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Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

Hirono Presses To Protect Native Hawaiian Community

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mazie K. Hirono (D-HI), member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, pressed FBI Director Christopher Wray on what the Bureau is doing to protect the Native Hawaiian community from sexual exploitation at a full Judiciary Committee hearing. During the hearing, Senator Hirono highlighted how sexual exploitation disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian women and children in the state of Hawaii.

“According to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Native Hawaiian women and girls represent 67% to 77% of sex trafficking victims identified in recent studies,” said Senator Hirono during the hearing. “Native Hawaiians also represent 37% of reported child sex trafficking cases.”

**OYAH Hui Policy Initiative
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Rep. Linda Ichiyama Supports Youth Emancipation Bill

In a meeting with volunteer Melissa Pavlicek and OYAH intern Haumea Velasco, State Representative Linda Ichiyama shared her strong feelings about the importance of establishing a process for youth emancipation. She said she is willing to consider sponsoring a bill along the lines of Senate Bill 2878 (2022) relating to youth emancipation. The bill was previously supported by OYAH and allows a minor at the age of sixteen to petition the family court for a declaration of emancipation. It also requires that the court examine the petition and conduct a mental health screening as well as the appointment of a guardian to represent the minors interests through the process. In 2022, the Hawaii Youth Services Network and Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii supported SB 2878.

OYAH's testimony emphasized the importance of the bill and said that emancipation would allow youth to be freed from the control of their parents in specific situations and grant them the rights and responsibilities of an adult.

OYAH Intern Haumea Velasco with Rep. Linda Ichiyama at a July meeting at the state capitol.



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