
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 existing
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)
14 rule 40; however HRPP rule 40 was not created for this purpose.
15 The petition is reserved for serious constitutional issues that
16 have 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 Hawaii 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 existing 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:

- 8 (1) Allow a party aggrieved by the judgment of a circuit
9 court on a minimum term order to appeal to the
10 intermediate appellate court;
- 11 (2) Require prisoners to be represented by counsel in any
12 petition challenging the minimum term proceedings;
- 13 (3) Require the supreme court to establish rules regarding
14 the form and content of the petition challenging
15 minimum term proceedings, the parties, and hearings on
16 the motion, and the referral to the public defender
17 where necessary; and
- 18 (4) Establish grounds for challenging a minimum term
19 order.

20 SECTION 2. Section 641-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
21 amended to read as follows:



1 "**§641-11 From circuit courts.** Any party aggrieved by the
2 judgment of a circuit court in a criminal matter or an order
3 pursuant to section 706-669(9) may appeal to the intermediate
4 appellate court, subject to chapter 602, in the manner and
5 within the time provided by the rules of court. The sentence of
6 the court in a criminal case shall be the judgment. All appeals
7 shall be filed with the clerk of the supreme court and shall be
8 subject to one filing fee."

9 SECTION 3. Section 706-669, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
10 amended to read as follows:

11 "**§706-669 Procedure for determining minimum term of**
12 **imprisonment.** (1) When a person has been sentenced to an
13 indeterminate or an extended term of imprisonment, the Hawaii
14 paroling authority shall, as soon as practicable but no later
15 than six months after commitment to the custody of the director
16 of the department of corrections and rehabilitation hold a
17 hearing, and on the basis of the hearing make an order fixing
18 the minimum term of imprisonment to be served before the
19 prisoner shall become eligible for parole.

20 (2) Before holding the hearing, the authority shall obtain
21 a complete report regarding the prisoner's life before entering



1 the institution and a full report of the prisoner's progress in
2 the institution. The report shall be a complete personality
3 evaluation for the purpose of determining the prisoner's degree
4 of propensity toward criminal activity.

5 (3) The prisoner shall be given reasonable notice of the
6 hearing under subsection (1) and shall be permitted to be heard
7 by the authority on the issue of the minimum term to be served
8 before the prisoner becomes eligible for parole. In addition,
9 the prisoner shall:

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

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

15 (c) Have counsel appointed to represent and assist the
16 prisoner if the prisoner so requests and cannot afford
17 to retain counsel; and

18 (d) Be informed of the prisoner's rights under
19 [†]paragraphs[†] (a), (b), and (c).

20 (4) The authority in its discretion may, in any particular
21 case and at any time, impose a special condition that the



1 prisoner will not be considered for parole unless and until the
2 prisoner has a record of continuous exemplary behavior.

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

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

9 (7) The State shall have the right to be represented at
10 the hearing by the prosecuting attorney who may present written
11 testimony and make oral comments and the authority shall
12 consider such testimony and comments in reaching its decision.
13 The authority shall notify the prosecuting attorney of the
14 hearing at the time the prisoner is given notice of the hearing.
15 The hearing shall be opened to victims or their designees or
16 surviving immediate family members who may present a written
17 statement or make oral comments.

18 (8) The authority shall establish guidelines for the
19 uniform determination of minimum sentences which shall take into
20 account both the nature and degree of the offense of the
21 prisoner and the prisoner's criminal history and character. The



1 guidelines shall be public records and shall be made available
2 to the prisoner and to the prosecuting attorney and other
3 interested government agencies.

4 (9) Prisoners shall have the right to representation by
5 counsel in any petition challenging the minimum term proceedings
6 that is filed under the rules of penal procedure within ninety
7 days of the issuance and service of the order fixing the minimum
8 term of imprisonment. The supreme court shall establish rules
9 regarding the form and content of the petition, the parties, and
10 hearings on the motion, and the referral to the public defender
11 where necessary. The grounds set forth in the petition
12 challenging the proceedings may allege that the minimum term
13 order is:

- 14 (a) In violation of constitutional or statutory
15 provisions;
16 (b) In excess of the statutory authority or jurisdiction
17 of the Hawaii paroling authority;
18 (c) Made upon unlawful procedure;
19 (d) Affected by other error of law;
20 (e) Clearly erroneous in view of substantive evidence on
21 the whole record; or



1 (f) Arbitrary, or capricious, or characterized by abuse of
2 discretion or clearly unwarranted exercise of
3 discretion."

4 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
7 the purposes of this Act.

8 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary for
9 the purposes of this Act.

10 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
13 the purposes of this Act.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of the
15 public defender for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 6. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
17 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
18 begun before its effective date.

19 SECTION 7. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
20 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

21 SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect on March 22, 2075.



Report Title:

Minimum Terms; Judicial Review; Appropriations

Description:

Allows a party aggrieved by the judgment of a circuit court on a minimum term order to appeal to the Intermediate Appellate Court. Requires prisoners to be represented by counsel in any petition challenging the minimum term proceedings. Requires the Supreme Court to establish rules. Establishes grounds for challenging a minimum term order. Appropriates funds. Effective 3/22/2075. (SD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

