

NOVEMBER 18, 2022

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

## Scan of States' Research Underpins OYAH Policy Efforts

Members of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i hui are reviewing proposed policy initiatives for the 2023 legislative session. To help inform the discussions, the OYAH policy interns have been reviewing research prepared by selected relevant national organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty ("Law Center").

According to the Law Center, each year, an estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness, 700,000 of whom are minors who are not with a parent or guardian.

The Law Center report noted that youth leave home for a variety of reasons, including severe family conflict, parental abuse or neglect, parental mental health issues, or substance abuse. Some leave home or are forced to leave after divulging a pregnancy or identifying as LGBTQ, the report said. The Law Center has developed a set of policy recommendations that align well with the OYAH proposals. It also launched a project called "Housing Not Handcuffs."

For a sample of recommendations by the Law Center, see right.

## Hawai'i Legislative Website Re-formatted



The state legislative website at [www.capitol.hawaii.gov](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov) has been reorganized. Get ready for the legislative session by reviewing how to look up a bill or find hearing notices!

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## Law Center Sample Recommendations:

Eliminate punishment of unaccompanied youth based on status.

- Limit the circumstances under which youth who have run away can be taken into custody or punished for running away; set very brief time limits for such custody when it is permitted; and prohibit sheltering of such youth with delinquent youth or adults.
- Provide opportunities for young people to avoid court involvement through diversion and restorative justice programs, counseling, treatment, family mediation, housing assistance, and other services, as well as adequate time to meet treatment goals.
- Decriminalize running away, curfew violations, and truancy.
- Limit and prevent young people's court involvement and their contact with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- Assign responsibility for the care and support of youth who have run away to the social service system rather than the juvenile justice system, and prohibit sheltering such youth in detention facilities.

See: <https://homelesslaw.org/> and <https://housingnohandcuffs.org/>