

**OPPORTUNITY
YOUTH
ACTION HUI**

06 April 2022

House Committee on Finance

Hearing Time: 02:45 PM

Location: Videoconference

Re: SB 3235, SD1 HD1, Relating to Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program

Aloha e Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Yamashita, and members of the Committee:

We are writing in **strong support** of SB 3235, SD1 HD1, relating to the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program. This bill would establish the safe spaces for youth pilot program within the department of human services. It would require the program to collaborate with all state and county departments that offer services to ensure the well-being of youth in Hawai'i to coordinate the identification of youth who are experiencing homelessness and placement of these youth at a shelter for homeless youth. It would also require the department of human services to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide shelters for homeless youth. Lastly, it would require the department of human services to submit a report to the legislature before the regular session of 2025. Appropriates funds. Repeals 6/30/2025. Effective 7/1/2060.

This measure would contribute to the efforts of reducing the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians, especially youth, in disadvantageous and dangerous situations, such as homelessness. According to the Partners in Care 2020 O'ahu Point In Time Count (PIT), about **16%** of Hawai'i's homeless population were children. Furthermore, **51%** of the overall PIT Count identified Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander as either their only race or part of their multiracial background. We believe this bill is a pivotal step in providing critical and necessary resources to the Native Hawaiian community, as well as helping youth that are in stressful home or social situations by providing a place to feel safe, away from sources of trauma.

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 3235, SD1 HD1.