

ACT 130

S.B. NO. 3235

A Bill for an Act Relating to Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that one in ten young adults who are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years, and at least one in thirty adolescents between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, experience some form of homelessness in which the young adult or adolescent is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian over the course of a year.

The legislature further finds that among homeless youth, sixty-nine per cent report mental health problems; thirty-three per cent have once been part of the foster care system; and fifty per cent have been in the juvenile justice system,

in jail or detention. Moreover, sixty-two per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth report being physically harmed while experiencing homelessness, while forty-seven per cent of non-LGBTQ youth reported being physically harmed while homeless.

The legislature also finds that runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to multiple threats, including having unmet basic food and shelter needs, untreated mental health disorders, substance use, significant disruption to their education, sexually transmitted diseases and human immunodeficiency virus infection, sexual exploitation, physical victimization, and suicide. As the consequences faced by homeless youth are vast, coordination among various agencies, including those responsible for the State's child welfare, education, health, human services, and juvenile justice systems, is required to protect the State's youth and ensure their safety.

The purpose of this Act is to establish an inter-agency safe spaces for youth pilot program to provide safe spaces in each county for youth experiencing homelessness.

SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department of human services for administrative purposes only a safe spaces for youth pilot program, which shall be an inter-agency initiative to provide safe spaces in each county for youth experiencing homelessness.

(b) The program shall collaborate with all departments of the State and its political subdivisions that offer services for the purpose of ensuring the well-being of youth in Hawaii, including the department of education, department of health, department of human services, department of public safety, and county police departments, to coordinate the identification of youth who are experiencing homelessness and placement of these youth at a shelter for homeless youth.

(c) The department of human services shall enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide shelters for homeless youth. Any nonprofit organization contracted under this subsection shall have the knowledge, experience, and qualifications, including licenses, necessary to operate a shelter for homeless youth.

(d) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, a shelter for homeless youth contracted under subsection (c) may admit a youth into the shelter's care for up to ninety days without the consent of the youth's parent or guardian.

(e) The department of human services shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations pertaining to the safe spaces for youth pilot program to the legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2025. The report shall include:

- (1) A record of pilot program activities and accomplishments;
- (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the program; and
- (3) Any proposed legislation.

(f) The department of human services shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(g) For the purposes of this Act:

“Shelter for homeless youth” means a facility that operates to receive youth twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and provide youth with services, including:

- (1) Overnight lodging and supervision;
- (2) Hot meals and hot showers;
- (3) Access to medical and behavioral health services; and
- (4) Education and employment support.

“Youth” means an individual who is at least fourteen years of age but under twenty-five years of age.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$600,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to fund the safe spaces for youth pilot program, including funding for one full time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position and administrative costs for the pilot program.

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

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022, and shall be repealed on June 30, 2025.

(Approved June 27, 2022.)