

February 22, 2024

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Hearing Time: 2:00 PM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 325

Re: HB1601, Relating to Criminal Justice Reform

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi hui, we are writing in **strong support** of HB1601, relating to criminal justice reform. This bill requires law enforcement officers to issue citations in lieu of arrest for certain offenses. This bill aims to reduce the number of unnecessary arrests made in criminal cases by expanding the authorized issuance of citations in lieu of arrest, with certain exceptions.

Arrests are highly disruptive to a person’s life. Arrests cause embarrassment and trauma, and an arrest record can seriously jeopardize the arrestee’s housing and employment prospects, both presently and in the future. Arrests may also set forth a chain of economic and logistical hardships for the arrestee’s family. Here in Hawai‘i, with an exorbitant cost of living and high percentage of families who live paycheck to paycheck, this problem disproportionately affects minority populations. In these instances, many arrestees or their families cannot afford to post bail before a trial.

Further, issuing citations in lieu of arrests can facilitate greater trust and cooperation between law enforcement and the communities they serve. By adopting a more community-oriented and less punitive approach to policing, HB1601 promotes a culture of mutual respect and understanding, fostering stronger relationships between law enforcement officers and the public.

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 HB1601.**

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