9 facility serving an ever expanding Waianae coast community of
10 some fifty thousand residents. The Center serves thirty-seven
11 thousand patients annually through its main center in Waianae,
12 satellite clinics in Waianae and Nanakuli, school-based sites in
13 Waianae and Nanakuli, and satellite clinics in Kapolei, Ewa, and
14 Waipahu. The majority of patients served are Native Hawaiian
15 (forty-seven per cent), followed by Asian & Other Pacific
16 Islanders (twenty-eight per cent). Sixty-five per cent of



1 patients are at one hundred per cent of the federal poverty
2 level or below; seven per cent are uninsured; and fifty-eight
3 per cent are receiving coverage under QUEST, the State's
4 medicaid program.

5 The vision of the founders of the Center, to offer
6 comprehensive health services, has guided the development of the
7 services and activities of the Center's patient-centered health
8 care home. The Center achieves its mission by not only serving
9 patients who seek services, but also by incorporating the goal
10 of improving the overall health status of the community it
11 serves.

12 Emergency medical services, while not a core service
13 supported by department funding, was identified by the community
14 as a vital service for the Waianae coast. The Center began
15 offering emergency medical services on a limited basis in 1976
16 through private funding. From 1986, with assistance from the
17 legislature, the Center's emergency room has been able to be
18 open twenty-four hours per day on a year-round basis. Subsidy
19 funding from the legislature has supported the Center's
20 emergency room in operating between the hours of midnight to



1 eight a.m., along with providing laboratory and imaging
2 services.

3 The Center's emergency room is one of the most heavily
4 utilized on Oahu, serving twelve thousand six hundred patients
5 through a total of 21,600 visits in 2017-2018. For the midnight
6 to eight a.m. period, there were 3,434 visits with fifty-nine
7 per cent being patients covered under medicaid and ninety-three
8 per cent being residents of the Waianae coast. The pathology
9 seen from midnight to eight a.m. averages one hundred seventy
10 with chest pain/congestive heart failure; three hundred twenty-
11 five in respiratory distress; six hundred forty with severe
12 signs or symptoms; two hundred in trauma; fifteen in labor; and
13 ninety patients presenting mental illness/substance abuse
14 issues.

15 The Center's participation and role in the statewide
16 Emergency Medical System is substantial. With recognition by
17 the State as a trauma support facility, the Center serves as a
18 safety net for the residents of the Waianae coast. The Center
19 is connected to the State Emergency Management System, which
20 connects all Hawaii hospitals and the emergency medical services
21 system. The Center's emergency room is rated as a Type II



1 facility (out of three types) for Hospital Capability for
2 Readiness. The Center's emergency room is used by the Honolulu
3 police department and child protective services. The Honolulu
4 police department brings individuals in custody to the emergency
5 room for medical care. Child protective services uses the
6 emergency room for pre-placement physical exams when children
7 are removed from their parents or guardians.

8 As the primary medical provider on the Waianae coast, the
9 Center fills a major role in providing health services to the
10 community, which allows the State to focus its limited resources
11 in other areas. The twenty-four-hour emergency services
12 provided by the Center addresses the unique challenges of the
13 community that are presented by being on the most western point
14 of Oahu, such as isolation caused by road closures, natural
15 disasters, and traffic; in addition, the Center addresses more
16 universal health challenges, such as the need to stabilize
17 trauma victims and the need to stabilize patients to avoid
18 hospitalization. Increased homelessness, economic conditions,
19 and behavioral health conditions have also increased the demand
20 for emergency medical services on the Waianae coast, but this



1 increase in demand has not been matched by an increase in State
2 funding.

3 The Center's operating costs for the midnight to eight a.m.
4 period was \$5,280,842 in 2017-2018. However, the funding level
5 the legislature has provided to the Center since 1986 to the
6 present has remained at \$1,468,000. The difference between
7 current legislative support provided through the department of
8 health and the actual cost to operate services between midnight
9 to eight a.m. is \$3,812,842.

10 There are many factors that contribute to the inability of
11 the Center to support itself financially, such as:

- 12 (1) The emergency department services a low-income,
13 uninsured, and underinsured population;
- 14 (2) The emergency department serves the large homeless
15 population on the Waianae coast;
- 16 (3) The economic base of the community is not able to
17 support medical services on a fee-for-service basis
18 and must absorb the cost of uninsured and underinsured
19 patients;
- 20 (4) Due to the Center's status as a federally qualified
21 health center, the Center is not allowed the benefit



1 of hospital-based emergency departments to bill an
2 emergency room facility fee for emergency patients
3 covered under the federal Medicaid, Medicare, and Tri-
4 care programs. Patients under these federal programs
5 make up seventy per cent of the Center's base;

6 (5) The State's uninsured funding is designed specifically
7 for uninsured primary care visits and does not cover
8 uninsured emergency room visits; and

9 (6) Other rural communities receive a large state subsidy
10 for emergency services through the state hospital
11 system, however, the Center does not get proportionate
12 support.

13 The legislature recognizes that a dependable, multi-year
14 financial commitment by the State in supporting emergency
15 medical services at the Center is the most effective way to
16 ensure that residents throughout the Waianae coast receive
17 appropriate medical care and that the community is served during
18 a disaster. The legislature further recognizes that failure to
19 increase funding to the Center to bring funding levels in line
20 with increased demands for services may result in the Center



1 having to reduce hours of vital services to the Waianae coast
2 community.

3 The purpose of this Act is to assist the Center in
4 continuing twenty-four-hour year-round emergency room services
5 to residents of the Waianae coast to ensure emergency medical
6 and disaster-related response services are available for the
7 fifty thousand residents of the Waianae coast.

8 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
10 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2019-2020 and the
11 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
12 2020-2021 to the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center for
13 operation of its twenty-four-hour emergency room.

14 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
15 of health for the purposes of this Act.

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



Report Title:

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center for operation of its twenty-four-hour emergency room.
(HB614 HD1)

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