
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that in light of ongoing
2 issues, and a recent Hawaii supreme court holding, the current
3 process of appealing criminal court sentences needs review and
4 revision by the legislature.

5 In a criminal case in a Hawaii circuit court, after a
6 defendant has been sentenced to incarceration, the Hawaii
7 paroling authority (HPA) determines the minimum term of
8 incarceration. This minimum term defines the length of time a
9 person must spend in incarceration before they become eligible
10 for parole. HPA is guided by rules and statutes, but getting a
11 court to review HPA's decision has proven difficult for inmates.

12 Currently, the inmate must petition the court for judicial
13 review pursuant to Hawaii rules of penal procedure (HRPP) rule
14 40; however HRPP rule 40 was not created for this purpose. The
15 petition is reserved for serious constitutional issues that have
16 arisen in the criminal case: an allegation of ineffective
17 assistance of counsel in violation of the sixth amendment of the



1 United States Constitution, the discovery of evidence withheld
2 by the prosecution in violation of the due process right to a
3 fair trial, or other issues that implicate the state
4 constitution or human rights. Inmates often challenge the
5 decisions of HPA and file HRPP rule 40 petitions which are
6 denied.

7 Under HRPP rule 40, without the assistance of counsel,
8 individuals who have been convicted, sentenced, and incarcerated
9 and are seeking judicial review must initiate a new cause of
10 action by filing a petition in the circuit court that sentenced
11 them, create their own record by attaching relevant documents
12 and requesting transcription of the proceedings before the HPA,
13 and raise complex legal issues. As HRPP rule 40 is considered a
14 civil matter, indigent petitioners are not entitled to
15 representation by the office of the public defender. Upon
16 proper filing under HRPP rule 40, the circuit court then
17 determines if the petition has merit before setting a hearing
18 and appointing counsel for indigent petitioners. This procedure
19 screens out meritorious issues and is daunting for indigent
20 inmates who must file their petition without the assistance of
21 an attorney.



1 In 2024, the Hawaii supreme court noted how a HRPP rule 40
2 petition is burdensome and time consuming:

3 It takes significant time after affirmance of a
4 conviction on final appeal for a HRPP Rule 40 petition
5 to be filed and resolved. In addition, allowing a
6 Rule 40 petition instead of addressing an issue on
7 direct appeal can also be detrimental to a defendant
8 because defendants are not automatically entitled to
9 counsel when they bring Rule 40 petitions. Only if a
10 court finds a "colorable claim" will counsel be
11 appointed. In contrast, our case law recognizes a
12 criminal defendant's right to counsel on appeal and on
13 certiorari. See *State v. Uchima*, 147 Haw. 64, 464
14 P.3d 852 (2020).
15 *State v. Yuen*, 154 Haw. 434, 447 n. 17, 555 P.3d 121, 134 n. 17
16 (2024).

17 The legislature finds that the current procedure for
18 judicial review of orders fixing minimum terms of imprisonment
19 issued by HPA is unjust and unduly burdensome. Allowing the
20 office of the public defender to continue its representation of
21 its clients on appeal in order to raise legal errors that may



1 have arisen at minimum term hearings will reduce the number of
2 HRPP rule 40 petitions, lead to more just outcomes for convicted
3 individuals, and increase efficiency in the criminal justice
4 system. The legislature further finds that judicial review will
5 provide greater uniformity in due process and statutory
6 compliance by HPA.

7 The purpose of this Act is to provide immediate judicial
8 review of orders fixing minimum terms of imprisonment.

9 SECTION 2. Section 602-5.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
10 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

11 "(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 94-3, the
12 supreme court shall determine the care, custody, and disposition
13 of all judiciary case, fiscal, and administrative records[-];
14 provided that records of criminal proceedings that lead to
15 incarceration shall be maintained by the sentencing court for
16 ninety days after the issuance of a decision. A record of
17 dispositional activity shall be maintained stating whether a
18 record was retained by the judiciary; transferred to public
19 archives, the [University] university of Hawaii, the Hawaiian
20 Historical Society; or another agency; or destroyed. This
21 record shall be kept on forms specified by the supreme court.



1 One copy of the record shall be filed in the court where the
2 records originated, and the original shall be filed with the
3 administrative director of the courts or an agency designated by
4 the director."

5 SECTION 3. Section 641-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
6 amended to read as follows:

7 "**§641-11 From circuit courts.** Any party aggrieved by the
8 judgment of a circuit court in a criminal matter or an order
9 pursuant to section 706-669(9) may appeal to the intermediate
10 appellate court, subject to chapter 602, in the manner and
11 within the time provided by the rules of court. The sentence of
12 the court in a criminal case shall be the judgment. All appeals
13 shall be filed with the clerk of the supreme court and shall be
14 subject to one filing fee."

15 SECTION 4. Section 706-669, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
16 amended to read as follows:

17 "**§706-669 Procedure for determining minimum term of**
18 **imprisonment.** (1) When a person has been sentenced to an
19 indeterminate or an extended term of imprisonment, the Hawaii
20 paroling authority shall, as soon as practicable but no later
21 than six months after commitment to the custody of the director



1 of the department of corrections and rehabilitation hold a
2 hearing, and on the basis of the hearing make an order fixing
3 the minimum term of imprisonment to be served before the
4 prisoner shall become eligible for parole.

5 (2) Before holding the hearing, the authority shall obtain
6 a complete report regarding the prisoner's life before entering
7 the institution and a full report of the prisoner's progress in
8 the institution. The report shall be a complete personality
9 evaluation for the purpose of determining the prisoner's degree
10 of propensity toward criminal activity.

11 (3) The prisoner shall be given reasonable notice of the
12 hearing under subsection (1) and shall be permitted to be heard
13 by the authority on the issue of the minimum term to be served
14 before the prisoner becomes eligible for parole. In addition,
15 the prisoner shall:

16 (a) Be permitted to consult with any persons the prisoner
17 reasonably desires, including the prisoner's own legal
18 counsel, in preparing for the hearing;

19 (b) Be permitted to be represented and assisted by counsel
20 at the hearing;



1 (c) Have counsel appointed to represent and assist the
2 prisoner if the prisoner so requests and cannot afford
3 to retain counsel; and

4 (d) Be informed of the prisoner's rights under
5 [f]paragraphs[+] (a), (b), and (c).

6 (4) The authority in its discretion may, in any particular
7 case and at any time, impose a special condition that the
8 prisoner will not be considered for parole unless and until the
9 prisoner has a record of continuous exemplary behavior.

10 (5) After sixty days notice to the prosecuting attorney,
11 the authority in its discretion may reduce the minimum term
12 fixed by its order pursuant to subsection (1).

13 (6) A verbatim stenographic or mechanical record of the
14 hearing shall be made and preserved in transcribed or
15 untranscribed form.

16 (7) The State shall have the right to be represented at
17 the hearing by the prosecuting attorney who may present written
18 testimony and make oral comments and the authority shall
19 consider such testimony and comments in reaching its decision.
20 The authority shall notify the prosecuting attorney of the
21 hearing at the time the prisoner is given notice of the hearing.



1 The hearing shall be opened to victims or their designees or
2 surviving immediate family members who may present a written
3 statement or make oral comments.

4 (8) The authority shall establish guidelines for the
5 uniform determination of minimum sentences which shall take into
6 account both the nature and degree of the offense of the
7 prisoner and the prisoner's criminal history and character. The
8 guidelines shall be public records and shall be made available
9 to the prisoner and to the prosecuting attorney and other
10 interested government agencies.

11 (9) Upon a motion filed by the defendant within ninety
12 days of issuance and service of the order fixing the minimum
13 term of imprisonment, the sentencing court may conduct judicial
14 review of the minimum term proceedings. The court, after
15 reviewing the record and proceedings, shall modify the order or
16 remand the case to the Hawaii paroling authority with
17 instructions for further proceedings if the order is:

18 (a) In violation of constitutional or statutory
19 provisions;

20 (b) In excess of the statutory authority or jurisdiction
21 of the Hawaii paroling authority;



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- 1 (c) Made upon unlawful procedure;
- 2 (d) Affected by other error of law;
- 3 (e) Clearly erroneous in view of substantive evidence on
- 4 the whole record; or
- 5 (f) Arbitrary, or capricious, or characterized by abuse of
- 6 discretion or clearly unwarranted exercise of
- 7 discretion."

8 SECTION 5. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
9 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
10 begun before its effective date.

11 SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
12 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

13 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 2026.

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INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 22 2025



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Report Title:

Minimum Terms; Judicial Review

Description:

Provides immediate judicial review of orders fixing minimum terms of imprisonment.

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