

OCTOBER 7, 2022

Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i Policy Initiative

Juvenile Justice Reports Accessible at LRB Library

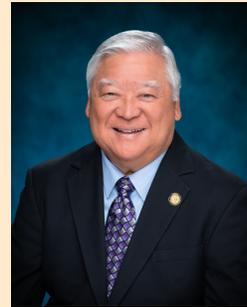
A priority of the OYAH policy interns is to support advocacy efforts with research and resource materials. Since the legislative session concluded in May, the OYAH policy interns have prioritized capacity-building and professional development, learning about other states' efforts to promote equity in the justice system.

A key resource for the policy interns is the Hawai'i Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) library located at the state legislature. LRB compiles legislative reports, serving as a research library for legislators and members of the public. Its materials are accessible online here: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/>

Diversion in the Juvenile Justice System, by Kate Bryant, an article featured in a recent issue of the NCSL Legis: NCSL Legisbrief, is now available through the LRB Library. It highlights the status of diversion programs across the country. "Approximately 34 states have enacted laws providing for at least one form of diversion or have codified certain diversion policies in statute. Some states have laws requiring certain types of cases to be offered a chance of diversion," according to Bryant.

These laws often include community-based diversion programs designed to keep young people suspected of low-level offenses out of the judicial system while also reducing the costs associated with traditional court procedures and the collateral consequences of a juvenile conviction. As states look to improve outcomes for young people, increase public safety and boost fiscal efficiency, lawmakers are working across the aisle to create non-judicial pathways for justice-involved youth. Juvenile justice is under the purview of individual states, territories and districts, but the federal government can influence state action by providing grant funding. In 2022, \$494 million in federal funds have been appropriated for juvenile justice programs.

Appropriated monies help jurisdictions tailor alternative justice approaches to their communities' unique needs and youth populations. During the 2021 fiscal year, Iowa received over \$1.5 million in funding to establish pre-charge diversion programs for low-risk youth, develop mental health, substance use and family therapy services, and reduce ethnic and racial disparities in the justice system.



Two key legislators who chair state legislative committees related to public safety, criminal justice, and incarceration will be leaving their positions due to retirement. Senator Clarence Nishihara (pictured left) chair of the Hawai'i Senate Committee on Public Safety, and Rep. Takashi Ohno, chair of the Hawai'i House of Representatives Committee on Corrections, Military and Veterans, will be replaced following the November 8 elections. The designation of new legislative committee chairs will be an opportunity to introduce the OYAH Hui and its priorities.



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