



April 10, 2024

The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Human Services  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Hearing on Thursday, April 11, 2024 at 11:00 a.m., Via VideoConference, Conference Room #329

Regarding SCR 175, "Requesting the Department of Human Services to Report on the Cultural and Therapeutic Services Provided by Community-Based Organizations at the Kawaihoa Youth and Family Wellness Center."

Dear Chair Marten and Vice Chair Amato and Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

As indicated by the organizations that have signed on to this letter, we ask that you **strongly support HCR 200/ HR180** to request a report by the Department of Human Services on the innovative approach and services provided by community-based organizations (CBOs), such as RYSE (Residential Youth Services and Empowerment), Kinai 'Eha, and Partners in Development Foundation's Kupa 'Aina Farm as well as DOE's Olomana Youth Center and the State's Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility, which work collaboratively with OYAH (the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i) hui. This work could not be possible without the numerous

other partners who support justice-involved and opportunity youth such as other Native Hawaiian and community-based organizations, Hawai'i Public Policy Advocates, law enforcement, Hawai'i's State Judiciary, Office of the Public Defender and Department of Health's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division.

**The Kawaioloa Youth and Family Wellness Center (KYFWC)** was statutorily formed in 2018 under the management of the Office of Youth Services. This 500-acre campus includes multiple state agencies and community non-profits, with a shared vision to promote and sustain healing and wellness of justice-involved youth, and collaborating to provide programs for the most vulnerable at-risk youth and young adult populations in the juvenile justice system. KYFWC has been developing culturally informed restorative practices as a Pu'uhonua – Sanctuary – a place of safety, peace and healing to support the well-being of the child and their family for the betterment of the community.

In October 2022, community and public partners co-located on the Kawaioloa Youth and Family Wellness Center (KYFWC) campus launched an eight-year project, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to create innovative, cultural and therapeutic programs for youth through the work of these CBOs alongside state and other community partners. Together these partners are creating a pu'uhonua, or sanctuary for healing and restoration to help our opportunity youth transform their lives and begin journeys of healing and thriving in their own lives, in their families and their communities (Website: [wearekawaioloa.org](http://wearekawaioloa.org)). The community partners include the following.

**Kinai 'Eha** is a Hawaii 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization specializing in innovation for workforce development, trauma-informed care, and youth justice. The organization is a leader in the trauma-informed care industry providing state-of-the-art staff training, mentoring, and alternative education options to justice-involved youth as well as all youth seeking purpose, personal empowerment, education, community service, leadership, cultural identity, connection, and workforce training in livable career pathways.

Website: [kinaieha.org](http://kinaieha.org)

**Residential Youth Services and Empowerment (RYSE)** operates a youth access center and shelter services. From 8am to 8pm seven days a week, youth ages 14–24 can use their drop-in services free of charge. RYSE also provides temporary transitional shelter for youth ages 18-24 with the goal to provide safety and help youth get off the streets, so that they can live and thrive as healthy, happy young adults.

Website: [rysehawaii.org](http://rysehawaii.org)

### **Kupa 'Aina**

Partners in Development Foundation's Kupa 'Aina Farm is a natural farming program that is paving the way for a food-secure Hawai'i by developing sustainable food production models and providing cultural 'āina-based experiential and vocational learning. Kupa 'Aina serves as a place for learning and connection to 'āina and uses Aloha 'Āina (love of the land) to heal youth, families, and communities.

Website: [pidf.org/kupaaina](http://pidf.org/kupaaina)

**Partners in Development Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that inspires and equips families and communities for success and service, using timeless Native Hawaiian values and traditions. Since 1997, PIDF has served more than 148,000 people in over 50 communities across the Hawaiian Islands. To learn more about all of PIDF's programs serving Hawaiian families, visit [pidf.org](http://pidf.org).

State partners on the campus include the following:

**Olomana Schools:** Olomana School dates back to 1850. Since 1974 the school has provided educational services to students at the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF), Detention Home (DH), Home Maluhia, and Olomana Youth Center (OYC). The HYCF students are incarcerated and DH/Home Maluhia students are awaiting hearing/trial or alternative placement; these students come from all over the state. OYC students are from the Windward District on the island of Oahu and enroll as a result of having difficulties in the educational mainstream because of disciplinary misconduct, chronic school alienation, failure and truancy.

[olomanaschoolhi.k12.hi.us](http://olomanaschoolhi.k12.hi.us)

**Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility:** HYCF, managed and operated by the Office of Youth Services, provides custody, care, and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders who have committed serious law violations. HYCF staff work closely with the Family Courts to ensure that any commitment to HYCF is a "last resort" – after all community-based services have been exhausted. Identification of community-based programs as alternatives to incarceration is ongoing.

Website: [humanservices.hawaii.gov/oys/hawaii-youth-correctional-facility/](http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/oys/hawaii-youth-correctional-facility/)

It is vital that this critical work continue to grow and HCR 200/HR 180 will support this work by raising the level of information available to the public and expanding the involvement and reach of the Department of Human Services and other state agencies as well as private sector organizations through coordinated plans to address the needs of opportunity youth in our state.

**We ask that you support HCR 100/HR180.**

On behalf of our partners, mahalo nui loa for your consideration of this request.



Shawn M. Kana'iaupuni, PhD  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Partners in Development Foundation

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i

April 11, 2024

Committee: House Committee on Human Services  
Time: 11:00 AM  
Location: State Capitol Conference Room 329  
Re: SCR 175

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

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i hui, we are writing in **support** of SCR 175 requesting the Department of Human Services to report on the cultural and therapeutic services provided by community-based organizations at the Kawaioloa Youth and Family Wellness Center.

Hawai‘i’s Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth are overrepresented at every stage of the justice system, with challenges rooted in the history of our islands. By advancing an indigenous model rooted in Hawaiian knowledge and cultural practices, re-engaging with elders, and reconnecting to the land and community, the community-based organizations providing services at the Kawaioloa campus help youth to heal, recognizing their promise as positive community contributors.

The efforts of the community-based organizations at the Kawaioloa campus were recognized by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Lever for Change as one of five global finalists of the Racial Equity 2030 challenge, an open call for bold solutions to drive an equitable future for children, families, and communities worldwide. The Challenge awarded an eight-year grant for the project, “Kawaioloa: A Transformative Indigenous Model to Replace Youth Incarceration”, to help build and scale actionable ideas for transformative change in the systems and institutions that uphold racial inequities. Understanding the work of these organizations and their impact on youth in Hawaii will be beneficial to the legislature in its own efforts to address the youth justice system.

Opportunity 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 SCR 175.**

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



Residential Youth Services & Empowerment

PO Box 11662 Honolulu, HI 96828

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

**Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 11:00am**

**Conference Room 329 & Videoconference**

**SCR175**

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

We are in **strong support** of SCR175 and requesting the Department of Human Services to report on the cultural and therapeutic services provided by community-based organizations at the Kawaiiloa Youth and Family Wellness Center.

Since opening our emergency shelter and drop-in access center for youth experiencing homelessness in 2018, we have provided a safe space and age-appropriate support for hundreds of youth ages, 14-24. The Kawaiiloa campus and its partners provides education and employment services, medical and behavioral health connections, and the needed support system to move out of unsheltered homelessness or beyond the criminal justice system. 47% of the youth RYSE serves are Native Hawaiian, 45% were formally in foster care, and 49% of those served have been homeless more than 3 times.

We appreciate the opportunity to share about the work to reduce the harmful effects of punitive systems for our youth. Any opportunity to promote equity and to improve upon the resources for our young people is appreciated.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

With aloha,

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

Carla Houser

Executive Director

**SCR-175**

Submitted on: 4/10/2024 1:59:17 PM

Testimony for HUS on 4/11/2024 11:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Haumea Velasco	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I support SCR 175.