
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that community health
2 workers connect rural, underserved communities with programs and
3 services that impact social determinants of health and address
4 factors such as access to health care, prevention, outreach, and
5 training. Often serving in rural, underserved communities,
6 community health workers spend a significant portion of their
7 time doing telehealth and behavioral health, outreach such as
8 assisting individuals to apply for medical insurance, providing
9 health education resources, and locating work opportunities.
10 Other community health workers may serve as translators,
11 assisting their communities to navigate health care and social
12 service systems.

13 In 2021, the legislature introduced Senate Bill No. 858,
14 Regular Session of 2021, serving as the first attempt to certify
15 all community health workers. However, concerns raised during
16 the legislative process deemed the certification process
17 premature. Subsequently, the legislature introduced Senate Bill



1 No. 2882, Regular Session of 2022 (S.B. No. 2882), which
2 proposed a community health worker certification program to
3 improve the quality of care and access to health care for
4 residents in the State, especially in rural areas. While
5 S.B. No. 2882 intended to recognize the important work community
6 health workers perform for the State, the measure did not pass.
7 However, the legislature adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution
8 No. 2, Regular Session of 2022, which requested the auditor to
9 conduct a sunrise review of the certification and regulation of
10 community health workers. Accordingly, the auditor conducted a
11 sunrise review of the certification and regulation of community
12 health workers in September 2022. The auditor found that
13 existing regulations under the Hawaii Regulatory Licensing
14 Reform Act require professions reasonably relating to health,
15 safety, or welfare of consumers to be subjected to state
16 oversight. Although the auditor noted that S.B. No. 2882 had an
17 intended benefit to the profession of community health workers,
18 regulation is not needed for consumer protection, as the types
19 of services provided by community health workers do not
20 reasonably endanger the health, safety, or welfare of those
21 benefiting from their services. Additionally, the auditor found



1 that there were no past or ongoing complaints against community
2 health workers or unreasonable barriers to entering the
3 profession. Therefore, the auditor determined that mandatory
4 statewide certification for community health workers would be
5 inconsistent with existing state policy relating to the
6 regulation of new professions and vocations.

7 The legislature further finds that there continues to be a
8 great need for community health workers, especially in rural and
9 underserved communities that do not have reliable access to
10 health education, resources, or job opportunities. As a
11 critical intermediary between residents and health care and
12 social services, community health workers have a unique
13 understanding of their community needs and accessibility to
14 services. Establishing a clear role, including major
15 responsibilities and scope of work, will allow community health
16 workers to continue their valuable work to communities
17 statewide.

18 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to establish a three-
19 year Ka'ū community health worker pilot program.

20 SECTION 2. (a) The department of health shall establish
21 and administer a three-year community health worker pilot



1 program in Ka‘ū, Hawai‘i county, to provide outreach, education,
2 training, and navigation to individuals residing in Ka‘ū and to
3 address social determinants of health, by a community health
4 worker.

5 (b) Community health workers participating in the Ka‘ū
6 community health worker pilot program may provide the following
7 services:

8 (1) Health education and outreach:

9 (A) Community health workers shall conduct health
10 education programs within the Ka‘ū community to
11 promote health awareness, disease prevention, and
12 healthy lifestyle practices; and

13 (B) Provide information on available health care
14 services, resources, and programs to community
15 members;

16 (2) Individual support and assistance:

17 (A) Community health workers shall offer assistance
18 to individuals in navigating the health care
19 system, including accessing health care
20 facilities, appointments, and follow-up care; and



1 (B) Provide guidance and support for individuals in
2 managing chronic conditions, medication
3 adherence, and lifestyle modifications for
4 improved health outcomes;

5 (3) Cultural competency and advocacy:

6 (A) Community health workers shall demonstrate
7 cultural sensitivity and competence in their
8 interactions with diverse populations within
9 their community; and

10 (B) Advocate for the health needs and concerns of
11 community members to health care providers,
12 institutions, and policymakers; and

13 (4) Data collection and reporting:

14 (A) Community health workers shall maintain accurate
15 records of educational activities and individual
16 interactions; and

17 (B) Submit periodic reports on community health
18 trends, needs, and program effectiveness to
19 relevant health authorities or agencies.

20 (c) The services of the pilot program pursuant to this
21 section shall be provided by community health workers who shall



1 be recruited, trained, assigned, and supervised by an entity
2 contracted by the department of health to organize and implement
3 the pilot program.

4 (d) The department of health shall enter into a contract
5 with a nonprofit organization to recruit, train, and supervise
6 community health workers and to oversee the pilot program;
7 provided that existing department of health personnel may be
8 assigned to fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities
9 of the pilot program. Any nonprofit organizations contracted
10 under this subsection shall have:

11 (1) A history of providing community empowerment, capacity
12 building, collaborative partnerships, and health
13 education to the Ka'ū community;

14 (2) The knowledge and experience necessary to provide
15 community health worker services to program
16 participants;

17 (3) A board of directors and staff team consisting of a
18 majority of residents currently residing in Ka'ū,
19 Hawai'i county; and

20 (4) The capacity to provide culturally competent training
21 and services.



1 (e) With the assistance of the nonprofit organization
2 contracted under subsection (d), the department of health shall
3 submit annual reports on the development and administration of
4 the Ka‘ū community health worker pilot program, including any
5 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
6 days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of 2025,
7 2026, and 2027. The report shall include a record of pilot
8 program activities and accomplishments, including:

- 9 (1) Outreach and training of community health workers; and
- 10 (2) Services provided to program participants by a
11 community health worker.

12 (f) The department of health shall submit a final report
13 on the Ka‘ū community health worker pilot program, including any
14 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
15 days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2028. The
16 report shall include:

- 17 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
18 accomplishments, including:
 - 19 (A) Outreach and training of community health
20 workers; and



1 (B) Services provided to program participants by a
2 community health worker; and

3 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the program
4 beyond three years.

5 (g) For the purposes of this section:

6 "Community health worker" means a frontline health worker
7 who is a trusted member of the community in which the community
8 health worker lives, is from the community, or who has an
9 unusually close understanding of the community served that
10 enables the community health worker to:

11 (1) Build trusted relationships;

12 (2) Serve as a liaison between health and social services
13 and the community;

14 (3) Facilitate access to services; and

15 (4) Improve the quality and cultural competence of service
16 delivery.

17 "Program participant" means a resident of Ka'ū, Hawai'i
18 county, who requests services by a community health worker
19 through the Ka'ū community health worker pilot program.

20 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
21 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,



1 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the
 2 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,
 3 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
 4 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
 5 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes
 6 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
 7 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
 8 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
 9 ceiling are that:

- 10 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
- 11 serve the public interest; and
- 12 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
- 13 addressed by this Act.

14 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
 15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 16 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for
 17 the Ka'ū community health worker pilot program, established
 18 pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

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

21 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.



Report Title:

DOH; Community Health Workers; Pilot Program; Preventative Services; Social Determinants of Health; Hawaii County; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Health to administer a three-year pilot program to authorize community health workers to provide outreach, education, training, and navigation of services to address the social determinants of health in Kau, Hawaii County. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation. (SD1)

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