

Committee: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Time: 1:00 p.m., March 15, 2023

Location: State Capitol

Re: HB948 HD2, Relating to Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Aloha e Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

We are writing in **support** of HB948 HD2, Relating to Child and Adolescent Mental Health.

This bill establishes a two-year child and adolescent crisis mobile outreach team pilot program on O‘ahu to expand existing crisis response services and appropriates funds.

Crisis mobile outreach centers can be a vital resource for adolescents during a period in their lives in which they face many significant challenges. Social and academic pressures, family conflicts, mental health challenges, and bullying are all risk factors associated with suicide among adolescents. Results from the 2019 Youth Behavioral Risk Factor Survellance System show that almost 20% of high school students nationwide seriously considered attempting suicide and nearly 9% actually attempted suicide. Mobile outreach centers offer quick, flexible, and confidential services and can provide care that addresses the specific needs of adolescents and reach areas that may be underserved by traditional service providers.

In 2022, the Hawaiʻi Department of Health: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division received 659 reports of youth mental health crises - doubling the total reports from just two years prior. According to the Hawaiʻi Medical Association, over 70% of children in Hawaiʻi suffering from major depressive episodes prior to the COVID pandemic did not receive treatment, while calls to the Hawaiʻi Crisis Text Line increased by 54% in April of 2020. Data from the National Alliance for Mental Illness Hawaiʻi further indicates that Hawaiʻi lost 176 lives to suicide within a single year. Supporting crisis mobile outreach is essential to support the mental health and well-being of our adolescent population. The funding of this project ensures that our keiki have access to the support and care they need during difficult times.

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 HB 349.**