
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State of Hawaii
2 is ranked fourth in the nation for the highest rates of
3 homelessness according to 2022 Homeless Counts by State. The
4 2023 Oahu Point in Time Count reported that among homeless
5 persons: thirty-six per cent were chronically homeless;
6 thirty-one per cent suffer from substance abuse problems;
7 thirty-nine per cent reported a mental illness; sixty-two per
8 cent reported one or more disabling conditions; and twenty-eight
9 per cent reported a physical, developmental, or other
10 disability.

11 The legislature further finds that homeless individuals
12 suffering from behavioral health conditions are often high users
13 of the hospital emergency departments, which costs the State's
14 health system millions of dollars each year for emergency
15 ambulance transportation and emergency mental health
16 evaluations. Providing appropriate care for these individuals
17 requires clinical expertise to evaluate their physical and



1 mental impairments and to assist in overcoming barriers to
2 access proper medical treatment and resources to meet the basic
3 needs like food, hygiene, safety, and transportation.

4 "Triage" is recognized as an evidence-based practice to end
5 the cycle of homelessness and provides an assessment of a
6 person's disorders, need for medication-assisted detoxification,
7 and timely psychiatric treatment. The lack of a triage service
8 has been a major gap in the State's system of behavioral health
9 care for homeless persons and others having mental illness or
10 substance abuse issues. When a person is ready and seeking
11 treatment, they should be able to access it immediately. This
12 is particularly true for those who suffer from substance use
13 disorders for whom the window of contemplation about the
14 benefits of treatment is often brief and fleeting. The safety
15 and constant supervision available in a triage center are a
16 stark contrast to the chaos and vulnerability individuals
17 experience on the street. Trauma-informed services in the
18 community foster active client participation and support, which
19 are critical to effective engagement in treatment and in patient
20 retention.



1 The legislature also finds that the 'Imi Ola Piha Homeless
2 Triage Center, piloted by the Institute for Human Services and
3 operating since June 5, 2023, has been successful in moving
4 homeless from the street to permanent housing. Within six
5 months of operation, through collaborating with police, outreach
6 specialists, and other community providers, the eight-bed
7 service site has triaged over one hundred fifty referrals. Of
8 the eighty-three clients in intake, the Homeless Triage Center
9 has detoxed sixty-three clients and stabilized the mental
10 illness of thirty-five clients. The Homeless Triage Center has
11 also transitioned those detoxed and stabilized into housing or
12 shelter, enabling continued treatment in the community.

13 The successful pilot program can do more to reduce the cost
14 of restoring homeless persons to normalcy and independence.
15 According to Oahu's 2023 Point in Time Count, there are 1,602
16 homeless persons reporting substance abuse or mental health
17 issues. The average cost of detoxification per year is \$1,536
18 for outpatients and \$58,810 for residential patients, while the
19 costs for emergency transport and treatment total \$3,633 per
20 year. Saving 1,602 patients from outpatient rehab visits or



- 1 (1) Establish within the statewide office of homelessness
- 2 and housing solutions in the department of human
- 3 services a working group to develop a triage center
- 4 program that focuses on serving homeless individuals
- 5 having substance abuse issues or mental illness; and
- 6 (2) Appropriate funds to the department of human services.

7 SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the statewide
8 office of homelessness and housing solutions a working group to
9 develop a triage center program that focuses on serving homeless
10 individuals having substance abuse issues or mental illness.

11 (b) The triage center program shall provide:

- 12 (1) Access to emergency food, shelter, housing navigation,
- 13 and supportive services, twenty-four hours per day,
- 14 seven days per week;
- 15 (2) Case management services;
- 16 (3) Medical assessments;
- 17 (4) Substance abuse treatment and detoxification services;
- 18 (5) Behavioral health services; and
- 19 (6) Trauma-informed, cultural-based life skills groups for
- 20 shelter guests to maximize engagement and retention.
- 21 (c) The working group shall consist of the following



1 (6) Trauma-informed, cultural-based life skills groups for
2 shelter guests to maximize engagement and retention.

3 (c) The working group shall consist of the following
4 members:

5 (1) The governor's senior advisor for mental health and
6 the justice system, who shall serve as co-chair of the
7 working group;

8 (2) The governor's coordinator on homelessness, who shall
9 serve as co-chair of the working group;

10 (3) One representative of the judiciary;

11 (4) One representative from the department of health;

12 (5) One representative from the department of human
13 services;

14 (6) Two members who shall be appointed by the president of
15 the senate;

16 (7) Two members who shall be appointed by the speaker of
17 the house of representatives;

18 (8) A representative of Partners in Care, Oahu's Continuum
19 of Care, to be invited by the co-chairs of the working
20 group; and



1 (9) A representative of Bridging the Gap, Continuum of
2 Care of Hawaii Island, Maui, and Kauai, to be invited
3 by the co-chairs of the working group.

4 (d) The working group shall report its findings and
5 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
6 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
7 the regular session of 2025.

8 (e) The members of the working group shall serve without
9 compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses, including
10 travel expenses, necessary for the performance of their duties.

11 (f) No member of the working group shall be subject to
12 chapter 84, Hawaii Revised Statutes, solely because of the
13 member's participation in the working group.

14 (g) The working group shall cease to exist on .

15 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
16 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,
17 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the
18 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,
19 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
20 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
21 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes



1 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
2 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
3 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
4 ceiling are that:

5 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
6 serve the public interest; and

7 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
8 addressed by this Act.

9 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 to
12 implement the triage center program working group established
13 pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
15 human services for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

DHS; Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions;
Homeless Triage Center Program; Working Group; General Fund
Expenditure Ceiling Exceeded; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a homeless triage center program working group within the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions in the Department of Human Services. Declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2025. Makes an appropriation. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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