

February 28, 2023

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Hearing Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: State Capitol

Re: SB 1044, SD1, Relating to Mental Health

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith Agaran and members of the Committee:

We are writing in **support** ofSB 1044, SD1, Relating to Mental Health.

This bill will appropriate moneys to hire complex-based youth mental health specialists for rural Hawaiʻi Department of Education schools.

As explained by the California Department of Education, providing mental health services in a school based setting helps address barriers to learning and provide supports so that all students can achieve in school and ultimately in life. Schools are places where prevention and early intervention activities can occur in a non-stigmatizing environment. Students will be able to maximize their benefit from mental health support services when they directly work with ceritified mental health specialists.

Our collective, Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi (OYAH), works to support young people under the age of 25 who are disconnected from school and work, referred to as “opportunity youth.” This developmental time period is extremely consequential to the individual growth and overall life chances of our children. **We support this measure.**

Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth houselessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally-informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

**Please support SB 1044, SD1.**