

JAN 25 2023

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

**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. Additionally,



1 resident kupuna or their caregivers who may not have access to  
2 broadband internet, audiovisual technology, or other resources  
3 available to attend telehealth appointments and connect to  
4 health care providers offering telehealth services may miss  
5 critical health care appointments.

6 The legislature notes that establishing a kupuna rural  
7 health care pilot program in Hawaii county will help encourage  
8 providers to prioritize access to health care for residents who  
9 require services at their residence or who require ground  
10 transportation to in-person services. In turn, an increase in  
11 provider prioritization of these rural areas will increase rural  
12 residents' access to previously less-than-accessible medical  
13 specialties.

14 The purpose of this Act is to establish a temporary kupuna  
15 rural health care pilot program in Hawaii county.

16 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department  
17 of health's executive office on aging the kupuna rural health  
18 care pilot program, which shall be a two-year pilot program to  
19 improve access to health care for kupuna in rural areas of  
20 Hawaii county.

21 (b) The kupuna rural health care pilot program shall:



- 1           (1) Expand access to health care providers, including  
2           telehealth services and in-person services, for  
3           residents in rural areas of Hawaii county;
- 4           (2) Expand and improve telehealth and broadband internet  
5           resources through the utilization of federal broadband  
6           grant funding, including:
  - 7           (A) Remote audiovisual training for patients or their  
8           family member caregivers to operate audiovisual  
9           technology; and
  - 10          (B) Referrals to resources for the purchase of  
11          audiovisual equipment used for telehealth  
12          services;
- 13          (3) Establish and administer a home visit program to fund  
14          health care providers, including physicians, nurse  
15          practitioners, or registered nurses, for any costs  
16          that the provider deems necessary to provide in-person  
17          health care services to a patient at the patient's  
18          home; and
- 19          (4) Establish and administer a medical ground  
20          transportation service to provide patients with



1           reliable transportation to in-person health care  
2           services.

3           (c) The executive office on aging may consult with any  
4 public or private entity to carry out its duties under contract  
5 with and the pilot program established pursuant to this Act.

6           (d) The executive office on aging shall submit an interim  
7 report on the kupuna rural health care program in Hawaii county,  
8 to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the  
9 convening of the regular session of 2024. The report shall  
10 include:

- 11           (1) Data on the number of program users;
- 12           (2) The number of medical provider home visits;
- 13           (3) The comparison of costs, including:
  - 14               (A) Costs associated with elders who needed critical
  - 15               (reactive) care in the past; and
  - 16               (B) Reductions associated with preventative care to
  - 17               preempt critical medical situations; and
- 18           (4) The feasibility of expanding the program statewide to
- 19           counties with a population of less than two hundred
- 20           fifty thousand.



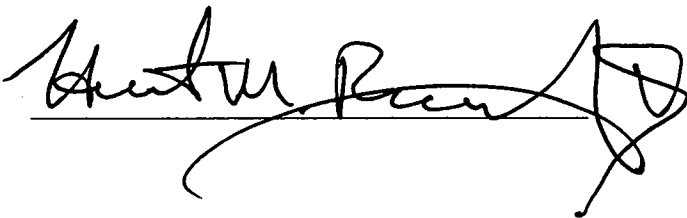
1 (e) Within two years of the pilot program's completion,  
 2 the executive office on aging shall submit a report of its  
 3 progress on the expansion of broadband internet access, to the  
 4 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
 5 the regular session of 2026.

6 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
 7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
 8 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
 9 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
 10 year 2024-2025 as a grant-in-aid to the Hawaii state rural  
 11 health association to carry out the kupuna rural health care  
 12 pilot program in Hawaii county established under section 2 of  
 13 this Act.

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

16 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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INTRODUCED BY: 



# S.B. NO. 1238

**Report Title:**

Department of Health; Executive Office on Aging; Kupuna Rural Health Care Pilot Program; Grant-in-Aid; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes the Kupuna Rural Health Care Pilot Program within the Executive Office on Aging of the Department of Health to improve access to care in rural areas of Hawaii County and expand broadband internet access, provide at-home visits, and ground transportation for in-person health care services. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

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

