

February 6, 2024

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs; and Senate Committee on Health and Homelessness

Hearing Time: 2:00PM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 325

Re: HB1595, Relating to Expungement

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs; and Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Health and Homelessness:

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi hui, we are writing in **strong support** of HB1595, relating to expungement. This bill creates a state-initiated process to expunge records of arrests and convictions pursuant to section 712-1249, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, at no cost to the record holder. This bill also requires the Hawai‘i Criminal Justice Data Center to submit biannual reports to the legislature until all eligible records are expunged.

This bill addresses a critical issue in our criminal justice system, providing a pathway for individuals with past convictions to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society successfully. Expunging criminal records can significantly reduce the barriers that many face when seeking employment, housing, and other opportunities, fostering a more equitable and just community.

Further, expunging records not only benefits individuals seeking a fresh start, but also contributes to the overall wellbeing of our communities. Research shows that individuals with expunged records are more likely to secure stable employment and housing, reducing the likelihood of recidivism. This, in turn, enhances public safety and fosters a sense of community rehabilitation.

By creating a state-initiated expungement process at no cost to the record holder, HB1595 recognizes the financial challenges that individuals with criminal records often face. Removing financial barriers to expungement ensures that all eligible individuals, regardless of their economic status, can access the benefits of a clean slate.

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 HB1595.**

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