

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: HB1663, Relating to Expungement of Criminal Records

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 HB1663, relating to controlled substances. This bill expands eligibility for, and automates, the expungement of conviction records if certain criteria are met. Beginning 12/1/2026, this bill requires the Attorney General to issue automatic expungement orders and the Judiciary to seal or remove information from publicly accessible databases.

HB1663 is a crucial step towards fostering rehabilitation, promoting fairness, and ensuring a more equitable and just society. Several states have similar “clean slate” laws. Pennsylvania, the first to institute an automatic record clearance legislation, has cleared over 45 million records since 2019. Issues with this program saw some individuals struggling to pay the required fees, and an increase in applications caused backlogs in processing however, taken alongside HB1595, which would eliminate fees from the expungement process, Hawai‘i is well on its way to proactively addressing these potential concerns.

The barriers attached to a criminal record are detrimental not only to the individual, but for employers, the workforce, and the economy as a whole. Studies have shown that individuals with an expunged record are significantly more likely to find stable employment, which not only benefits them personally but also contributes to the overall economic well-being of the community. Expungement improves housing prospects, opens doors to educational opportunities, and restores civil rights.

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 HB1663.**

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