

ACT 102

H.B. NO. 2042

A Bill for an Act Relating to Mental Health.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that in the wake of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Hawaii's youth need additional mental health resources to strengthen organizational capacity and expand outreach services to target the most at-risk youth, including Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, who have reported some of the highest rates of negative mental health related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legislature also finds that the best approach to youth mental health wellness is community-based, which meets youth where they are. Additionally, youth mental, emotional, and behavioral health are just one aspect of wellness. Other factors include environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual health. These dimensions are interdependent and affect each other.

These youth mental health issues are a great concern for the State's public health and welfare. According to an analysis by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2021, nearly forty per cent of high school students reported experiencing poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and forty-four per cent reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in the last year.

The legislature further finds that the YMCA of Honolulu secured funding for a pilot program in 2023 that will screen four hundred fifty youth ages eleven through eighteen, enroll one hundred youth in a one-week prevention program, and register fifty youth in a thirteen-session intervention program. Also in 2023, the YMCA of Honolulu delivered mental health wellness programming through its intersession and summer programs, with results that showed that 81.2 per cent of youth became more aware of their mental health condition, including identifying moods, emotions, and their overall mental state; 72.6 per cent of youth gained a new coping skill; and 82.9 per cent of youth increased their positive support network.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to provide funding for the provision of youth mental health and wellness services to help address mental health challenges faced by youth in the State.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$900,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the child and adolescent mental health division of the department of health to contract for the provision of youth mental health and wellness services to address the mental health and wellness needs of youth in the State.

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

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

(Approved June 27, 2024.)