

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

## Should Hawai'i Extend Right to Housing Law?

By: Haumea Velasco, OYAH intern

Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Hui representatives Carla Houser from RYSE and Danny Cup Choy from Hawai'i Public Policy Advocates recently met with state Senator Stanley Chang to discuss Hawai'i's Youth Right to Housing law. Senator Chang serves as the chair of the Senate Committee on Housing. Hawaii Revised Statutes section 346-17.6 created a framework for childcare providers to supply shelter and services to homeless youth. HB 282 (2021) expanded the definition of "provider" to include organizations that supply homeless youth with housing and services. The previous definition for providers was limited to licensed childcare and child-placing organizations.

House Bill 282 also established a sunset date set for June 30th 2023. As that date closes in, OYAH policy leaders are taking a close look at the law and its benefits for organizations that provide for Hawaii's homeless youth.

OYAH member organization RYSE testified in favor of HB282 at hearings in 2021 from its introduction to its passage. RYSE advocated that as many youth leave their homes due to abuse, they have the choice between two paths: enter the foster care system or reunite with their family.

However, homeless youth torn between these imperfect options sometimes are compelled to choose to live on the street. As a result, more youth are pushed into detrimental situations and are not able to recover by the time they become 18, the age at which they previously were eligible to enter shelters.

Simply put, the damage done for homeless youth is compounded when they are a youth and when they are in need of shelter and services the most. That is why allowing a minor to consent to their own housing is a natural step in providing a minor the chance to escape a potentially abusive relationship at home as well as enabling them to receive shelter and care when they are the most vulnerable.

*Members of the 2022 Hawai'i State Senate Housing Committee are pictured above from top: Chair Stanley Chang; Vice-Chair Dru Kanuha and member Senators Sharon Moriwaki, Karl Rhoads, and Kurt Fevella. The committee membership may change for the 2023 legislative session. Occasionally committee membership is changed during the session, but these legislators have experience dealing with housing issues related to OYAH members and OYAH policy initiatives.*



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