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Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

OYAH Policy Leaders Submit Report to Department of Human Services Director



The Hawai'i House of Representatives recently passed House Resolution 180 which requested a report by the Department of Human Services on the innovative approach and services provided by community-based organizations on the grounds of the Kawaiiloa Youth & Family Wellness Center.

In December, RYSE (Residential Youth Services and Empowerment), Kinai 'Eha, and Partners in Development Foundation's Kupa 'Aina Farm presented its own Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i report to new DHS Director Ryan Yamane and special assistant to the director Annie Macapagal. Pictured above are Shawn Kana'iaupuni and Josiah Akau following the meeting with Director Yamane to present the OYAH report. It outlines successes attributed to the organizations which work in collaboration with the Department of Education's Olomana Youth Center and the State's Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility, as well as and many other partners. The report notes that over 370 individual youth engaged in OYAH community-based programs in fiscal year 2024. OYAH policy interns will share the report with members of the state legislature and their staffs.

The report also highlighted the \$7 million raised annually through strategic partnerships by the OYAH organizations which is dedicated to culture-based restorative services. Funders range from federal agencies to local philanthropic organizations.

Legislative Biennium Begins January 15

Typically more than 3,000 bills will be introduced between January 15 and January 27, the first of many deadlines at the state capitol. For many state legislators, this will be their first session. Out of 51 members in total, the Hawai'i State House of Representatives has 26 members with two years or less experience. And out of those 26 members, ten have only served since November.

Third-year University of Hawai'i law students Sydney Story and Haumea Velasco, in collaboration with advisor Melissa Pavlicek and the leaders of OYAH, will review each bill introduced and make recommendations for engaging. The goal will be to help shape public policies that reduce the negative effects of youth incarceration, prevent incarceration, and promote Native Hawaiian equity in the justice system. Other key areas of focus will include support for youth aged 18 - 24, preventing homelessness, and increasing mental health services.



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