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**Testimony of the Office of the Public Defender,  
State of Hawai'i to the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness**

February 6, 2025

H.B. 1101: RELATING TO SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM.

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender **strongly supports H.B. 1101.**

This measure would create a Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program. Youth at risk and youth in need of services require safe and supportive emergency housing and shelters. These services are desperately needed to help quell the growing needs of our youth who are living in poverty, who are houseless (some who may have become houseless together with their parents to no fault of their own), and who need mental health services and treatment. Youth at risk and youth in need of services are also at risk of being victims of crime (e.g., property crimes, assaults, sexual assaults, and/or human trafficking). They are often preyed upon. Youth may have experienced multiple and multi-dimensional traumas that only compound when personal safety is under constant threat.

The creation of a Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program will also help prevent at risk youth from becoming involved in criminal activity and can help the youth in need obtain access to vital services like mental health treatment and substance abuse treatment and access to safe and supportive housing and educational services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

February 4, 2025

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**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



**RYAN I. YAMANE**  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**JOSEPH CAMPOS II**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

**TRISTA SPEER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 3, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1101 – RELATING TO SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH PILOT PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration measure, defers to the Office of Youth Services, and offers comments.

**PURPOSE:** To make the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program a permanent program within the Office of Youth Services.

The Office of Youth Services (OYS) is implementing the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program authorized by Act 130, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022 (Act 130). Act 130 will be repealed on June 30, 2025, and this measure codifies the Safe Spaces for Youth Program in Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Since Act 130 passed, OYS has moved forward with implementing the Safe Spaces for Youth program that aims to establish Safe Spaces homeless youth shelters in each county and the Safe Place Network access points. The Safe Spaces homeless shelters will work with the Safe Place Network access points identified in the community where youth and young adults up to age 24 can enter and ask for assistance. With additional funding, OYS is poised to establish a shelter for young adults ages 18-24 on Hawaii Island. In addition to codification, a general fund

February 4, 2025

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appropriation is required for OYS to take the next steps, and DHS defers to OYS regarding its resource needs.

According to the National Network for Youth, communities with established Safe Spaces for homeless youth report higher success rates in terms of improved housing stability, increased school enrollment, and a reduction in risky behaviors. By making the Safe Spaces for Youth program permanent, Hawaii can continue to build upon the pilot's progress and address shelter and other needs for youth across Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

February 6, 2025

To: The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair,  
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Date: Thursday, February 6, 2025  
Time: 10:00 a.m.  
Place: Conference Room 329, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director  
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

**Re: H.B. No. 1101 RELATING TO SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM**

HB1101 proposes to build upon the “safe spaces for youth” pilot program by making the program permanent within the Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Youth Services and have DHS collaborate with all state and county agencies that offer youth services for youth and young adults. DLIR **supports** this Governor’s Package proposal as it will provide needed assistance to recipients of the Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) grants overseen by the department.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

JOHN MIZUNO  
DIRECTOR  
STATEWIDE OFFICE ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Testimony of **John M. Mizuno**  
Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness  
Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
& HOMELESSNESS**  
Thursday, February 6, 2025  
10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

In consideration of  
**House Bill No. 1101**  
**RELATING TO SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM**

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

My name is John Mizuno. I am the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness and the Director of the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS).

First, on behalf of my office and Governor Green, I want to thank the House of Representatives for introducing HB1101.

I am writing in strong support of **House Bill 1101**, which makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services and requires the program to collaborate with all state and county departments that offer services for youth and young adults to coordinate the identification of youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and placement of these youth at a shelter for homeless youth or young adults. **HB 1101** also authorizes the Office of Youth Services to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide shelters for homeless youth or young adults and requires the Office of Youth Services to submit a report twenty days prior to the regular session of the Legislature.

The Governor, the First Lady, and the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions are committed to partnering with the Hawai'i State Legislature and entities like the Office of Youth Services to help our homeless youth, and we are working on youth kauhale as part of our state-wide kauhale initiative. We hope to have our youth kauhale work together to provide wrap-around services for youth and young adults facing housing instability. We stand ready and look forward to parting further with the Hawai'i State Legislature and valuable entities like the Office of Youth Services to help our homeless youth.

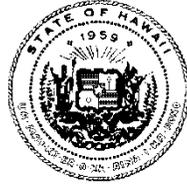
John M. Mizuno Testimony on HB1101  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
February 6, 2025  
Page 2

Thank you, Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members, for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of House Bill 1101. I am grateful for your consideration of this critical measure and its positive impact on our office, allowing us to collaborate with others and provide more services for our precious young people. We appreciate the legislature's continued commitment to helping those facing housing instability, especially our homeless youth.

Mahalo!

Brandon Mitsuda  
Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions  
Special Assistant

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



LEANNE GILLESPIE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
LUNA HO'OKELE

Phone: (808) 587-5710  
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STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
**OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES**  
KE'ENA LAWELAWE 'ŌPIO  
1010 Richards Street, Suite 314  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

February 5, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Leanne Gillespie, Executive Director

SUBJECT: HB1101 – RELATING TO SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM  
Hearing: February 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Office of Youth Services (OYS) is in strong support of this administration measure bill and offers comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to make the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services. Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Project repeals 6/30/2025. It requires the program to collaborate with all state and county departments that offer services for youth and young adults to coordinate the identification of youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and placement of these youth at a shelter for homeless youth and young adults. The bill also authorizes the Office of Youth Services to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide shelters for homeless youth and young adults and requires the OYS to submit an annual report.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

The legislature's vision of this Safe Spaces program has not yet been fully realized.

In 2022, the passing of Act 130, SLH 2022 authorized the Department of Human Services, Office of Youth Services to establish an inter-agency Youth Safe Spaces Pilot Program to provide shelter to homeless youth, ages 14 to 24, in each of the four counties. Services were to include:

- (1) Overnight lodging and supervision
- (2) Hot meals and hot showers,
- (3) Access to medical and behavioral health services, and
- (4) Education, and vocational support for homeless youth.

The inventory of short-term beds shows that there are just over 100 physical beds for minors across all counties and 40 young adult beds on Oahu only. There are currently no specifically young adult shelter beds on the islands of Maui, Hawaii or Kauai. The number of beds for both populations does not adequately shelter homeless youth.

The minimum cost to operate one emergency shelter, with the services listed above, is estimated at approximately \$800,000 annually. Variance in costs depends on location, facility expenses, staffing and services offered. With minor children not being allowed to shelter with young adults, Act 130 includes the requirement to open eight shelters, two in each County: Oahu, Hawaii, Maui and Kauai for a total estimated cost of \$6,400,000, not including staffing and administrative and program planning and implementation costs, estimated at an additional \$600,000.

OYS originally requested \$4,496,870 to fund two shelters on Oahu, and one on each of the islands of Maui, Hawaii and Kauai and support other programmatic and administrative costs including two positions. For FY23, OYS received \$600,000, for FY24 \$868,556, and for FY25 \$871,016. This year, OYS submitted a budget request for \$1,171,016 for one young adult shelter on the Island of Hawaii, Safe Places program, and one Children and Youth Program

Specialist position. Following this request not moving forward, a legislative proposal was generated.

During year one of the Safe Spaces Pilot Project, OYS gathered an inventory of shelter beds, conducted research, and gathered input from community organizations and the needs of homeless youth across the state. The OYS gathered state agencies together to further discuss the needs of youth and this program, including how to collect and share data for emergency shelters that would be opened under this program. With inadequate funding to procure a contract to open a new shelter, OYS increased several of its current residential shelter contracts to quickly add bed space, in the form of available nights, to the then inventory.

During year two of this project, OYS developed a robust and comprehensive Safe Spaces program plan, contracted with the Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) to develop, and implement the National Safe Place Network's Safe Places, as a component of Hawaii's Safe Spaces Pilot Project. In March 2024, HYSN in partnership with OYS and the National Safe Place Network, gathered stakeholders from around the state together to discuss to problems of, and solutions to, youth homelessness.

During year three, the final year of this project, HYSN received its Safe Place license and local sites were trained and certified as Safe Places to assist minors in need of help. Safe Spaces was officially launched in late Summer 2024 with a Press Release by the Department of Human Services, Office of Youth Services. This press release educated the community about the new Safe Place sites, indicated by a yellow sign, where youth could enter and receive immediate help. These sites included The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services shelter in Hilo and Hale Kipa shelter on Oahu. Phone numbers and a text option for 24/7 response were also activated and available for youth who need assistance. The TXT 4 HELP option is provided as part of the National Safe Place Network's national line. Local phone numbers are provided by subcontract to The Salvation Army on Hawaii Island and Hale Kipa on Oahu.

<b>Safe Spaces Performance Deliverables</b>	<b>Number</b>
Safe Place Site Recruitment/Training	12
Education & Outreach Presentations	164
Number of Youth Receiving Safe Place Text-4-Help cards	125
Media Coverage	1 press release, 2 live interviews
Website and Social Media	159 website hits, 1200 Facebook fans, 5 Instagram posts
<b>Safe Place Encounters*</b>	
Text4Help	25
Safe Place Sites	0

\*Program has been building since inception and is in place to begin accepting youth at Safe Place access sites and Safe Space shelters.

OYS continues to contract with HYSN who continued to recruit additional Safe Place sites and provide education, training, and outreach to build and strengthen this program. Additional contracts continue to fund Safe Spaces minor beds at Safe House residential programs.

OYS, in partnership with HYSN, government and community-based organizations, have developed a robust and comprehensive program plan to meet youth where they are at, to ensure youth know where to get help, and can receive the help they need. To make this program plan a reality, additional support will be needed. The state falls short on enough inventory to shelter homeless minors and young adults. With adequate funding, this program can reach its original vision, and OYS can procure contracts for both minor and young adult

shelters in all four counties during FY 26 and be ready to open statewide Safe Spaces beginning in FY27.

OYS further recommends that Safe Spaces be accessible to minors up to the age of 18 years old and young adults up to the age of 25 years old who are experiencing homelessness, crisis, mental health, violence, substance abuse or other issues and who are at-risk of system involvement.

Estimated cost for full implementation of Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Project:

Safe Spaces Program Activity	Annual Estimated Cost
Minor Shelter on Oahu, Hawaii, Maui, Kauai	\$800,000 ea = \$3,200,000
Young Adult Shelter on Oahu, Hawaii, Maui, Kauai	\$800,000 ea = \$3,200,000
Safe Place 24/7 Response	Oahu = \$181,000 Hawaii, Maui, Kauai (\$85,000 ea) = 255,000
Safe Place Administration Costs	\$100,000
OYS Children & Youth Program Specialist Position	\$71,016
Total	\$7,007,016

The OYS respectfully requests that Safe Spaces be made a permanent program under Hawaii Revised Chapter Section 352-7 Youth Service Centers and appropriate funds of \$871,016 for FY26 to maintain the current program services and \$7,017,016 to OYS' base budget effective FY27 to expand the program to its full vision. In lieu of full funding beginning FY27, the OYS respectfully requests to continue FY25 project funding of \$871,016 and increase this by \$970,000 to open a young adult shelter on Hawaii island and increase Safe Place 24/7 response on the Islands of Maui and Kauai, for a total appropriation of \$1,841,016.

OYS respectfully requests that any general fund appropriation not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executed budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and offer comments.



## HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: [info@hysn.org](mailto:info@hysn.org)

Vonnell Ramos, President  
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President  
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer  
Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive  
Director

### *Network Membership*

*Access to Independence*  
*Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i*  
*Bobby Benson Center*  
*Child and Family Service*  
*Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i*  
*Domestic Violence Action Center*  
*EPIC `Ohana, Inc.*  
*Friends of the Children's Justice*  
*Center of Maui*  
*Get Ready Hawai`i*  
*Hale Kipa, Inc.*  
*Hale `Opio Kaua`i, Inc.*  
*Hawai`i Children's Action*  
*Network*  
*Hawai`i Health & Harm*  
*Reduction Center*  
*Hawaii Island Community`*  
*Health Center*  
*Ho`ola Na Pua*  
*Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i*  
*Ka Hale Pomaika`i*  
*Kokua Kalihi Valley*  
*Kaua`i Planning and Action*  
*Alliance*  
*Lines for Life Youth Line*  
*Maui Youth and Family Services*  
*Na Pu`uwai Molokai Native*  
*Hawaiian Health Care*  
*Systems*  
*P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.*  
*Parents and Children Together*  
*PHOCUSED*  
*Piha Wellness and Healing*  
*Planned Parenthood of the*  
*Great Northwest, Hawaii*  
*Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana*  
*Residential Youth Services*  
*& Empowerment (RYSE)*  
*Salvation Army Family*  
*Intervention Services*  
*Sex Abuse Treatment Center*  
*Susannah Wesley Community*  
*Center*  
*The Catalyst Group*

February 2, 2025

To: Senator Lisa Mareten, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Human Services and  
Homelessness

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1101 RELATING TO THE SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 1101 Relating to the Safe Spaces for Youth Program

Runaway and homeless youth and young adults are the most vulnerable segment of Hawaii's homeless population.

Young people run from abusive or neglectful families, They often have untreated mental health or substance abuse issues. And sometimes they are thrown out of their homes by the adults who are supposed to care for and protect them. Living on the street is difficult and dangerous and young people.

Homeless youth need street-based outreach, safe emergency shelter, family strengthening services to enable family reunifications, and transitional living services for youth and young adults who cannot be safely reunited with their families. Safe Spaces for Youth can ensure that short-term and longer-term safe and appropriate housing is available statewide.

One element of the Space Spaces for Youth Pilot project is the Safe Place Program Any young person in crisis on Oahu or Hawaii Island can walk into a Safe Place site or text for help with 24-hour a day response. Hale Kipa, The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services, Parents and Children Together, Work Hawaii, Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawaii, and the Hawaii County Rapid Transit System are among the organizations working together on this project. Without new funding from the legislature, 2 years of planning, training, and outreach will be lost if Safe Place ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith F. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director



**HB1101 Safe Spaces Homeless Youth**  
**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS**

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Thursday, Feb 6, 2025: 10:00: Room 329 Videoconference

**Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB1101:**

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.*

**HSAC supports the Office of Youth Services to contract with community agencies for outreach and to contract with community agencies to provide shelters for youth.**

There is a rise in youth homelessness due to the lack of affordable housing, financial hardships, and the aftermath of the 2023 Maui wildfires as well as the pandemic issues that resulted in worsened youth homelessness due to economic instability, school closures, and family stress.

HSAC supports solutions to secure funding and develop strategies to combat the crisis.

1. **Rising Youth Homelessness** – Many young people face homelessness due to family conflict, abuse, financial hardship, or aging out of foster care. Without stable housing, they are at high risk of exploitation, crime, and mental health issues.
2. **Lack of Safe Alternatives** – Shelters for adults often do not accommodate youth-specific needs. Young people need spaces that provide safety, guidance, and appropriate age support.
3. **Education & Employment Barriers** – Homeless youth struggle to attend school or maintain jobs without stable housing. A shelter can provide stability, allowing them to pursue education and work opportunities.
4. **Mental & Physical Health Risks** – Many homeless youth suffer from untreated trauma, mental illness, or substance abuse. A shelter can offer access to healthcare, counseling, and rehabilitation services.
5. **Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness** – Providing safe housing and support can help youth transition into independent living and prevent chronic homelessness in adulthood.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for further questions.



**Residential Youth Services & Empowerment**

**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS**

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Rep. Terez Amato

Rep. Cory M. Chun

Rep. Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy

Rep. Gregg Takayama

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi

Rep. David Alcos III

Rep. Diamond Garcia

DATE: Thursday, February 6, 2025

TIME: 10:00am

PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 329

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee:

We are submitting comments only on HB1101 relating to Safe Spaces for Youth Program.

The Office of Youth Services (OYS) provides and coordinates a continuum of services and programs for youth-at-risk to prevent delinquency and reduce the incidence of recidivism. The core responsibility of the OYS is to manage and operate the state's only youth correctional facility. OYS also oversees the service provisions and policies that improve the juvenile justice system and advocate for delinquency prevention services.

Should Safe Spaces for Youth become a permanent program OYS to become a within the Office of Youth Services, we would ask for the consideration to adequately fund and support this office to ensure they can implement the needed, comprehensive programs that address broader needs of homeless youth, such as education, mental health, and employment training.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

With aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carla Houser!".

Carla Houser

Executive Director



# Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i

# KAWAIILOA

February 6, 2025

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
Hearing Time: 10:00AM  
Location: State Capitol Conference Room 329  
Re: HB1101, Relating to Safe Spaces for Youth Program

Aloha e Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we are writing in **strong support of HB1101, relating to Safe Spaces for Youth Program**. This bill makes Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services. The bill requires that Safe Spaces for Youth collaborates with all state and county departments that offer youth and young adult services to identify those experiencing homelessness and place them in shelters for homeless youth and young adults. HB1101 also authorizes the Office of Youth Services (OYS) to contract with non-profit organizations to provide shelters for homeless youth or young adults. The bill mandates that the program submit reports twenty days before the regular sessions of the Legislature.

Youth and young adults experience homelessness at high rates. In 2021, nearly 3,600 identified students statewide were experiencing unstable housing. In 2023, Hawai'i had the third-highest rate of homeless youth in unsheltered locations. With Hawai'i's increased cost of living and the lingering effects of COVID-19 on individuals' health and employment, the implications of homelessness in Hawai'i are exponential.

Youth and young adults often rely on safe spaces for survival. Act 130 established Safe Spaces for Youth (Safe Spaces) as a pilot program. The pilot program provided resources and care critical for reducing youth and young adult homelessness in Hawai'i and proactively tackling the underlying issues of homelessness. Safe Spaces offered Hawai'i's youth and young adults outreach and prevention services and access to basic needs such as hot meals and showers, shelter, medical and behavioral care, education, and employment, reducing the risk of crime and involvement with the criminal justice system.

By permanently establishing the Safe Spaces for Youth Program, HB1101 ensures that OYS can continue to address the needs of Hawai'i's unsheltered youth and young adults or those at risk of homelessness without fear of losing the resources and the public and private collaborations and partnerships that support them. The bill provides the OYS Safe Spaces for Youth Program with the comfort and stability needed to ensure that Hawai'i's youth have safe living spaces and access to basic care and resources to thrive.

Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i 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 HB1101.**

1099 Alakea Street, Suite 2530 | Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 | (808) 447-1840



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1101

**TO:** Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, & HSH Committee Members

**FROM:** Nikos Leverenz  
Policy & Advancement Manager

**DATE:** February 6, 2025 (10:00 AM)

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Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) **strongly supports** HB 1101, which makes the Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program permanent within the Office of Youth Services. The bill also requires the program to collaborate with all state and county departments that offer services for youth and young adults to coordinate the identification of youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and placement of these youth at a shelter for homeless youth or young adults.

HHHRC provides homelessness services in Regions 1 and 6 on O'ahu and is a member of [Partners in Care \(PIC\)](#), a planning, coordinating, and advocacy alliance that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill needs within O'ahu's continuum of care for homeless persons.

HHHRC provides services to unaccompanied homeless youth, including those who are sexual and gender minorities (SGM). These youth face a range of challenges to their health and well-being compared with their heterosexual peers, including substantially increased risk of hunger, violence, behavioral health challenges, and housing instability. Risks are even more pronounced for those who are transgender. A [2018 report from the state Department of Health](#) noted that only 51% of transgender youth typically sleep at the home of their parent or guardian's home, compared with only 6% of cisgender youth.

HHHRC's mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai'i and the Pacific. We work with many individuals impacted by poverty, housing instability, and other social determinants of health. Many have behavioral health problems, including those related to substance use and mental health conditions, and have also been deeply impacted by trauma related to histories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**HB-1101**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 7:43:01 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Richard S Velasquez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this Bill. As a social worker and a member of the State LGBTQ+ Commission I have learned how important it is to have a Safe Space where unhoused youth can turn and give them the time and opportunity to connect with important services, currently our keiki and youth end up on the streets. where they become victims of violence, crime and abuse. They start on a path that leads to adult life of crime and homelessness. To connect with services takes time and the interest of our community programs and this program allows this to happen

**HB-1101**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 8:52:21 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alika Campbell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support funding service for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

**HB-1101**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 4:12:05 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Constance Bell-Mullen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Constance Bell-Mullen, and I have dedicated my career to social services, working to support and empower youth and families. I am here to express my strong support for Bill HB1101, which seeks to expand and strengthen the Safe Place Program for at-risk youth.

Safe Place provides a vital lifeline for young people who are experiencing crises, such as homelessness, abuse, or neglect. This program connects youth to immediate safety and trained professionals who can help stabilize their situations. In my experience, I have seen too many young people fall through the cracks when they have nowhere to turn. Safe Place fills that critical gap, giving youth access to safe locations where they can receive support without fear or judgment.

Many of these young people face overwhelming circumstances through no fault of their own. Without timely intervention, they are at risk of harm, exploitation, or trauma. Safe Place locations offer more than physical safety; they provide hope, resources, and a pathway to healing and stability. Programs like this can mean the difference between survival and long-term success for these youth.

By passing Bill HB1101, you are investing in a future where vulnerable young people have access to safety and the support they need to thrive. I urge you to stand with our youth by ensuring this program has the resources to expand and operate effectively across our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
**Constance Bell-Mullen**