



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2460  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: February 5, 2024

Room Number: 225

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests funding for this  
2 measure be considered as a vehicle to expand services, including staff support, provided it does  
3 not supplant the requests outlined in the Governor's executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and offers comments.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) provides  
6 the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

7 The Department supports this measure which proposes an appropriation to the Child and  
8 Adolescent Mental Health Division of \$900,000 to contract for the provision of community-  
9 based child and adolescent mental health services that will promote resilience and wellness. It  
10 is in alignment with the Department’s vision that all Hawai’i residents have a fair and just  
11 opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

12 Recent disasters in Hawaii have highlighted the importance of protective factors for our youth,  
13 and community-based mental health promotion plays an important role in increasing protective  
14 factors and healthy behaviors. Psychoeducation and skill building can provide children and  
15 adolescents with the tools they need to take care of their mental health and well-being in the  
16 face of adversity.

1 **Offered Amendments:** While the Department supports the opportunity to award a contract  
2 that promotes mental health, we suggest an amendment that clarifies that any contract award  
3 would be the result of a competitive procurement process.

4

5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**STATE OF HAWAI‘I**  
**OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER**

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**Testimony of the Office of the Public Defender, State of  
Hawai‘i to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

February 5, 2024

S.B. 2460: RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender strongly supports S.B. 2460:

The Office of the Public Defender submit that there is an ongoing need for mental health services for our youth across the State of Hawaii. We are in full agreement that the “best approach to youth mental wellness is community-based, which meets youth where they are” as stated in Section 1 of this measure. Our office works with youth in the juvenile justice system, and we consistently see the need for mental health services, including counseling, therapy, and access to information and services to help youth manage their mental health challenges. We work with youth all along the spectrum of need. Youth who are in a severe mental health crisis and contemplating suicide or engaging in acts of self-harm. Youth in the throws of serious depression. Youth in need of help to process trauma. Youth in need of help with anxiety disorders. Youth in need of grief counseling. These are just a few examples of the need in our communities. Funding for this measure would greatly benefit our youth in need and would be another tool to help keep youth out of our juvenile justice system and help keep youth engaged in mental health education, engagement, and services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



## HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: [info@hysn.org](mailto:info@hysn.org)

Vonnell Ramos, President  
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President  
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer  
Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive  
Director

### Network Membership

*Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i  
Big Island Substance Abuse  
Council*

*Bobby Benson Center  
Child and Family Service  
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i  
Collins Consulting, LLC  
Domestic Violence Action Center  
EPIC `Ohana, Inc.*

*Family Programs Hawai`i  
Family Support Hawai`i  
Friends of the Children's Justice  
Center of Maui*

*Get Ready Hawai`i  
Hale Kipa, Inc.*

*Hale `Opio Kaua`i, Inc.  
Hawai`i Children's Action  
Network*

*Hawai`i Health & Harm  
Reduction Center  
Hawaii Island Community'  
Health Center*

*Ho`ola Na Pua  
Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i  
Ka Hale Pomaika`i  
Kahi Mohala*

*Kokua Kalihī Valley  
Kaua`i Planning and Action  
Alliance*

*Maui Youth and Family Services  
Na Pu`uwai Molokai Native  
Hawaiian Health Care  
Systems*

*P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.  
Parents and Children Together  
PHOCUSED*

*PFLAG – Kona, Big Island  
Planned Parenthood of the  
Great Northwest, Hawaii  
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana  
Residential Youth Services  
& Empowerment (RYSE)*

*Salvation Army Family  
Intervention Services  
Sex Abuse Treatment Center  
Susannah Wesley Community  
Center*

*The Catalyst Group*

February 1, 2024

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
And members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2460 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) strongly supports SB 2460 Relating to Mental Health.

According to the 2021 Surgeon General's Advisory on Youth Mental Health, recent national surveys of young people have shown alarming increases in the prevalence of certain mental health challenges.

35% of middle and high school youth in Hawai'i experience persistent depression; 7% of high school and 11% of middle school students in Hawai'i reported having attempted suicide.

23% of middle school students report that their mental health was most of the time or always "not good" in the prior 30 days. Youth mental health issues are a risk factor for high-risk substance use.

The TeenLink Hawai'i website continues to get 2,000 site visits on average each month. The top topics/pages visited included Suicide; Health and Wellness Toolkit; Sleep; Stress; Mental Health; and Self-Care.

A Hawai'i Department of Health report using 2020 data estimates that 11,000 of Hawai'i's youth experienced at least one major depressive episode in the prior year. Of those who experienced a major depressive episode, approximately 6,000 did not receive mental health services in the prior year.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark  
Executive Director

**SB-2460**

Submitted on: 2/3/2024 9:19:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2024 1:55:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kyle Ishizaka	Testifying for YMCA of Honolulu	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Distinguished Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

My name is Kyle Ishizaka; Executive Director of the YMCA of Honolulu –Kalihi Branch and Subject Matter Leader of Mental Health Wellness Initiatives for Teens.

The Y has a long history and heritage working with teens and receiving Government funds to provide services for youth.

In the past 60 years, the Y has provided outreach, prevention, intervention, mentoring, and substance abuse treatment services to youth in Hawaii.

This work continues today with the Y providing substance abuse treatment services to the island of Kauai and also to 14 High Schools and 15 Middle Schools on Oahu, Lanai, and Molokai.

Through the years, services were provided to address the needs of the community that were ongoing at the time.

Statistics show there are more Mental Health issues in our state and nation and Public Service Announcements about Mental Health Wellness is on T.V. regularly.

Since the pandemic, mental health has become more relevant and the State of Hawaii is in need of Mental Health Prevention and Intervention Services to youth.

The Y has been running Mental Health Prevention and Intervention services in the community, as well as, in Department Of Education Middle and High Schools across Oahu.

Through Bill SB2460, I hope organizations within our communities will be able to provide Mental Health Prevention and Intervention Services to individuals in the State of Hawaii.

Please consider supporting and funding SB2460.

Thank you for your time.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

February 2, 2024

TO: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair Committee on Health and Human Services

FR: Greg Waibel  
President and CEO  
YMCA of Honolulu

RE: TESTIMONY-SB2460, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH – SUPPORT

In a study conducted as part of the Global Burden of Disease<sup>1</sup>, mental health experts from across the country expressed a very high level of concern that we are in a second pandemic of mental health problems with not enough resources and approaches to help people. The voice of people who are seeking help include feelings of being stuck, empty, uncertain, anxious, overwhelmed, burned out, stressed, isolated, done, and depressed. The surveyed mental health professionals think the state and federal government must provide more resources.

The need is demonstrated daily in our communities and if it continues unaddressed will cause permanent damage to youth mental health. People who have a clinical diagnosis have access to care through Medicare/Medicaid/private insurance. We know that we task our schools to do so much more than academics and students have needs that go well beyond their academics into their social/emotional supports, physical health, etc.

The mental health crisis is not one that can be solved by one organization and one strategy alone. Just as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted many aspects of our community, the solution to this crisis will also need to be multifaceted, collaborative, and innovative. As a community-based organization that provides critical services to thousands of youth in our state, we are well positioned to meet youth “where they are” in ways that are comfortable and are relevant to the unique cultural identities of those who will be served. We approach our work with trained professionals and evidence-based practices to support the mental wellness support that our youth need. The YMCA has a track record of success in working with youth and can offer a community-based approach, providing programs to help youth at various points in their mental wellness pathway. We have been working in the mental wellness pathway in prevention and intervention for 2 years. The program that we are seeking support from the legislature has been initiated through a Federal earmark through Congressman Case in 9 DOE middle and high schools. Our DOE schools have embraced our help and we have found where our program fits within their behavior health supports. This bill would expand our reach across the state and allow us to serve additional teens in a variety of experiential and therapeutic activities to help participants develop selfawareness, self-esteem, social skills, appropriate coping mechanisms

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)02143-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)02143-7/fulltext)

and stress management tools to address their mental health and wellness needs. The program is conducted in person in Department of Education Schools and other community based locations where services are easily accessible and take place outside normal school hours. Program staff will conduct pre- and post-program surveys to measure participant outcomes and help them develop strategies and start habit formation for managing their mental health after completing the program. We also do social prescribing to connect participants with their passions and other youth who share their passions and interests. Participants will be referred to clinically appropriate care and resources if determined necessary. We track the outcomes to ensure effectiveness. We will use pre- and post-evaluation data, participation data, along with feedback from participants and those making referrals or working with the youth in the schools, homes, and other programs to help inform improvements to the program. We have developed this curriculum and outcome measures in conjunction with mental health experts for age appropriate delivery. Since Y began to deliver specific mental wellness programs we have served over 1,000 youth in the prevention space. Our curriculum and protocols are developed with the help of qualified mental health professionals and in consultation with schools on best practices and proven techniques. We understand assessment and treatment models, and we are partnering with licensed clinicians to guide our approach, tools, and curriculum. We are grateful for your consideration as we all work together to ensure the mental wellness of Hawaii's youth.



**LATE**

ROBIN E.S. MIYAMOTO  
555 SOUTH STREET #1205  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TEL (808) 383-6154 FAX (888) 248-6762

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

Monday, February 5, 2024 at 1:55 PM

Conference Room 255

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2460**

**APPROPRIATES FUNDS TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEEDS OF  
YOUTH IN THE STATE**

February 4, 2024

TO: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair Committee on Health and Human Services

FR: Robin E. S. Miyamoto, PsyD  
Clinical Psychologist

RE: TESTIMONY-SB2460, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH – SUPPORT

Honorable Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, and members of the committees, My name is Dr. Robin Miyamoto, and I am a Clinical Psychologist who has been serving the State of Hawaii for 25 years. I am Past-President of Hawaii Psychological Association and an Assistant Professor at the John A. Burns School of Medicine. I am testifying today as a board member for the Metro YMCA. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB 2460 appropriating funds to address the mental health and wellness needs of the youth in our state.

In March 2020, I was the Director of Clinical Services and Behavioral Health for two departments at JABSOM. Over the course of a weekend, we had to pivot to providing telehealth services following the stay-at-home orders addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time,

my department and psychologists across the state have been running to keep up with the mental health demands that continue to be the long tail of COVID. I have spent my career serving our state's rural and underserved communities, most recently in Maui following the wildfires. I am all too familiar with the growing list of behavioral health needs facing our community and the shortage of mental health professionals. While there are other bills this session targeting the shortage, this bill helps to create an additional level of support that may prevent kids from developing significant and permanent mental health concerns that require the highest tier of care, individual therapy.

Take a moment to reflect on the children and adolescents you know, maybe your own children. As a result of social isolation and classroom time lost, most kids are three years developmentally delayed. Social functioning has declined, and the prevalence of anxiety and depression in children is the highest it has ever been. While most of us no longer wear masks, schools have reopened, and large-scale events are back, we may never recover from the mental health impacts of COVID-19.

The community-delivered and school-based programs designed by the YMCA help identify children who are struggling and get them into early intervention programs to increase resilience and change the trajectory of their mental health. Community-based group intervention programs offered by the YMCA are a necessary stop-gap measure that can be implemented immediately. While we continue to address the provider shortage, those solutions are years in the making. With the funding this bill provides, the YMCA could dramatically and immediately increase the number of children it serves. The YMCA has a proven track record, trained staff, and evidenced-based practices ready to support the mental wellness of our young people.

Addressing the long-term effects on the mental health of our entire community, but mostly our children will take a coordinated approach across schools, community organizations, and healthcare systems. We are asking for your support for this critical prevention piece that prevents more significant mental illness.

Mahalo for your time and consideration today.

Sincerely,



Robin E. S. Miyamoto, Psy.D  
Clinical Psychologist



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2460:  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

TO: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

**Hearing: Monday 02/05/2024; 1:55 PM;  
State Capitol Conf Rm 225 & via videoconference**

Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino, and Members, Committee on Health and Human Services

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 2460**, which appropriates funds to address the mental health and wellness needs of youth in the State. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, homeless, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii has a long history of providing services for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD).

There is an increased need to provide trauma-informed mental health services to at-risk youth throughout our state. Per CAMHD 2021 Annual Factbook summary, data shows the need for youth mental health services is estimated to be much higher than the number of youth currently being served with the CAMHD system. Catholic Charities Hawaii supports this bill to help address the growing mental health and wellness needs of youth across our state.

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division and their efforts to increase services throughout the state.

We urge your support for this bill and ask for your assistance in its passing during this legislative session.

Please contact our Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Shellie Niles at (808) 527-4813 if you have any questions.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822  
Phone (808) 527-4813



# Hawai`i True Cost Coalition

DATE: February 5, 2024  
TIME: 1:55PM  
PLACE: Via Videoconference and Conference Room 225  
BILL: SB2460, Relating to Mental Health  
Committee: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai`i True Cost Coalition (TCC), we are writing in support of SB2460 which would appropriate funds for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division of the Department of Health (DOH) to contract for youth mental health and wellness services.

The TCC is comprised of over 50 community based nonprofit organizations, serving over 500,000 of people across the state, that have come together to ensure that government funding adequately and sustainably covers the true costs of providing governmental services by Hawai`i nonprofit organizations.

The demand for mental health and wellness services has increased, and we applaud the Legislature's efforts to provide resources to the Department of Health so that Hawaii's youth can access this critical service.

We also encourage the Legislature to support DOH's budget request which includes increased funding for purchase of service contracts with local nonprofits to provide additional critical services for the community, as these contracts have not been increased in many years.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB2460.



## Hawaii Medical Association

1360 South Beretania Street, Suite 200 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814  
Phone: 808.536.7702 • Fax: 808.528.2376 • hawaiimedicalassociation.org

### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Date: February 5, 2024  
From: Hawaii Medical Association  
Elizabeth England, MD  
Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee

Re: SB2460; RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH  
Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2460**, relating to mental health, which appropriates funds for “for the child and adolescent mental health division of the department of health to contract for the provision of youth mental health and wellness services”.

The HMA is deeply concerned about the impact of mental illness across the state. According to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), Hawai'i lost 176 lives to suicide in a single year<sup>1</sup>. Despite the high rate of suffering and death associated with mental health disorders, an astounding 67% of affected adults in Hawai'i do not receive proper treatment<sup>2</sup>. This is the highest rate of any state in the country. The situation is even worse for our keiki. Prior to the outbreak of COVID, over 70% of children in Hawai'i suffering from a major depressive episode did not receive treatment<sup>3</sup>. During the pandemic, widespread isolation and social distancing has strained an already overburdened system. Calls to the Hawai'i Crisis Text Line increased by 54% in April 2020, indicating that an even higher proportion of patients are not receiving the mental health care that they need<sup>4</sup>.

As a state, we can help address this crisis through increased outreach and intervention. Providing the Department of Health the necessary funds needed to support these community outreach programs is an excellent step towards giving our keiki the care they deserve.

### REFERENCES

1. Resources – National Alliance for Mental Illness Hawaii. (n.d.). Retrieved February 20, 2022, from <https://namihawaii.org/resources/>

#### 2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, President • Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President Elect • Angela Pratt, MD, Immediate Past President  
Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

#### 2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Beth England, MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

2. Adult Data 2021. (n.d.). Mental Health America. <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2021/mental-healthamerica-adult-data>
3. Youth data 2022. (n.d.). Mental Health America. <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2022/mental-healthamerica-youth-data>
4. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division. (n.d.). State of Hawaii Department of Health. <https://health.hawaii.gov/camhd/>

#### **2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers**

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#### **2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team**

Beth England, MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

## Helping Hawai'i Live Well

**Testimony to the Committee on Health & Human Services  
Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 1:55 p.m.  
Videoconference  
SB2460, Relating to Mental Health**

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Aloha members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services!

We write in strong support of SB2460, which appropriates funds to address the mental health and wellness needs of youth in the State.

Mental Health America of Hawai'i (MHAH), an affiliate of the renowned national organization, is a highly regarded 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving the State of Hawai'i. For nearly 80 years, MHAH has been fulfilling its mission "to promote mental health & wellness through education, advocacy, service, and access to care" through its vision of 'mental wellness for all.' We endeavor to reduce the shame and stigma of mental illness and improve the overall care, treatment, and empowerment of those with or at risk for mental health challenges across all stages of life in Hawai'i.

Considering the ongoing youth mental health crisis resulting from the global pandemic, and now, the traumatic events of the Maui fires, the need to address youth mental health, wellness, and resilience has never been more critical. Youth are especially impacted by disasters of this scale with the most manifested conditions being trauma, depression, anxiety, and substance use, with further impact trickling down from those who take care of them. In addition to the impacts of the fire, youth were already, and continue to be, severely impacted by the pandemic, with the CDC noting that COVID-19 created traumatic stressors for youth mental wellbeing. *Evidence has demonstrated that there is a critical need for mental health and resilience education and suicide prevention programs for all youth.* Late last year, the SAMHSA released its *National Guidelines for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Crisis Care* to express the need to improve prevention efforts and crisis response for children and youth. Earlier that same year, the US Surgeon General declared a youth mental health crisis in the U.S. According to the Hawaii Department of Health's Injury Prevention and Control Sections EMS & Injury Prevention System Branch, death by

## Helping Hawai'i Live Well

suicide was the second leading cause of fatal injuries in Hawai'i between 2016 and 2020. During the same period, suicide was the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of fatal injury for those 0 – 15 years of age, and the 1<sup>st</sup> leading cause for those between the ages of 16 and 29.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation, and we are grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Respectfully,



Bryan L. Talisayan

Executive Director

[Bryan.Talisayan@mentalhealthhawaii.org](mailto:Bryan.Talisayan@mentalhealthhawaii.org)





## TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

FEBRUARY 5, 2024

SB 2460, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** SB 2460, relating to mental health. Pursuant to the "Health and Wellbeing" section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party supports "the creation of a universal healthcare system that values people over profit, and follows best practices and current research to deliver holistic care covering both physical and mental healthcare."

Mental health is just as important as physical health. This is especially true for our keiki. According to the 2022 Kids Count Data Book, however, about 2,200 more children in Hawai'i struggled with anxiety and depression in 2020, a 23 percent increase compared with 2016. The report also estimated that 5.9 percent of children aged 3 to 17 had anxiety or depression in 2020, compared with 4.8 percent in 2016.

Moreover, according to Hawai'i Health Matters, 1 in 3 Hawai'i public school students in grades 6 to 12 felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some of their usual activities. Sadly, less than 25 percent of those teens received the help they needed.

In 2023, Hawai'i received more than \$4 million in federal funds to expand mental health services for youth, including roughly \$1.4 million for Hawai'i's Department of Health, \$800,000 for the Honolulu division of DOH, \$1.25 million for

the alcohol and drug abuse division of DOH in Kapolei, and \$400,000 for the Health and Harm Reduction Center. The legislature has also increased funding for mental health services in recent years, such as by establishing a mobile mental health clinic pilot project on multiple islands in 2023.

Nonetheless, mental health resources remain small when compared to the amount of funding devoted to physical health, both locally and nationally. To uplift our children's mental wellness and resiliency, we must devote additional support for youth mental health programs and services and continue making our response to the youth mental health crisis a top priority for our state.

Mahalo nui loa,

**Kris Coffield**

*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*  
(808) 679-7454  
kriscoffield@gmail.com

**Abby Simmons**

*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*  
(808) 352-6818  
abbyalana808@gmail.com

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i

February 5, 2024

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Hearing Time: 1:55 PM  
Location: State Capitol Conference Room 225  
Re: SB2460, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i hui, we are writing in **strong support** of SB2460, relating to mental health. This bill appropriates funds to address the mental health and wellness needs of youth in Hawaii.

Amid growing mental health issues for Hawaii’s youth, investing funds to raise awareness for youth mental well-being and providing the necessary tools to combat adverse mental health is essential to long-term youth development.

Opportunity Youth Action Hawai‘i is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth houselessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

**Please support SB2460.**

## Written Testimony

Citizen: Claudia Crist  
Date: February 2, 2024  
Bill: SB2460  
Position: In Support

Honorable Members of the Hawai'i Legislature,

As former CEO of the only hospital-based child and adolescent residential care facility in the entire state of Hawai'i, I vividly recall the impact physical and social isolation as well as lack of school routine and proactive wellness screenings had on the mental health of Hawai'i's youth. In addition to experiencing prolonged social and physical isolation, it quickly became clear that, some of the homes where children and teens were isolated were not always the safest places to be, adding additional stress.

The pandemic highlighted the stark effects of a combination of historic lack in community-based mental wellness programs and accessible resources, social and physical isolation, and extensive wait times for appropriate inpatient and outpatient mental health services. Subsequently, we have seen a sharp increase in morbidity and mortality of mental illness. This has caused our youth, and the youth throughout the United States, to suffer unnecessarily.

SB2460 would provide much-needed seed money to support professionally operated, community-based mental wellness programs. As in physical health, and with lessons taken from whole health, enhancing, and maintaining mental wellness and preventing illness is key. Furthermore, public health science and lessons teach us that investing in youth mental wellness programs is likely to yield long-term opportunity cost savings by promoting healthier and more productive individuals, reducing the economic burden on society, and fostering a positive and prosperous future.

The funding provided by SB2460 is critical in supporting a (small) test-of-change for the State of Hawai'i. The results will hopefully show an increase in the health and well-being of Hawai'i's keiki. After all, they are our future!

Thank you.

Claudia Crist, RN, MHA, FACHE, SHRM-SCP  
Board Member, YMCA of Honolulu

**SB-2460**

Submitted on: 2/3/2024 11:33:39 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2024 1:55:00 PM

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

Comments:

I believe that mental health is important for our youth because it could define as themselves in the future. It is also important because It helps keep our youth in a good mindset when they are dealing with challenges. As a teen, I have experienced a lot of stress and overthinking during these past years. Some examples that have impacted my mental is friends, family, outside of school and lots more. The one that have impacted me the most was friends and school. The reason why friends impacted me is that I have been struggling to find my true friends and looking for a friend group that can always be there for me. It hasn't been easy but I realized it takes a step by step process. Another thing that impacted on my mental health is school. I just started High School and It has been a lot different. Lots of academic pressure, school work, test and lots more. Being asked questions that will make me thing about my future after High School. I tend to stress about my school work because it could be difficult or stressful. Sometime I could be staying up till midnight to finish my homework so I can get ready for class for the next day. How do I deal with these challenges you may ask. One way to deal with mental health is talking to someone. I think that this is important because it could help yourself express your feeling and concerns about yourself. I have talked to my close friends, teachers, counselors and parents, they have made me feel more secure about my mental health. Mental health is important because without a stable mind, you cannot function mentally well. Our legislators should support this bill because it will have a big impact for our community and youth.

**SB-2460**

Submitted on: 2/3/2024 8:39:21 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2024 1:55:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Aimee Grace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, My name is Aimee Malia Grace, MD, MPH, FAAP and I am writing in my personal capacity to support this important legislation. I am a pediatrician by background and public health/health policy professional.

Addressing the youth mental health needs in our state is critical, especially after the pandemic. The YMCA has amazing programs to serve our youth from a community-oriented perspective, and partnerships with entities like the Hawai'i State DOH are so valuable.

Mahalo for your consideration and your support of the funds for this program and please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.

**LATE**

**SB-2460**

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 2:57:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2024 1:55:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tamara Paltin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB2460 our youth need mental health support

Mahalo,

Tamara Paltin

**LATE**

**SB-2460**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 10:15:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2024 1:55:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The mental health crisis among young people in the state requires our immediate attention.  
Thank you for your support of this essential resource for our keiki.

With aloha,

David Ball

Waialae-Kahala