

MARCH 3, 2023

Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

Youth Emancipation Bill Passes Committees in House

The Committee on Finance **PASSED HB349 HD2, Relating to Children**. This bill expands the original jurisdiction of family court to include proceedings for declaration of emancipation of minors. The bill specifies the rights of an emancipated minor, and establishes further emancipation procedures.

Emancipation conveys to the individual the rights and responsibilities of an adult, including financial, educational, and contractual freedoms. The bill further specifies that emancipated youth will not be able to purchase, sell, possess, or consume alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or electronic smoking devices.

OYAH, as well as Carla Houser on behalf of RYSE, had testified in support and provided comments on this measure. Representative Ward questioned the number of individuals the bill would affect and RYSE identified approximately 8-10 candidates, annually, who would be viable candidates for the process. Further questioning deemed "emancipation" to also be defined as a young person who is living independently of any sort of adult who is legally responsible for their care, oftentimes living in minor shelters, or involved in situations that leave them at risk of exploitation. Finally, RYSE identified the difficulty of maintaining upward mobility when living in a housing situation that is constantly temporary, and not permanent. The bill would allow these minors the stability and permanence necessary to being living their lives. It will be considered by the House for a floor vote on March 7 and if approved move on to the state Senate.

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OYAH Meets with Policy-makers: Advocating for Change

On March 1st, OYAH interns held an introductory meeting with state Representative Amy Perruso. We introduced OYAH to Rep. Perruso and asked how our missions could help serve her legislative goals. Upon learning of our focus on homelessness, Rep. Perruso mentioned her concerns regarding the funding issues that led to the shutdown of Achieve Zero, a grassroots organization based in central O'ahu that is focused on ending homelessness. Rep. Perruso also mentioned HB78 (now dead) and the free community college program, noting that the bill and program would be brought up again next legislative session and would need to be a campaign. She noted that it was especially important for students to advocate for the program, because they best understand its importance and impact.

We also discussed big-picture, institutional problems that go beyond the scope of specific legislation, and agreed to keep in contact to further discuss these and other issues. Meetings were also held with Rep. Linda Ichiyama, Rep. Gregg Takayama (below with Dr. Shawn Kana'iaupuni, Rep. Sonny Ganaden, and Rep. Adrian Tam.

