

February 22, 2023

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hearing Time: 09:30 a.m.

Location: State Capitol

Re: SB 1442 SD1, Relating to ʻOhana Zones

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

We are writing in **strong support** ofSB 1442, Relating to ʻOhana Zones.

This bill will appropriate funds for the ʻohana zones pilot program, including expenses relating to operations, upkeep of facilities, provision of services, and administrative costs; authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds for the construction of facilities for the ʻohana zones pilot program; establish one position within the Office of the Governor responsible for the deployment of the capital improvement funds appropriated by this Act; and specify certain exemptions that shall apply to the ʻohana zone construction.

We are in support of the continuation of the ʻohana zones program and believe that it is serving its intended purpose to provide critical services to the State's homeless population. Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi is especially concerned about homelessness among youth, with research showing that youth aged 12–17 are at higher risk than adults of becoming homeless. According to a recent report, transition-aged youth between 18 and 24 years are one of the fastest growing homeless populations. Homeless youth often do not receive adequate services. They may not meet shelter admission policies, and, at times, there is a lack of bed space for youth. Although homeless young adults can use shelter services, services may not always be a good fit for the needs of the transitioning population. This bill is an important step among many that need to be taken to address homelessness in our community. We ask that you support it.

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 1442 SD1.**