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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that between 2020 and  
2 2021, Molokai and Lanai lost access to two air carriers, leaving  
3 both islands with a single air carrier available to the public  
4 for departures from each island. Since then, residents have  
5 been plagued with inconsistent and undependable air  
6 transportation services, including frequent and last-minute  
7 flight changes, cancellations, and lengthy delays. As rural  
8 communities, residents of Molokai and Lanai are medically  
9 underserved, which means that residents are routinely referred  
10 to providers on Maui or Oahu for medical care. Delays,  
11 cancellations, and flight changes may cause residents traveling  
12 for medical treatment to miss important and potentially  
13 life-saving treatments, including surgeries and chemotherapy  
14 treatments that were scheduled months earlier and may take weeks  
15 to months to reschedule.

16           The purpose of this Act is to establish a two-year  
17 essential rural medical air transport pilot project to make



1 chartered plane seats available to patients and medical insurers  
2 to consistently and dependably transport residents of certain  
3 medically underserved rural communities.

4 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department  
5 of health the essential rural medical air transport pilot  
6 project.

7 (b) The purpose of the pilot project shall be to provide  
8 residents in rural islands with increased access to medical  
9 care.

10 (c) The pilot project shall charter flights and:

11 (1) Allow insurance companies to reserve and pay for seats  
12 on those flights for:

13 (A) Insured individuals residing on a rural island to  
14 be transported to and from an urban island for  
15 medical and health care services, including  
16 appointments with medical providers; and

17 (B) The companions of insured individuals to  
18 accompany the insured individuals; and

19 (2) Allow companions of insured individuals to reserve and  
20 pay for seats on those flights to accompany the  
21 insured individuals.



1 (d) The pilot project shall seek reimbursement or payment  
2 from insurers to the maximum extent possible.

3 (e) Subject to available funds and demand, the pilot  
4 project shall attempt to offer at least roundtrip  
5 flights per week.

6 (f) The department of health shall consult with  
7 appointment schedulers, patient navigators, provider staff, and  
8 insurers to coordinate patient appointment times with flight  
9 times.

10 (g) The department of health may contract with a private  
11 entity to administer the pilot project.

12 (h) The department of health shall submit a report to the  
13 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
14 the regular session of 2026. The report shall contain:

15 (1) The expenses and revenues of the pilot project;

16 (2) The number of seats sold to:

17 (A) Insured individuals seeking transportation to  
18 obtain medical services;

19 (B) Companions of insured persons; and

20 (C) Other residents of a rural island,  
21 who used the pilot project;



- 1 (3) Any other relevant findings; and
- 2 (4) Recommendations about whether the pilot project should
- 3 be extended, amended, made permanent, or terminated,
- 4 and any proposed legislation.

5 (i) The pilot program shall cease to exist on June 30,  
6 2026.

7 (j) For the purpose of this Act:

8 "Rural island" means an island within the State that has a  
9 population of more than one thousand, but less than ten  
10 thousand.

11 "Urban island" means an island within the State that:

- 12 (1) Has a population of more than nine hundred thousand;
- 13 or
- 14 (2) Has a population of more than one hundred thousand but
- 15 less than one hundred eighty thousand.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall not be construed to limit or  
17 prevent any individual from obtaining transportation to another  
18 location for medical treatment or to reduce or limit any  
19 insurance reimbursement or coverage for those transportation  
20 costs.



1 SECTION 4. In accordance with section 9 of article VII, of  
 2 the Constitution of the State of Hawaii and sections 37-91 and  
 3 37-93, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined  
 4 that the appropriation contained in this Act will cause the  
 5 state general fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025  
 6 to be exceeded by \$ , or per cent. The reasons  
 7 for exceeding the general fund expenditure ceiling are that the  
 8 appropriation made in this Act is necessary to serve the public  
 9 interest and to meet the needs provided for by this Act.

10 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general  
 11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
 12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for  
 13 necessary positions and the other expenses of the essential  
 14 rural medical air transport pilot project.

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

17 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



# H.B. NO. 2544 H.D. 1

**Report Title:**

Essential Rural Medical Air Transport Pilot Project; DOH;  
Charter Flights; Appropriation; Expenditure Ceiling

**Description:**

Establishes within the Department of Health a 2-year pilot project to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural island residents with reliable transportation to medical care on urban islands. Appropriates funds. Sunsets 6/30/2026. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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

2024-1541 HB2544 HD1 HMSO

