

ACT 107

H.B. NO. 1148

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 there is a severe shortage of mental health providers in the State. This shortage is due to a lack of appropriately educated individuals and high rates of turnover in the field, which is exacerbated by compassion fatigue, burnout, and inadequate preparation for mental health serving positions. The legislature therefore finds that the mental health provider shortage in the State addressed by this measure is a matter of statewide concern.

The legislature further finds that the university of Hawaii Windward community college, in collaboration with the Hawaii state hospital, has developed a mental health technician certificate of competence program. The coursework for the certificate program addresses the immediate and critical workforce needs of preparing potential employees and upskilling existing employees. These certificates are also a foundation to increasingly higher qualifications, as the initial certificate of competence opens a pathway to further training and development. A one-year certificate program currently under development will build on the skills developed by the existing mental health technician certificate of competence program by adding clinical skills and knowledge necessary to perform higher job requirements in more advanced clinical settings. The coursework can also be applied toward baccalaureate degrees. These programs help to grow the State's overall capacity to address the mental health challenges and needs of Hawaii's residents.

The mental health technician certificate of competence program consists of three approved courses, which provide a basic foundation in mental health knowledge in a short-term, focused program of study available in person and online. The asynchronous online courses can be offered to mental health workers

and students across the State, with Windward community college coordinating with other community colleges in the university of Hawaii system. In order for the program to be offered statewide, additional resources are needed to provide for key personnel and establish a scholarship program to increase access to the mental health technician certificate of competence program for individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or low-wage earners, and others interested in pursuing a career pathway in mental health.

The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to support the statewide expansion of the university of Hawaii Windward community college's mental health-related programs.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$210,150 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 to support the statewide expansion of the university of Hawaii Windward community college's mental health-related programs, to be expended as follows:

- (1) \$75,000 for the establishment of one temporary full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) faculty instructor position to develop and administer curriculum;
- (2) \$75,000 for the establishment of one temporary full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) faculty outreach position to onboard new cohorts, grant scholarships, and carry out any other necessary administrative tasks; and
- (3) \$60,150 for the establishment of a scholarship program, the granting of scholarships, and other necessary administrative costs.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

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

(Approved June 27, 2024.)