

A Bill for an Act Relating to a Youth Commission.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that increasing youth participation in the public policymaking process is a vital state interest. Hawaii has the lowest youth voter participation rate in the United States. In 2008, Hawaii had the lowest voter participation rate among eighteen to twenty-nine year olds in the country at thirty-one per cent, compared to fifty-seven per cent voter participation among those thirty years of age and older.

The legislature further finds that youth aged sixteen and seventeen may legally work, pay taxes, marry, and drive. However, they are denied a formal role in the political process because they are prohibited from voting. Although youth under the age of eighteen may not vote, they deserve access and input through other means to the policymaking process.

Many of the most persistent issues facing the State, such as affordable housing, jobs, and education, primarily affect youth. Youth are the ones who need a place to live, depend on good employment to support themselves and their families, and seek quality education for their children, if applicable. Yet after many decades, these issues remain among the most difficult to address.

The legislature further finds that a youth commission would enable a greater role for young people in the policymaking process. Furthermore, the legislature and governor would benefit from additional formal input from youth on the effect of legislation on young people in the State.

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Establish a youth commission within the office of youth services to advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the State; and
- (2) Appropriate funds for the hiring of one staff position to administer the youth commission and other administration costs.

SECTION 2. Chapter 352D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§352D- Youth commission. (a) There is established within the office of youth services, for administrative purposes only, a youth commission to advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the State.

(b) The commission shall:

- (1) Respond to requests for comment and recommendation on matters referred to it by the governor or legislature;
- (2) Conduct research and community outreach regarding the needs of the youth of Hawaii, including but not limited to increasing youth participation in government and public policy;
- (3) Make recommendations addressing the concerns and needs of the youth of Hawaii; and
- (4) Report to the governor and legislature the activities, goals, and accomplishments of the commission by July 1 of each calendar year beginning on July 1, 2019.

(c) The youth commission shall consist of fifteen members between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four and shall not be subject to section 26-34. Of the members:

- (1) Five members shall be appointed by the governor; provided that the governor shall ensure that each county is represented by at least one appointee; provided further that the governor shall ensure that at least one member is a previous recipient of youth services;
- (2) Five members shall be appointed by the president of the senate; and
- (3) Five members shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

provided that the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint members representing the diversity of the State.

(d) Each member shall be appointed for a term of two years; provided that the initial terms of the appointed members shall be staggered as follows:

- (1) Six members, two each appointed by the governor, the president of the senate, and the speaker of the house of representatives, to serve three-year terms;
- (2) Six members, two each appointed by the governor, the president of the senate, and the speaker of the house of representatives, to serve two-year terms; and
- (3) Three members, one each appointed by the governor, the president of the senate, and the speaker of the house of representatives, to serve one-year terms.

(e) The youth commission shall annually elect a chairperson.

(f) Eight members of the youth commission shall constitute a quorum to do business. Any action taken by the commission shall be validated by a simple majority of the quorum.

(g) The youth commission members may invite other individuals to participate in commission activities as temporary, nonvoting members.

(h) If the governor, president of the senate, or speaker of the house of representatives fails to appoint a member to the youth commission for any reason within six months after a vacancy occurs, the commission by a majority vote may appoint a person who satisfies the requirements of this section to the commission to fill the vacancy."

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$81,416 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 for the hiring of one staff position to administer the youth commission and other associated administrative costs.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of youth services for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

(Approved July 5, 2018.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.