

February 22, 2024

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Hearing Time: 2:00 PM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 325

Re: HB1602, 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 HB1602, relating to criminal justice reform. This bill authorizes a 48-hour grace period after a missed initial court appearance.

Currently, failure to appear in court results in the issuance of an arrest warrant. Arrests not only assume a significant portion of limited police resources, but also have a lasting economic and psychological impact on arrestees and their families.

Many factors may case individuals to miss their court dates, including circumstances beyond their control. These individuals should not be subject to immediate arrest and incarceration without being afforded a reasonable opportunity to rectify the situation. Compounding circumstances, including the issuance of an arrest warrant for a missed court date, only strain our already overburdened criminal justice system, perpetuate the cyclical nature of incarceration, and increase recidivism rates.

By authorizing a 48-hour grace period after a missed initial court appearance, HB1602 provides individuals with the necessary time to reschedule hearings, consult with legal counsel, and make appropriate arrangements to appear before the court. This bill acknowledges the complexity of people’s lives and the myriad of factors that can contribute to missed court dates, while also promoting values of fairness and due process within our legal system. A grace period may also foster greater trust and cooperation between law enforcement, the judiciary, and the communities they serve. By adopting a more compassionate and understanding approach to missed court appearances, we can build stronger relationship and promote a sense of accountability and responsibility within the community.

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 HB1602.**

1099 Alakea Street, Suite 2530 | Honolulu | Hawai’i | 96813 | (808) 447-1840 | www.oyahpolicy.com