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 individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions may be particularly vulnerable in an emergency. Social isolation and loneliness are intimately linked to poor health, with data from March 2020 showing that significantly higher shares of people who are sheltering-in-place reported negative mental health effects resulting from worry or stress compared to those not sheltering-in-place. In particular, the legislature finds that physical isolation and loneliness during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic may present specific health risks for households with adolescents and older adults.

The legislature further finds that rural health clinics address inadequate supplies of physicians serving medicare beneficiaries in rural areas and increase availability of medically necessary, face-to-face primary health services and qualified preventative health services furnished by a rural health clinic practitioner, including physicians, nurse
practitioners, physical assistants, certified nurse-midwives, clinical psychologists, and social workers. In rural areas where there is little privacy in small, tight-knit communities, residents are dissuaded from seeking mental health service in fear of community condemnation that influences and further prejudices. The legislature finds that rural health clinics serve an essential role in underserviced communities such as a Kau, Hawai‘i island, enabling greater appointment availability for medicaid patients.

The purpose of the Act is to appropriate funding to the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to provide support for the expansion of the Kau rural health clinic to improve access to urgent care and outpatient behavior health services, thereby reducing the need for emergency services.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $700,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2021-2022 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to provide support for the expansion of the Kau rural health clinic to improve access to urgent care and outpatient
behavior health services, thereby reducing the need for emergency services.

The sums appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii health systems corporation for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.
Report Title:
Kau Hospital; Rural Health Clinic; Hawaii Health Systems
Corporation; Urgent Care; Behavioral Health Services;
Appropriation

Description:
Appropriates funds to the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to
expand the Kau Rural Health Clinic to improve access to urgent
care and outpatient behavioral health services.

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