

JANUARY 31, 2024

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

## 2024 State Legislature: Renewing Hope for Policy Change



Carla Houser (RYSE) and OYAH Policy Intern Sydney Story participated in a January state Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i hui, law student Sydney Story, testified in strong support of HB 470 HD2 SD1, relating to minors. This bill will require providers of no cost emergency shelter and related services to maintain separation for unrelated adults and minor children; and make permanent the amendments to the definition of "provider" to include organizations that are not child placing organizations or child caring institutions that meet certain criteria.

The bill was introduced in 2023, but stalled when the state Department of Human Services expressed concerns, allowing the emergency shelter law to sunset in June.

Sydney emphasized the significance of providing homeless youth with emergency shelter and services. She told the Senate Judiciary Committee members that shelter is a foundation of stability and provides access to essential resources, fostering positive life outcomes and mitigating the potential for future adversities.

The bill was advanced by the committee and, after being approved by the Senate, will be assigned a conference committee to negotiate differences between the House and Senate version of the bill.

## Second Year of the Legislative Biennium Opens with 2,648 Bills

The OYAH policy interns are reviewing bills introduced at the state legislature and will present their recommendations to OYAH policy leaders. This year, about 20 percent fewer bills were introduced, but since it is the second year of the biennium, more than 2,000 bills from last session are also available to legislators to consider.

The policy interns have already begun testifying this session in support of measures that provide funding for mental health services, reduce or eliminate the harmful effects of incarceration, and reduce the use of solitary confinement for adults. These are all longstanding priorities of the Opportunity Youth Action Hui.

For more information go to:  
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