

JAN 20 2023

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that social isolation and
2 loneliness are intimately linked to poor health. Data from
3 March 2020 show that significantly more people reported negative
4 mental health effects while sheltering in place due to
5 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) than those not sheltering in
6 place. Physical isolation and loneliness during COVID-19 may
7 present specific health risks for households containing
8 adolescents and older adults in particular.

9 The legislature further finds that the current behavioral
10 health crisis disproportionately affects residents in
11 underserved rural communities, such as the Ka'ū district in the
12 county of Hawai'i. For residents in Ka'ū, seeking care requires
13 traveling approximately seventy miles to Kona or fifty miles to
14 Hilo, with few options for care within immediate reach. In
15 addition to this physical barrier, little privacy and
16 stigmatization of behavioral health within small tight-knit
17 communities further deters residents from seeking care.



1 The legislature further finds that the county of Hawai'i is
2 facing a severe behavioral health crisis. Between 2018 and
3 2022, the department of health's behavioral health services
4 administration reported 3,517 discharges related to mental
5 health disorders and 7,416 discharges related to substance
6 abuse. These statistics represent only those individuals who
7 sought care. Estimates for the number of individuals in the
8 county suffering from behavioral health issues are nearly double
9 those reported.

10 The legislature further finds that rural health clinics
11 serve an essential role in underserved communities, including
12 Ka'u. Rural health clinics address the dearth of physicians
13 serving medicare beneficiaries in rural areas, increasing
14 availability of and access to medically necessary face-to-face
15 primary health services performed by rural health clinic
16 practitioners, including physicians, nurse practitioners,
17 physician assistants, certified nurse midwives, clinical
18 psychologists, and social workers.

19 The purpose of this Act is to require the Hawaii health
20 systems corporation to partner with a nonprofit organization in
21 the Ka'u district in the county of Hawai'i to conduct a needs



1 assessment to determine the demand for and access to urgent care
2 and outpatient behavioral health services in Ka'ū.

3 SECTION 2. (a) The Hawaii health systems corporation
4 shall partner with a nonprofit organization whose mission is to
5 preserve access to quality health care in rural communities in
6 the Ka'ū district in the county of Hawai'i, such as the Ka'ū Rural
7 Health Community Association, Inc., to conduct a needs
8 assessment to determine the demand for and access to urgent care
9 and outpatient behavioral health services in Ka'ū.

10 (b) The Hawaii health systems corporation shall submit a
11 report of its findings and recommendations, including any
12 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
13 days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2024.

14 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DKR', is written over a horizontal line.

S.B. NO. 754

Report Title:

Behavioral Health; Hawaii Health Systems Corporation; Hawaii County; Kau District; Needs Assessment; Report

Description:

Requires the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to partner with a nonprofit organization in the Kau District in the County of Hawaii to conduct a needs assessment to determine the demand for and access to urgent care and outpatient behavioral health services in Kau. Requires a report to the Legislature.

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