
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that thousands of Hawaii
2 residents have visual disabilities that hamper daily living and
3 may lead to isolation, limited productivity, loss of
4 independence, and lack of social integration. The department of
5 human services estimates that there are twelve thousand Hawaii
6 residents who are blind or have a significant visual impairment.
7 The legislature also finds that many blind or visually impaired
8 individuals live on Oahu where access to opportunities and
9 services are better organized and readily available compared to
10 the neighbor islands.

11 The legislature further finds that state and local support
12 services for blind or visually impaired individuals, including
13 training, adjustments to blindness services, and transportation
14 services, are provided through economies of scale, and
15 therefore, tend to benefit residents in populated areas as
16 compared to those in sparsely populated areas. As such,



1 approximately two thousand neighbor island residents who are
2 blind or visually impaired are left with the choice of either
3 moving to Oahu or living without the opportunity to have full
4 and integrated lives in their existing communities.

5 Accordingly, the legislature finds that there is a need for
6 a supplemental service program that provides additional support
7 services to blind and visually impaired individuals residing on
8 neighbor islands.

9 The purpose of this Act is to:

10 (1) Require the department of human services to:

11 (A) Establish a neighbor islands blind and visually
12 impaired service pilot program that supplements
13 existing statewide services by providing training
14 and other services to neighbor island residents
15 who are blind or visually impaired;

16 (B) Establish a neighbor islands blind and visually
17 impaired service pilot program working group and
18 submit a pilot program implementation plan to the
19 legislature before the Regular Session of 2024;
20 and



1 (C) Submit a report on the blind and visually
2 impaired service pilot program to the legislature
3 prior to the Regular Session of 2027; and

4 (2) Appropriate moneys to fund the establishment and
5 operation of the neighbor islands blind and visually
6 impaired service pilot program and working group.

7 SECTION 2. (a) The department of human services shall
8 establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service
9 pilot program that provides training and other services to blind
10 and visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor
11 islands.

12 (b) The pilot program shall provide peer-to-peer outreach,
13 sight loss adjustment, peer counseling support, and mobility
14 training to program participants, including:

15 (1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program
16 needs;

17 (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that
18 existing services are identified and used to the
19 maximum extent possible;

20 (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group
21 counseling;



1 (4) Access to and training for use of telecommunications
2 services to receive current news, weather alerts, and
3 other vital public information;

4 (5) Awareness development and training for use of
5 computers, smart phones, and other communications
6 devices;

7 (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;

8 (7) Orientation and mobility training;

9 (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed
10 benefits, services, and individual rights; and

11 (9) Other services, including peer support needed for
12 program participants to sustain independence and
13 social integration.

14 The services of the pilot program pursuant to this subsection
15 shall be provided by volunteers, who shall be recruited,
16 assigned, and supervised by the department or an entity
17 contracted by the department to organize and implement the pilot
18 program. All volunteers shall have the necessary
19 qualifications, be chosen based on experience and training, and
20 use training methods consistent with the structured discovery
21 approach used by the new visions program operated by the Ho'opono



1 services for the blind branch within the department's division
2 of vocational rehabilitation.

3 (c) The pilot program shall also provide program
4 participants with special needs transportation assistance. The
5 department shall work with neighbor island transportation
6 service providers and other individuals and entities to develop
7 a special needs transportation assistance service network to
8 serve program participants.

9 (d) Applications for participation in the pilot program
10 shall be submitted on a form furnished by the department. The
11 department shall establish procedures and requirements for
12 accepting program participants.

13 (e) The pilot program shall be authorized to extend and
14 supplement the existing services provided by the Ho'opono
15 services for the blind branch.

16 (f) The department may enter into a contract with a
17 nonprofit organization to recruit, train, and supervise
18 volunteer service corps members and to oversee the pilot
19 program, provided that existing department personnel may be
20 assigned to fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities



1 of the pilot program. Any nonprofit organization contracted
2 under this subsection shall have:

3 (1) The knowledge, experience, and qualifications
4 necessary to provide peer support services to program
5 participants;

6 (2) A management team, consisting of officers and
7 directors, of which a majority are blind or visually
8 impaired; and

9 (3) Membership chapters or organization subunits located
10 on the neighbor islands that will be served by the
11 pilot program.

12 (g) The department shall establish a neighbor islands
13 blind and visually impaired service pilot program working group
14 composed of neighbor island residents who are blind or visually
15 impaired to make recommendations regarding the establishment and
16 implementation of the pilot program. The department, in
17 collaboration with the working group, shall develop a written
18 implementation plan that includes a pilot program performance
19 period and program budget, and shall submit the plan, including
20 any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than



1 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
2 2024.

3 (h) The department shall submit a report of its findings
4 and recommendations pertaining to the neighbor islands blind and
5 visually impaired service pilot program to the legislature no
6 later than thirty days prior to the convening of the regular
7 session of 2027. The report shall include:

8 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
9 accomplishments;

10 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the program; and

11 (3) Any proposed legislation.

12 (i) The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter
13 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and prescribe forms necessary to
14 carry out the purposes of this Act.

15 (j) For purposes of this section:

16 "Department" means the department of human services.

17 "Neighbor island" means a county with a population less
18 than five hundred thousand.

19 "Pilot program" means the neighbor islands blind and
20 visually impaired service pilot program established pursuant to
21 this Act.



1 "Program participant" means a resident of a neighbor island
2 whose mobility or ability to live independently is substantially
3 limited due to loss of sight and who is participating in the
4 pilot program.

5 "Special needs transportation" means transportation
6 provided to program participants at times or for trips when
7 public transportation is not a reasonable option.

8 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
10 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and
11 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
12 year 2024-2025 to fund the establishment and operation of the
13 neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot
14 program and working group; provided that:

15 (1) The department of human services shall include funding
16 for the pilot program in its regular budget request
17 submitted in 2024; and

18 (2) Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall
19 be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion
20 of the base budget for any state or county agency



1 providing services for blind or visually impaired
2 persons.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
4 of human services for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on December 31,
6 2050, and shall be repealed on June 30, 2027.



Report Title:

Deaf and Blind Task Force; Department of Human Services; Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Ho'opono Services for the Blind Branch; Working Group; Implementation Plan; Appropriation

Description:

Require the Department of Human Services to: establish a Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program that supplements existing statewide services by providing training and other services to neighbor island residents who are blind or visually impaired; establish a Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program Working group and submit a pilot program implementation plan to the Legislature before the Regular Session of 2024; and submit a report on the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program to the legislature prior to the Regular Session of 2027. Appropriates funds. Effective 12/31/2050. (SD1)

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