

# Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

OYAH policy interns monitor a variety of policy issues that may relate to youth incarceration or matters that directly affect the rights of Hawaii's youth and their access to resources that support their success.

## A Day at the Legislature!

Our two newest policy interns, Justice Castroverde-Moniz and Ka'ohi Gomera, visited the Legislature with Melissa on March 19th to testify before the Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs on HB1667 HD1. HB 1667 HD1 lowers the age at which a youth may obtain a state civil identification card without a parent or guardian's signature from 18 to 16. This was Justice's first time testifying! The interns also got to snap a photo with Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs Chair, Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III. It was a great day of advocacy and learning what goes on at the legislature!



*Ka'ohi (left) and Justice (right) pictured with Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs Chair, Tim Richards (center).*



*Justice testifying in front of the Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs for HB1667 on behalf of OYAH.*

## OYAH Interns Hard at Work in the Office!

OYAH's policy interns meet every Thursday at the office to receive any updates from and discuss their assigned bills with Henry and Melissa, and/or to work on any individual projects.



*Kapri, Justice and Ka'ohi draft testimony!*

## The OYAH Experience

### KA'OHII GOMERA

**Assigned Active Bills:** SB 2861 SD2, HB 2181 HD1, HB1626 HD1 SD1

Working for OYAH has been extremely fulfilling for me. As a full time law student I spend most of my time inside a classroom. At OYAH, I am using skills learned in the classroom to advocate on behalf of the community. Pushing for bills that could change the lives of our community has reminded me why I decided to go to law school to begin with. Each day at OYAH I get to serve my community and its an honor to do so.

### JUSTICE CASTROVERDE-MONIZ

**Assigned Active Bills:** SB2108 SD1 HD1, HB2167 HD2

Thus far, my experience with OYAH has been eye-opening. Before joining the organization, my understanding of the legislative process was fairly basic. However, I now have a much deeper appreciation for what effective legislative advocacy entails. It demands a high level of diligence, adaptability, and time sensitivity when working to advance a bill. My experience delivering testimony at the State Capitol was both exciting and challenging. I dedicated significant effort to memorizing my remarks for the committee, but the one-minute testimony limit made it difficult to fully convey all the points I had prepared.

### KAPRI TULANG-DE SILVA

**Assigned Active Bills:** HB1565 HD2, HB1667 HD1 SD1

Serving as a policy intern has been a life-changing experience. Through this role, I've gained a deeper understanding of what true advocacy and meaningful community engagement look like. Being able to serve my community—especially Hawai'i's children, who represent our future—has been incredibly fulfilling. It has also opened my eyes to the ways our educational and governmental systems often fall short for Hawai'i's youth, while underscoring the many opportunities for growth and change. Most importantly, the people I've met along the way—particularly the inspiring youth and leaders at Kinai 'Eha—have grounded me in my purpose and reaffirmed why I chose to pursue a career in law and education.