

February 1, 2024

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Hearing Time: 9:00 AM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 329

Re: SB2746, Relating to Public Safety

Aloha e Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi hui, we are writing in **strong support** of SB2746, relating to public safety. This bill will require and appropriate moneys for the provision of free voice communication services in the State’s youth and adult correctional facilities. It amends sources of funding for and imposes a limit on moneys retained in the victim information and notification system special fund. It appropriates moneys into and out of the automated victim information and notification special system fund. It declares that the appropriations exceed the state general fund expenditure ceiling for the fiscal year 2024-2025.

Incarceration can be an extremely isolating experience, and maintaining meaningful communication with loved ones is vital for the well-being of individuals within correctional facilities. The ability to communicate with family and friends not only provides emotional support but also plays a significant role in the successful reintegration of individuals into society upon release. It provides motivation for rehabilitation, reduces social isolation, provides practical reentry support, and fosters a sense of accountability and responsibility among incarcerated individuals.

This legislation not only recognizes the importance of communication but also addresses the financial barriers that currently hinder access to voice communication services for inmates. By requiring and appropriating funds for free voice communication services, SB2746 demonstrates a commitment to fairness and justice within our correctional system.

For youth involved in the criminal justice system, maintaining strong familial connections is especially critical. Youth-specific rehabilitative programs often emphasize family involvement as a key component, and effective communication programs ensure that families are kept informed and remain actively engaged in the rehabilitation process.

Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi 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 HB SB2746.**

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