

March 28, 2024

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Hearing Time: 2:00 PM

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 325

Re: SB2706 SD1, Relating to Expungement of Criminal Records

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawaiʻi hui, we are writing in **strong support** of SB2706 SD1, relating to the expungement of criminal records. This bill establishes the Clean Slate Expungement Task Force to develop a state-initiated record clearing program. The bill also requires the task force to submit reports to the Legislature.

SB2706 SD1 is a crucial step towards fostering rehabilitation, promoting fairness, and ensuring a more equitable and just society. Several states have similar “clean slate” laws. Pennsylvania, the first to institute an automatic record clearance legislation, has cleared over 45 million records since 2019. Issues with this program saw some individuals struggling to pay the required fees and an increase in applications caused backlogs in processing. However, if effectuated alongside other measures aimed at criminal justice reform, Hawai‘i is well on its way to proactively addressing these potential concerns.

The barriers attached to a criminal record are detrimental not only to the individual, but for employers, the workforce, and the economy as a whole. Studies have shown that individuals with an expunged record are significantly more likely to find stable employment, which not only benefits them personally but also contributes to the overall economic well-being of the community. Expungement improves housing prospects, opens doors to educational opportunities, and restores civil rights.

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 SB2706 SD1.**

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