



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES
707 Richards Street, Suite 525
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

January 31, 2017

TO: The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor

FROM: Merton Chinen, Executive Director

SUBJECT: **SB 417, Relating to Children**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 1, 2017, 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

OFFICE'S POSITION: OYS defers to the Judiciary on this measure, and has the following comments:

- The measure would provide options to more effectively address school attendance, while preventing unnecessary penetration into the formal juvenile justice system.
- Truancy, a status offense, often is the result of deeper and more complex issues, including school environment, family functioning, health care, poverty, homelessness, and cultural adaptation.
- A one size fits all policy and procedure may not lead to better outcomes, if the underlying factors and dynamics affecting attendance at school are not properly addressed.

Currently, efforts are underway through ongoing partnerships with various agencies and resources such as the police, Department of Education, Judiciary, community-based agencies, and the University of Hawaii, to address truancy and increase school attendance.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the measure is to provide that informal adjustment shall be prioritized over formal action for a child under family court jurisdiction solely as a result of truancy.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR

Sen. Gil Keith-Agaran, Chair

Sen. Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

9:00 a.m.

Room 016

STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 417 - INFORMAL ADJUSTMENT FOR TRUANCY

Aloha Chair Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Rhoads 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 two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 6,000 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars or under the "care and custody" of the Department of Public Safety. We are always mindful that approximately 1,400 of Hawai'i's imprisoned people are serving their sentences abroad thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Native Hawaiians, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support of SB 417 and we want to thank the Chair for introducing this common-sense measure. Prioritizing informal adjustment, such as the restorative justice process to address truancy, is a far better way to understand what is going on with our youth. We need to help our youth navigate their way through the choppy waters of our world.

Punitive measures cause lasting harm and one thing we should not do is label our youth and brand them as problems.

Instead, let us help our youth reach their fullest potential with a high degree of self-esteem, curiosity and enthusiasm for their lives and communities.

Mahalo for this opportunity to champion our youth!