



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
**OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES**  
1010 Richards Street, Suite 314  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

April 2, 2018

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Merton Chinen, Executive Director

**SUBJECT: HB 1716 HD1, Relating to a Youth Commission**

Hearing: Wednesday, April 4, 2018, 10:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

**OFFICE'S POSITION:** OYS supports the intent of the measure but requests that any appropriation not affect the priorities in the Executive Biennium Budget. There are currently youth driven advisory boards or councils in the community that focus on areas pertinent to their specific interests, such as the HI HOPES Youth Advisory Council that aims to educate, advocate, and collaborate with the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services, to improve the child welfare system, including foster care. Another example is the Teen Link Hawaii Youth Advisors sponsored by the Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii that provides valuable input regarding youth perspectives on living a substance-free lifestyle. OYS believes the youth voice should be recognized and included in determining policies and recommendations on important matters impacting their lives. OYS has the following additional comments on coordinating and sustaining an effective youth advisory commission:

- Members should be diverse, including a strong representation of youth at risk.
- Adequate funding for coordinating, training and implementation is critical for success.
- Recognize youth have busy schedules, need flexible options for meetings, and should be compensated accordingly for their valuable participation.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the measure is to establish a youth advisory commission within the Office of Youth Services to advise the Governor and Legislature on issues relating to youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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## COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

Sen. Gil Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Thursday, April 4, 2018

10:30 am

Room 211

## STRONG SUPPORT - HB 1716 HD1 - YOUTH COMMISSION in OYS

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran 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 more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the families of **ASHLEY GREY, DAISY KASITATI, JOEY O'MALLEY, JESSICA FORTSON AND ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED UNDER THE "CARE AND CUSTODY" OF THE STATE** as well as the approximately 5,500 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars or under the "care and custody" of the Department of Public Safety on any given day. We are always mindful that approximately 1,600 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 Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

HB 1716 HD1 establishes 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 relating to youth and appropriates funds for this purpose.

This Commission is a great way to engage our children and youth in civic issues and to help them understand the broader reach of policymaking. The Commission would be strengthened by including youth (male and female) who have been houseless, youth who have been justice-involved and youth who have been in the foster care system. This would enhance the Commission's knowledge and thinking about better ways to assist our youth who are struggling with challenges in their lives.

*Recognizing and involving youth in a community's decision-making processes is about more than engaging young people for the sake of inclusivity. It's about recognizing the measurable benefits youth offer to organizations and whole communities.*

We urge the committee to pass this bill and help our children and youth become active and engaged participants in civic issues. These are our future leaders and our greatest treasures!

Mahalo for hearing this important bill. We urge the committee to pass it. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

*The youth is the hope of our future.*

Jose Rizal



**TO:** Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

**DATE/LOCATION:** Tuesday, April 4, 2018; 10:30 a.m., Conference Room 211

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1716 RELATING TO A YOUTH COMMISSION**

**We support HB 1716– Relating to a youth commission.** This bill establishes 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 relating to youth. We should continue to create opportunities where diverse perspectives are included, especially those of the consumers.

Youth issues should include youth voices. The commission is a great way to engage the future generation in real-world conversations about the issues surrounding their lives and our communities. By involving our youth, we will encourage them to be fully engaged in Hawaii's current civic landscape and will affirm that their voice matters. Civic engagement for our youth will help them to learn new skills, gain experience and be active participants in helping to create a bright future for Hawaii.

As an organization who works together with our youth, we wholeheartedly support giving youth a voice. We support giving them the opportunities to have a seat at the table. Our children are our future and should be active participants in the work of our community. Our youth have a lot to share... it is important that we listen. Let's build up the next generation of innovative thinkers, problem solvers, solution builders and civic leaders!

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii's not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 18,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families

identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 16 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of HB 1716**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

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**TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE BILL 1716, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO A YOUTH COMMISSION**

**Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Hon. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Hon. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, April 4, 2018, 10:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMUAlliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 400 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in support of House Bill 1716, HD 1, relating to a youth commission.

Sex traffickers prey on our state's school children, often loitering around public school campuses to target our children. Traffickers are experts in observing and selecting their victims, and often infiltrate public schools by using students to recruit their peers. One of the largest child sex trafficking rings discovered on Hawai'i's shores was unearthed in 2014. It included 16 students, most whom were students at Mililani High School and Moanalua High School, two of our state's top performing schools. Currently, IMUAlliance is involved in investigations at six schools facing trafficking problems, all of which were initiated this year.

We are one of the state's largest victim service providers for survivors of sex trafficking, for which childhood sexual abuse is frequently a precursor. Over the past 10 years, we have provided comprehensive direct intervention services to 130 victims, successfully emancipating them from slavery and assisting in their restoration, while providing a range of targeted services to over 1,000 victims in total. We are also a leading provider of anti-sexual-exploitation education, teaching over 10,000 students each year about the perils of sex trafficking and the commercial sex trade. When we provide anti-trafficking instruction in the Department of Education schools, students report that themselves or someone they know are being or at risk of being trafficking at a 2:1 ratio—two victims for every class we teach. Teachers, in turn, frequently request information and assistance in meeting the needs of traumatized students and preventing their children from being ensnared by our state's prolific slave trade. Each of the victims we have assisted has suffered

from complex and overlapping trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, dissociation, parasuicidal behavior, and substance abuse. Trafficking-related trauma can lead to a complete loss of identity. A victim we cared for in 2016, for example, had become so heavily bonded to her pimp that while under his grasp, she couldn't remember her own name.

Sex trafficking is just one of many issues facing the youth of Hawai'i, whose voices are too often silenced in policymaking involving children's well-being. From topics ranging from bullying prevention to improving our public school system, our state would benefit from coordinating a forum to amplify the opinions of our most vulnerable constituents. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Sincerely,  
Kris Coffield  
*Executive Director*  
IMUAlliance

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2018 2:41:14 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2018 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Melodie Aduja	Testifying for Oahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i	Support	No

**Comments:**

To the Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair; the Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

Good morning, my name is Melodie Aduja. I serve as Chair of the Oahu County Legislative Priorities Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill No 1716 HD1, relating to the Youth Commission; Office of Youth Services; and an appropriation.

The OCC Legislative Priorities Committee is in favor of House Bill No. 1716 HD1 and support its passage.

House Bill No. 1716 HD1, is in accord with the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i ("DPH"), 2016, as it establishes 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 relating to youth, and appropriates funds.

The DPH Platform provides that "[w]e believe that all families should have an equal opportunity to build their assets and become self-sufficient, and we support a strong safety net of programs that will afford them the opportunity to do so. We must protect our children, our future, from violence and neglect and provide them with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and thrive.

We support initiatives that enhance access and equity in education, employment, and business opportunities intended to lift families and initials out of poverty and remove existing barriers to equal opportunity in our communities." (Platform of the DPH, P. 4, Lines 184-191 (2016)).



Given that House Bill No.1716 HD1 establishes 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 relating to youth, and appropriates funds, it is the position of the OCC Legislative Priorities Committee to support this measure.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration.  
Sincerely yours,

/s/ Melodie Aduja  
Melodie Aduja, Chair, OCC Legislative Priorities Committee  
Email: legislativepriorities@gmail.com, Tel.: (808) 258-8889

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2018 9:49:05 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2018 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Barbara Polk	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support for youth is essential. Please pass this bill.