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15 March 2022

House Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

Hearing Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual

Re: SB 2481, SD2, Relating to Youth Crisis Centers

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice-Chair Tam, and members of the Committee,

We are writing in **strong support** of SB 2481, SD2, relating to youth crisis centers. This

measure would establish the Youth Crisis Center Branch of the Office of Youth Services

and the position of Administrator of the Youth Crisis Branch of the Office of Youth

Services.

This bill would address and offer aid to the youth of Hawaiʻi who struggle with mental

health and abuse. Research shows that Native Hawaiians suffer from alarming rates of

negative mental health associated risk factors. Youth suicide ideation,

attempt and death rates are highest among Native Hawaiians. Furthermore, Native

Hawaiian keiki are overrepresented as victims of abuse and neglect, according to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. We believe this measure is a pivotal step in the effort to advance mental health and abuse victim support for Native Hawaiian youth. We applaud the legislature for recognizing that instances of crisis occurring amongst the State's most vulnerable youth are increasing, especially in communities having a high incidence of poverty; homelessness; crime; school truancy; school suspensions; runaways; physical and mental abuse; illegal drug use; juvenile crime; and crimes against youth, including sex trafficking. We agree that these communities lack sufficient resources and services to respond to the immediate needs of the youth at risk.

The Opportunity Youth Action Hui is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs.

We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth houselessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally-informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

**Please support SB 2481, SD2.**

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