
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many Hawaii
2 residents are unable to obtain timely and appropriate health
3 care and behavioral health care due to shortages of primary,
4 specialty, and behavioral health care providers. Vulnerable
5 residents, including the elderly, and rural residents experience
6 even greater barriers to health care provider access. These
7 barriers include issues relating to fixed or limited financial
8 resources, lack of physical mobility or other disabilities,
9 cognitive impairment, transportation, and a lack of readily
10 accessible physicians and other health care providers.

11 Telehealth is a viable solution to maximize existing local
12 resources and increase patient convenience and compliance.
13 However, the best available data indicates that the use of
14 telehealth is limited in the State. No more than fifteen per
15 cent of practicing providers in the State report a telehealth
16 experience, even though the State has some of the most
17 progressive telehealth laws in the nation.



1 Preliminary findings from the 2017 State Telehealth Summit
2 confirm that provider comfort and patient expectations are the
3 most significant barriers to greater telehealth adoption.
4 Department of health research, including direct observation of
5 strong telehealth programs in other jurisdictions, reveals that
6 staff support is needed to ensure that both the patient and
7 technology are situated correctly for a telehealth encounter.
8 Ideally, staff support should be situated at both the health
9 care provider's and the patient's locations. However, support
10 staff for the patient is critical when the patient is in a non-
11 traditional health care setting, including a home, community
12 center, or school.

13 The legislature further finds that establishing a
14 telehealth pilot project will help provide the State's health
15 care providers and patients the benefits of telehealth, increase
16 provider adoption of telehealth, support health care workforce
17 development related to telehealth, and evaluate the clinical and
18 administrative efficacy of various telehealth delivery models.
19 The legislature notes that establishing a rural health care
20 pilot project to pay an availability fee to eligible health care
21 providers servicing rural areas will help encourage providers to



1 prioritize these rural areas. In turn, an increase in provider
2 prioritization of these rural areas will increase rural
3 residents' access to previously less-than-accessible medical
4 specialties.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish and
6 fund telehealth and rural health care pilot projects.

7 SECTION 2. (a) The department of health shall implement a
8 telehealth pilot project.

9 (b) The telehealth pilot project shall:

- 10 (1) Assist residents at two distinct project sites, both
11 of which shall have a medically underserved area
12 designation by the Health Resources and Services
13 Administration of the United States Department of
14 Health and Human Services; provided that one site
15 shall be located in a county with a population of less
16 than five hundred thousand and the other site shall be
17 located in a county with a population of more than
18 five hundred thousand;
- 19 (2) Utilize telehealth as the primary means to deliver
20 health care; and



1 (3) Include at least one federally-qualified health center
2 or rural health clinic in each project site.

3 (c) Within six months of the exhaustion of all telehealth
4 pilot project funds, the department of health shall make
5 available to the public an evaluation report on the telehealth
6 pilot project's outcomes, including the quality of care, patient
7 satisfaction, training and workforce development issues, and the
8 financial sustainability of telehealth activities.

9 SECTION 3. (a) The department of health shall implement
10 and administer a rural health care pilot project.

11 (b) The rural health care pilot project shall:

12 (1) Assist residents in three distinct rural areas, one
13 each on the islands of Maui, Molokai, and Lanai;
14 provided that the area selected on the island of Maui
15 shall be in the Hana district;

16 (2) Pay a \$250 availability fee to each contracted
17 licensed physician or nurse practitioner providing
18 health care services in one or more of the areas
19 selected pursuant to paragraph (1); provided that each
20 physician or nurse practitioner shall practice in a
21 specialty that is difficult for rural residents to



1 access, including but not limited to cardiology,
2 gastroenterology, endocrinology, dermatology,
3 nephrology, and psychiatry; provided further that the
4 availability fee shall be separate from, and in
5 addition to, any charges billed by the physician or
6 nurse practitioner; and

7 (3) Reimburse each contracted physician or nurse
8 practitioner for any costs, including airfare, lodging
9 costs, and a per diem, that the physician or nurse
10 practitioner deems necessary to provide in-person
11 health care services to patients in the areas selected
12 pursuant to paragraph (1).

13 (c) Within six months of the exhaustion of all rural
14 health care pilot project funds, the department of health shall
15 submit to the legislature an evaluation report on the rural
16 health care pilot project's outcomes, including the quality of
17 care, patient satisfaction, training and workforce development
18 issues, the financial sustainability of the pilot project, and
19 any proposed legislation.

20 (d) The department of health shall contract with eligible
21 physicians and hospitals, including but not limited to those



1 within the networks of Hawaii Pacific Health, The Queen's Health
2 Systems, and Kaiser Permanente, to carry out the rural health
3 care pilot project.

4 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$100,000 or so much
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the
7 telehealth pilot project established pursuant to section 2 of
8 this Act.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 health for the purposes of section 2 of this Act.

11 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$100,000 or so much
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the
14 rural health care pilot project established pursuant to section
15 3 of this Act.

16 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
17 health for the purposes of section 3 of this Act.

18 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.



Report Title:

DOH; Telehealth; Rural Health Care; Pilot Projects;
Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Health to implement a telehealth pilot project and publish an evaluation report on the telehealth pilot project outcomes. Requires the Department to implement and administer a rural health care pilot project to provide physicians and nurse practitioners serving selected rural areas with an availability fee and reimbursements for certain expenses and submit to the Legislature an evaluation report on the rural health care pilot project outcomes. Appropriates funds to support the pilot projects. (CD1)

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