



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i*

*Ka 'Oihana Ho'okolokolo, Moku'āina 'o Hawai'i*

**Testimony to the Thirty-Third State Legislature, 2026 Regular Session**

**House Committee on Finance**

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 5, 2026, 2:00 p.m.

Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference

By

Dana L. Nakasato

Applications Division Chief

Information Technology and Systems Department

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 2181, H.D. 1 – Relating to the Judiciary

**Purpose:** Beginning 7/1/2027, requires the Judiciary to develop, implement, and administer an automated court appearance reminder system that generates text message or electronic mail notifications for upcoming court appearances in certain types of cases. Requires persons making an arrest or issuing a citation to obtain, to the extent practicable, the offender's mobile telephone number and electronic mail address. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary provides the following comments:

The Judiciary developed an eReminder system several years ago which remains available for use by parties to a case as well as members of the public free of charge. The eReminder system allows court users to sign up for text and/or email reminders for court cases. The electronic messages are sent seven days before, one day before, and at 6:00 a.m. on the court date. This service is available for Circuit Court criminal, Circuit Court civil, Family Court divorce, and District Court traffic, criminal and civil cases. Since its inception, over 70,000 text messages have been sent through the system. More information on the system can be found on the Judiciary's web site at <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/ereminder>. The Judiciary recently made enhancements to the system consistent with the intent of this measure.



The Judiciary continues to assess the feasibility of enhancing the current eReminder system as envisioned in this measure. This includes an evaluation of whether the system is able to accommodate the strict specifications for what must be contained in a reminder, data collection requirements, and other considerations.

In the event this measure proceeds as written, the Judiciary appreciates the willingness to appropriate funds to address the costs of making significant changes needed for an opt-out system and annual increases in requisite funding to send more text messages. In 2025, the Judiciary had approximately 400,000 court hearings across all case types that could trigger multiple reminders. At this time, we estimate these costs to be \$100,000 annually. A one-time system change would cost \$170,000.

We respectfully request that any appropriation provided not supplant the Judiciary's existing funding or budget requests.

We continue to assess the time it would take to plan, design, and implement any operational and system changes, including the preparation of updated citation booklets. We would require a delayed effective date to implement responsibly.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
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No. \_\_\_\_\_

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2181, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO THE JUDICIARY.

by

Tommy Johnson, Director  
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & via Videoconference

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports the intent** of House Bill (HB) 2181, House Draft (HD) 1, which seeks to require the Judiciary to develop, implement, and administer an automated court appearance reminder system that generates text message or electronic mail notifications for upcoming court appearances in certain types of cases. It further seeks to require persons making an arrest or issuing a citation to obtain, to the extent practicable, the offender's mobile telephone number and electronic mail address.

The measure also requires the Judiciary to consult with DCR's Intake Service Centers (ISC) Division in designing the automated notification system. DCR welcomes and appreciates the opportunity to work with the Judiciary as this strategy directly intersects with ISC's pretrial supervision, assessment and case-management practices. The bill modernizes the state of Hawai'i's current opt-in notification approach by mandating an automated opt-out court notification system in its place, which supports

HB 2821, HD 1 Relating to the Judiciary.  
March 4, 2026  
Page 2

nationally recognized best practices that demonstrate a reduction in pretrial failure to appear rates in jurisdictions that have implemented this system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of the intent** of HB 2181, HD 1.

# Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i

# KAWAIILOA

March 4, 2026

House Committee on Finance

Hearing Time: 2:00 pm

Location: House conference room 308 via videoconference,

Re: HB2181 HD1, Relating to automated court appearance reminder system - **Support**

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we submit this testimony in strong support of HB 2181 HD1, which requires the Judiciary to develop and administer an automated court appearance reminder system that generates text message or electronic mail notifications for upcoming court appearances in certain types of cases. This bill requires people making an arrest to issue a citation to obtain, to the extent practicable, the offender's mobile telephone number and electronic mail address.

Automated reminders significantly reduced missed court dates. Failure to appear in court can result from transportation issues, child care, demanding work schedules, and forgetfulness. When someone misses a court hearing, a bench warrant is often issued and can lead to arrest, detention, and additional charges, even if the case is relatively minor. Reminder systems reduce unnecessary warrants and jail bookings for simple non-appearance, allowing courts to focus on substantive matters. In 2025, the National Institute of Health reported that text messages reduced missed probation and parole appointments by more than 40%.

We strongly support HB2181 HD1 because reminders strengthen procedural fairness and ensure individuals are meaningfully informed of their obligations, thereby reducing avoidable default-judgment penalties. Marginalized communities, parents, students, and those who are housing insecure are disproportionately impacted by missed court dates, and a reminder system ensures that people will receive clear and timely notice from an accessible device, increasing access to justice.

With more people attending their court hearings, this bill would reduce rescheduling costs and law enforcement time spent on warrant service. An automated messaging system is a low-cost alternative to the significant financial burden of incarceration and repeated court proceedings. Because 91% of adults have a mobile device, this bill aims to meet people where they are by using modern technology to improve accessibility and efficiency. HB2181 HD1 is a practical, data-driven, and fiscally responsible solution to missed court hearings, preventing long-term harm and breaking the cycle before it begins. In addition, this bill will allow courts to operate more efficiently, with fewer cases delayed by failure to appear, and resources can be used to resolve cases on the merits, without having to focus on procedural obstacles.

Because Hawai'i has the nation's highest cost of living, many residents work multiple jobs, and a missed court date can jeopardize employment, housing, and family responsibilities, which are acute in the State of Hawai'i. Hawai'i residents under these pressures are more likely to miss a court hearing and need advance, consistent reminders to make necessary arrangements to appear in court. Therefore, we respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure because it supports diverse situations and promotes accountability within our justice system.

# Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i

# KAWAIILOA

March 5, 2026

House Committee on Finance

Hearing Time: 2:00 pm

Location: Conference Room 308

Re: HB2181 HD1, Relating to the Judiciary - **Support**

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we submit this testimony in strong support of HB2181 HD1, which requires the Judiciary to develop and administer an automated court appearance reminder system that generates text message or electronic mail notifications for upcoming court appearances in certain types of cases. This bill requires people making an arrest to issue a citation to obtain, to the extent practicable, the offender's mobile telephone number and electronic mail address. It allows arrested persons to "opt out."

Automated reminders significantly reduced missed court dates. Failure to appear in court can result from transportation issues, child care, demanding work schedules, and forgetfulness. When someone misses a court hearing, a bench warrant is often issued and can lead to arrest, detention, and additional charges, even if the case is relatively minor. Reminder systems reduce unnecessary warrants and jail bookings for simple non-appearance, allowing courts to focus on substantive matters. In 2025, the National Institute of Health reported that text messages reduced missed probation and parole appointments by more than 40%.

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Testimony from:  
Lisel Petis, Policy Director, R Street Institute

**Testimony in Support of HB 2181: “Relating to the Judiciary.”**

March 5, 2026

House Finance Committee

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Lisel Petis, and I am the policy director of criminal justice and civil liberties at the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. R Street engages in policy research and analysis dedicated to common sense solutions that make government work smarter and more effectively. Given our commitment to pragmatic policies that improve fairness, public safety, and government accountability, I am here in support of House Bill 2181.<sup>1</sup>

H.B. 2181 is a fiscally responsible, evidence-based solution to reduce avoidable costs for the courts, law enforcement, and taxpayers.

When people miss court, the public pays twice. First, the court, prosecutors, and defense attorneys lose the time and value of the hearing that was scheduled. Second, the system incurs the cost of follow-up work that a missed appearance triggers, including rescheduling, additional notices, staff time, and in some cases bench warrants and jail intake. These are predictable costs that add up quickly. Studies estimate court nonappearances can cost up to \$1,500 per occurrence.<sup>2</sup>

Automated court reminders are a proven way to reduce missed court dates at very low cost. Nearly 98 percent of Americans own a cell phone, which means the delivery system already exists for most defendants.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, dentists, restaurants and hair salons routinely use automated reminders to reduce missed appointments and reservations—because they are cost-effective. As reminders become not just normal for appointments, but expected, courts have a meaningful opportunity to do the same. State

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<sup>1</sup> H.B. 2181.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session/measure\\_indiv.aspx?billtype=HB&billnumber=2181&year=2026](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=HB&billnumber=2181&year=2026).

<sup>2</sup> Alissa Fishbane et al, “Improving Court Attendance: The Essential Guide to Court Reminder Programs,” Ideas42, May 2025. [https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530\\_RemindersRpt\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530_RemindersRpt_Final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> “Mobile Fact Sheet,” Pew Research Center, Nov. 20, 2025. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile>.

studies show the impact: automated reminder systems can reduce failures to appear by 20 to 40 percent on average.<sup>4</sup>

Currently in Hawai'i, defendants must proactively "opt-in" to receive court reminders—an extra step that behavioral scientists have found creates a barrier to access and dramatically reduces participation.<sup>5</sup> Opt-in reminder states show enrollment rates of only two to 30 percent.<sup>6</sup> Under Hawai'i's opt-in system, recent information suggests reminders went out for less than 4 percent of court hearings.<sup>7</sup> In comparison, automated reminders produce much higher participation, commonly in the 70 to 90 percent range.<sup>8</sup>

There are modest upfront costs to develop or integrate an automated reminder system, but the savings can begin quickly, and are significant in the long-term. States have implemented such programs for roughly \$35,000 to \$600,000, with ongoing costs often under 1 cent per message.<sup>9</sup> Even modest reductions in missed appearances can offset implementation costs. Preventing 100 missed appearances avoids roughly \$150,000 in administrative burden using the \$1,500 estimate. Preventing 500 avoids roughly \$750,000.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support HB 2181 and to treat automated court reminders as a practical investment that reduces recurring system costs while improving court efficiency and fairness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Lisel Petis  
Policy Director  
R Street Institute  
[lpetis@rstreet.org](mailto:lpetis@rstreet.org)

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<sup>4</sup> "States Underuse Court Date Reminders," Pew, May 12, 2025. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/05/states-underuse-court-date-reminders>; Fishbane. [https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530\\_RemindersRpt\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530_RemindersRpt_Final.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> "eReminders for Court Dates," Hawai'i State Judiciary, "last accessed Feb. 3, 2006. <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/ereminder>; Samantha Hammer et al., "Smart Court Appearance Strategies: Court Date Reminders," Ideas42, last accessed Feb. 3, 2006. <https://www.ideas42.org/blog/smart-court-appearance-strategies-court-date-reminders>.

<sup>6</sup> Pew. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/05/states-underuse-court-date-reminders>.

<sup>7</sup> Michelle Acosta, "Testimony to the Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session," Feb. 4, 2026 (Based on 400,000 hearings per year and only 70,000 reminders being sent since the inception of the program in 2021). [https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2026/Testimony/HB2181\\_TESTIMONY\\_JHA\\_02-04-26\\_PDF](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2026/Testimony/HB2181_TESTIMONY_JHA_02-04-26_PDF).

<sup>8</sup> Pew. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/05/states-underuse-court-date-reminder>.

<sup>9</sup> Pew. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/05/states-underuse-court-date-reminders>; Isabel Shapiro, "Investments in Text Reminders Bring State Courts Big Gains," Pew, Jan. 15, 2026. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2026/01/15/investments-in-text-reminders-bring-state-courts-big-gains>.

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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*Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor*



## COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 5, 2026

2:00 PM

Room 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

## **STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 2181 HD1 - COURT APPEARANCES**

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for almost three decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,669 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars<sup>1</sup> and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on February 16, 2026. We are always mindful that 797 of Hawai'i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons extends a warm mahalo nui to you for scheduling this important bill. In these challenging times, we appreciate your hearing this bill that gives grace to and acknowledges that there are too many families in Hawai'i struggling to make ends meet. With a myriad of responsibilities such as arranging for child care, caregiving to an ailing family member, lack of transportation, car troubles, etc. life can be overwhelming for so many people.

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<sup>1</sup> DCR Weekly Population Report, February 16, 2026

[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-02-16.pdf](#)

HB 2181 HD1 enhances the court reminder system and gives people a nudge when they are managing multiple family issues. The bill requires the Judiciary to develop, implement, and administer an automated court appearance reminder system that generates text message or electronic mail notifications for upcoming court appearances in all traffic and criminal cases in the district, family, and circuit courts beginning July 1, 2027. It also requires persons making an arrest or issuing a citation to obtain, to the extent practicable, the offender's mobile telephone number and electronic mail address after identifying themselves.

Since we know that there are a significant number of people and families who are identified as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), this is an important and humane measure. In Hawai'i, many families and individuals live above the poverty line but still struggle to afford the essentials for a basic quality of life. Known as the ALICE population, these working households are facing increasing financial pressures as the cost of living rises. The 2024 update of the ALICE report<sup>2</sup> sheds light on these challenges and provides critical insights into the financial stability of Hawai'i's working families. By exploring updated survival budgets, the impacts of tax credits, and the unique struggles of specific communities like Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, this report calls for targeted actions to ensure economic stability and growth for all.

The latest ALICE report updates the Survival Budget based on 2022 census data, highlighting a significant increase in the cost of living. The new budget emphasizes the crucial role of tax credits in supporting working families and showcases the adverse effects felt when these credits end.

- 2023 Survival Budget (using 2021 data) for a family of four (two adults, two young children): \$85,812
- 2024 Survival Budget (using 2022 data) for the same family: \$99,552 (a 16% increase)
- 2023 Survival Budget for a single adult: \$36,912
- 2024 Survival Budget for a single adult: \$39,384 (a 6.6% increase, equating to \$19.69 per hour)

For context, the average wage for a single earner in Hawai'i is \$52,734, or \$25.35 per hour, while the current minimum wage stands at \$14 per hour.

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<sup>2</sup> **ALICE IN THE CROSSCURRENTS – 2024 UPDATE**

[ALICE in the Crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Hawai'i](#)

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) are particularly affected by the current economic climate, with **57% of NHPI households falling below the ALICE threshold**. This statistic points to the need for targeted interventions to support the economic mobility and counteract the racial disparities that persist through both historic and current systems.

Enhancing the court reminder system and understanding Hawai`i's cultural context, we can increase the number of people who show up for their court dates and avoid the stress of having a bench warrant looming over their lives. This enhancement will save the courts' time and money and will demonstrate the values that our communities hold dear. **WE ARE HAWAI`I, WE CARE FOR AND ABOUT EACH OTHER!**

Community Alliance on Prisons urges the committee to pass this measure that will help those individuals and families who are struggling daily in the midst of budget cuts.

Mahalo to the committee for hearing and, hopefully, passing this bill. Community Alliance on Prisons is grateful to FIN!



February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026

To: Members of the Hawaii (Hawai'i)<sup>1</sup> House of Representatives

From: Isabel Shapiro, The Pew Charitable Trusts (*Delivered electronically*)

**RE: Pew Analysis of HB 2181 Relating to the Judiciary re: Automated Enrollment for Court Date Reminders**

Dear Speaker Nakamura, Vice Speaker Ichiyama, and members of the Hawaii (Hawai'i) House of Representatives:

The Pew Charitable Trusts is an independent non-partisan organization that conducts research and provides technical assistance to advance data-driven policy solutions. Pew's courts & communities project partners with state and local court systems to ensure that people can meaningfully participate in their court cases and to reduce unnecessary harm and disparities perpetuated by court involvement. Our team has done extensive work with state courts to examine the consequences of missed court dates and the best ways to improve appearance rates.

As explained below, after reviewing **HB 2181** and the relevant national research on court appearance and text message reminders, we find that **this bill could improve the rate at which people appear for criminal and traffic hearings and reduce jail admissions** in Hawaii (Hawai'i) by automating enrollment in the state's pre-existing court date text reminder system.

When someone doesn't show up for their hearing, it slows down court operations and wastes the valuable time of judges, attorneys, and court staff. In [most states](#), including Hawaii (Hawai'i), missing a court date can lead to a penal summons, a bench warrant, or new charges for contempt of court. These outcomes can ultimately lead to arrest and jail for the person who missed court – even if they simply forgot and even if the underlying charge is a misdemeanor. When we worked in [Michigan in 2019](#), we found that failure to appear was the number one reason for arrest in the state. When we worked in [North Carolina in 2021](#), we saw that warrants for missing court were the number one reason for admission to jail.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'okina (') represents the glottal stop consonant, or a pause in speech, in the Hawaiian language. It is a symbol of Hawaiian identity that allows for accurate pronunciation and meaning when spoken. It is used throughout this letter.

Research consistently shows that sending reminders before court dates can increase appearance rates and reduce collateral consequences. At least four randomized controlled trials—the gold standard in research—have shown that text message reminders reduce missed court appearances by 20% to 40%.<sup>2</sup> And one of those studies found even [greater improvements](#) for individuals with lower incomes and people of color.

But, for text message reminders to work, they must reach people. Pew found in a [recent 50-state survey](#) that states that leave it to individuals to sign themselves up for reminders, like Hawaii, see much less participation in their programs than states that automatically enroll court users. In Arizona (an automatic enrollment state), 90% of court users with eligible cases receive court date reminders. In Pennsylvania, however, where court users must opt in to the program, only 2% of court users with eligible cases had signed up for court reminders.

**Based on the foregoing research, our assessment of HB 2181 is that if enacted, the policy change would likely improve appearance rates and reduce local justice system costs associated with arresting and jailing people who have missed court.**

If there is interest in reviewing more of Pew’s research, learning about other states’ experiences, our reports, briefs, and fact sheets are available at <https://www.pew.org/en/projects/courts-and-communities>.

Respectfully,

Isabel Shapiro  
Principal Associate, Courts and Communities Project  
The Pew Charitable Trusts

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<sup>2</sup> Zottola, Angela. “A Meta-Analysis of Court Reminder Interventions.” *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 2022.

## Hawai'i House Committee on Finance

March 3, 2026

### Testimony in Support of HB 2181: Relating to the Judiciary

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alissa Fishbane and I am a Managing Director at ideas42, a nonprofit with deep expertise in human behavior. Through our (Un)warranted initiative, we help state and local jurisdictions around the country set up [effective court reminder programs](#) and work with policymakers to codify practices proven to significantly decrease missed court dates.

We focus on this issue because missed court creates case backlogs, overburdens dockets, wastes financial and human resources, and leads to jail overcrowding. We conservatively estimate **each missed court date costs government \$1,496** in staff time and other resources.<sup>1</sup>

We strongly support HB 2181, which will enable an automated court reminder system with expanded participation and proven message content. Research across the country demonstrates higher appearance rates from reminder programs that use these best practices.

By improving its reminder system, Hawai'i can significantly reduce avoidable court backlogs, warrants, arrests, and incarceration that result when people accidentally miss court. Increasing the use and content of reminders will **drastically improve appearance rates, relieving needless pressures on courts, law enforcement, jails, budgets, taxpayers, individuals, families, and employers.**

#### I. Automated Court Reminders Reduce More Missed Court Dates

The most common reason for missing court is forgetting.<sup>2</sup> Yet forgetting appointments is not unique to the legal system: doctor appointments are missed at rates that are comparable or even higher than court dates. Understanding this, doctors, restaurants, hair salons, and many other entities consistently use reminders to reduce nonappearance rates.<sup>3</sup> It's become a **standard practice because it works.**

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<sup>1</sup> Fishbane, Alissa et al. (2025) The Essential Guide to Court Reminder Programs. ideas42. [https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530\\_RemindersRpt\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530_RemindersRpt_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Crime and Justice Institute. "What Really Prevents Court Appearance?" February 2025. <https://www.cjinstitute.org/assets/sites/2/2025/02/What-Really-Prevents-Court-Appearance.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (2008). Audit of Veterans Health Administration's Efforts to Reduce Unused Outpatient Appointments. p.i. <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-08-00879-36.pdf>; Crutchfield, T., Kistler, C. (2017). Getting patients in the door: medical appointment reminder preferences. Patient Prefer Adherence. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5279837/>

Reminders have been shown in multiple contexts to be a cost-effective and impactful way to **reduce missed court rates by 20-40%**.<sup>4</sup> In addition, ideas42 has found that behaviorally informed text messages reminders reduce nonappearance rates by **twice as much for communities with the lowest wealth**.<sup>5</sup>

These benefits are seen only when reminder programs reach the majority of people with active cases. Numerous behavioral science studies demonstrate that when people are asked to voluntarily enroll in something – for their own benefit – they do so at very low rates in comparison to systems that automatically enroll them. This is because even a seemingly simple process requires many steps (knowing about the program, remembering to sign up, taking the time to do so, etc.), which lead to people to delay and forget.

Existing court reminder systems demonstrate the importance of automatic enrollment: in Colorado, participation in the statewide court reminder program **increased by 300% after switching from voluntary to automatic enrollment**.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, very few people (<3%) request to stop receiving messages. Of those who gave a reason for opting out of the program, only 0.02% said they did not want to receive texts, and more people said it was an incorrect or wrong phone number. This data shows that Colorado is **reaching over 97% of people correctly and who want the reminders**.<sup>7</sup>

This trend is seen across states: those with **automatic enrollment (“opt-out”) have 72-90% participation, while those with voluntary sign up (opt-in) reach only 2-30% of eligible cases**.<sup>8</sup>

Switching to auto-enrollment is good for everyone. The more people show up to court, the less time is spent rescheduling court dates, issuing warrants, making arrests and bookings, and completing other administrative tasks resulting from nonappearance. Furthermore, a recent study of people detained for missing court showed that 90% want court reminders, and among them 97% were comfortable with automatic enrollment.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Effective Court Reminder Systems Save Money and Reduce Workloads

Text messaging systems, which overall cost relatively little to set up and maintain, save a huge amount of government time and money, year after year. For **every court date attended, the**

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<sup>4</sup> Zottola, Samantha A., et al. (2022). Court date reminders reduce court nonappearance: A meta-analysis. *Criminology & Public Policy*, DOI: 10.1111/1745-9133.12610.

<sup>5</sup> Fishbane, A., et al. (2020). “Behavioral nudges reduce failure to appear for court.” *Science*, 370(6517). DOI: [10.1126/science.abb6591](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abb6591).

<sup>6</sup> See Colorado Court Text Reminder Data dashboard, graph: “Total Messages by eCourtDate.” The change from voluntary to automatic enrollment occurred between September and October 2022. <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiMjViMT1OTMzE2Zi00NWY0LWE5ODctNDMxNDQ0YjM3ZTViIiwidCI6IjNiOWMwZWZjLWExNmItNGQ1MS04MDg4LTZiMjYyYTA3NyJ9&pageName=ReportSection>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2025) “States Underuse Court Date Reminders” <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/05/states-underuse-court-date-reminders>

<sup>9</sup> Magnuson, S., Dezember, A., Kuehmeier, K., Green, C., and Gautschi, D. (2023). “Understanding Court Absence and Reframing ‘Failure to Appear.’” Justice System Partners. <https://justicesystempartners.org/lake-county-court-appearance-study/>

**government saves on the costs of issuing a warrant, arresting, booking, and jailing a person, rescheduling hearings, and supervising more people.** Additionally, court reminders move cases forward and allow law enforcement to focus on issues of public safety.

In our experience, law enforcement and court staff see the value of investing a small amount of time up front to collect phone numbers and email addresses, to the greatest extent possible. Being able to send more reminders to more people, and from the very beginning of their case (as often the first out-of-custody hearing is the most missed),<sup>10</sup> will lead to the greatest efficiency and reduced workloads for judges and court staff, sheriffs and police departments, and prosecutors and defenders.

ideas42 estimates that at least \$2,850 is saved for every court date attended, based on easily quantified costs to both government and people.<sup>11</sup> Because the cost of running the system is low (less than 1 cent per message), even with set up costs we find that reminders run **below \$1 per case.**<sup>12</sup>

Court reminder systems with good reach have resulted in substantial savings. For example, in Hennepin County District Court, Minnesota court reminders lead to an **estimated cost savings of over \$3 million per year**, based on reduced costs of additional hearings and jail time for missed court dates.<sup>13</sup>

### **III. Well-Designed Court Reminders Improve Outcomes for Individuals and Communities**

Missed court dates are costly to all legal agencies, individuals with court cases, and communities at large. One missed court date can lead to warrant, additional fines, and jail.

Any amount of time in jail jeopardizes jobs, economic security, housing, and child custody, while causing trauma to individuals, their families, and their community. It also increases the likelihood of future arrests and a longer sentence, two outcomes that harm public safety and create further instability.<sup>14</sup> Warrants on their own cause great harm: being “marked” with a warrant increases a person’s likelihood of later involvement in the system, and can negatively affect their job prospects, housing and other needs.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, people with open warrants often avoid places where they could be identified and are therefore less likely to get medical care, show up at regular jobs, call the police, or use social services.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to reaching as many people as possible through automated systems and active collection of phone numbers and email addresses, the **message design of reminders matters.**

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<sup>10</sup> Fishbane, Alissa et al. (2025) The Essential Guide to Court Reminder Programs. ideas42. [https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530\\_RemindersRpt\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/i42-1530_RemindersRpt_Final.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Podkopcac, M. (2019). Using Reminders to Reduce Failure to Appear in Court. Fourth Judicial District of Minnesota, Hennepin County.

<sup>14</sup> The Hidden Costs of Pretrial Revisited, Executive Summary, March 21, 2022. <https://craftmediabucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/HiddenCosts.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> I. Kohler-Hausmann, Misdemeanor justice: Control without conviction. *Am. J. Sociol.* 119, 351–393 (2013). doi: 10.1086/674743

<sup>16</sup> A. Goffman, On the run: Wanted men in a Philadelphia ghetto. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* 74, 339–357 (2009). doi: 10.1177/000312240907400301

For example, ideas42 has found that including specific elements such as the consequences of not showing up and what to expect at court, **can increase effectiveness by 65%**.<sup>17</sup>

Well-designed court reminders help more people and can be implemented at no additional cost. Greater impact results in higher workforce participation, reduced new criminal activity, and stronger families and communities. And, by saving money and time, they further free up resources to address public safety and other needs.

In summary, **everyone benefits from a reminder system that follows best practices:** automates enrollment, expands phone number collection, and sends messages proven to work best. The small investment yields **large benefits for courts, law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, employers, taxpayers, and individuals** alike.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [alissa@ideas42.org](mailto:alissa@ideas42.org) with any questions, or for models or pro-bono guidance, as outlined in our [Essential Guide to Court Reminder Programs](#) for state and local courts. We would be honored to be a resource at any time.

Sincerely,

Alissa Fishbane  
Managing Director  
ideas42

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<sup>17</sup> Fishbane, A., et al. (2020). "Behavioral nudges reduce failure to appear for court." Science, 370(6517). DOI: [10.1126/science.abb6591](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abb6591).

**HB-2181-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 5:01:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lanette Bourg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm in support of HB2181.

Thank you,

Lanette Bourg

**HB-2181-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:01:17 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carolyn Eaton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carolyn Eaton. I am a resident of Honolulu, and I strongly support this measure. The automated court appearance reminder system it will engender will be the difference between appearance and "no show" for some defendants. The Judiciary, for whom timely appearance allows steady processing, will craft and administer this reminder system, thereby saving defendants, whose life circumstances may be chaotic, from an unplanned failure to appear.

Mahalo for your support of this intervention on behalf of our court system and those who have been charged to appear. Mahalo for your appreciation that when courts can operate smoothly, greater justice may prevail. I appreciate your considering my testimony.

**HB-2181-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 1:02:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Donna P. Van Osdol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee:

This bill requires the use of a system to text message citizens a reminder of their respective court dates in the district, family, and circuit courts.

I support this measure!

Thank you for your time.

**HB-2181-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:23:24 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-2181-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:33:32 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Charmaine Doran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha:

I am submitting written testimony in strong support of HB2181 HD1. This measure seeks to modernize Hawaii’s judiciary by requiring it to develop and implement an automated system that sends text message or email reminders for upcoming court appearances.

For working families, caregivers, and anyone juggling multiple obligations, a simple reminder can be the difference between appearing in court and an unnecessary bench warrant. Evidence shared by advocates notes that the average cost of a missed appearance to the system and community is very expensive. Additionally, countless studies have demonstrated that for the working poor one missed appearance can result in an endless cycle of fines, fees, and court appearances. Finally, the bill’s approach—using routinely collected contact information to send timely, factual reminders—aligns with successful systems in other states and respects privacy while improving access to justice.

I respectfully ask the Committee to pass HB2181 HD1.

Mahalo for your time and service.

Charmaine Doran

**HB-2181-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/5/2026 9:17:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Todd and Committee Members,

I support HB 2181 HD1.

Implementing a simple automated reminder system for court appearances is a practical step that can reduce missed court dates, improve accountability, and lessen unnecessary administrative costs. When individuals fail to appear, it places additional strain on the courts and wastes taxpayer resources.

Providing text or email reminders is a reasonable and efficient tool that helps individuals meet their obligations while allowing the Judiciary to operate more effectively.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of HB 2181 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Teri Kia Savaiinaea  
Wai‘anae, Hawai‘i