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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
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TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
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September 5, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President
and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura, Speaker
and Members of the House of
Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

Enclosed is the Annual Report of the Hawaii State Youth Commission for the State fiscal year 2025 to the Governor and Legislature, submitted per section 352D-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

Per section 93-16, HRS, this report will be available for electronic review on the Department's website at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/reports/legislative-reports/>. For questions regarding this report, contact Leanne Gillespie, Executive Director, Office of Youth Services, at lgillespie@dhs.hawaii.gov.

Sincerely,

Ryan I. Yamane
Director

Enclosure

c: Governor's Office
Lieutenant Governor's Office
Department of Budget and Finance
Legislative Auditor
Legislative Reference Bureau Library (1 hard copy)
Hawaii State Public Library, System State Publications Distribution Center (2 hard copies, one electronic copy)
Hamilton Library, Serials Department, University of Hawaii (1 hard copy)

**REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD HAWAII STATE
LEGISLATURE 2026**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF
SECTION 352D-11, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, THE
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HAWAII STATE YOUTH
COMMISSION FOR THE STATE FISCAL YEAR 2025.**

**Hawaii State Youth Commission
Office of Youth Services
Department of Human Services
September 2025**



Annual Report
July 2024 – June 2025 (FY 2025)
The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission (HiYC)

Prepared by

Misty Cruden, Marli Mason, Mei Kanada, Hana-Lei Ji, Andrew Pomai Chang, Sophie Chan, and
Marley McIntyre

HiYC Chair, HiYC Vice Chair, HiYC Secretary, Legislative Lead, and Legislative Topic Leads

Submitted to

Governor Josh Green and The Hawai‘i State Legislature

HiYC Mission Statement

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission is a constellation of youth, connected to our past and mindful of our future, who engage in public-policy advocacy through a commitment to inclusivity, opportunity, and progress in Hawai‘i.

1. Introduction

Formed four years ago, the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission (HiYC) has been dedicated to engaging and empowering youth across the state to articulate their voices and perspectives to the Governor and State Legislature on legislative policies, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of Hawaii. The 15 HiYC members (ages 14 to 24) are appointed by the Governor, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the House, and current membership includes representation from Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Maui, and Hawai‘i Island.

This year's main theme was diversity and collaboration. Our main goal for this year was to have commissioners from different backgrounds and perspectives when it came to shaping policy. We also wanted to work together as a commission as best as possible to strengthen our voice, especially when it came to the legislative session and submitting testimony. Our commissioners displayed great efforts in communication with each other, voicing concerns, and speaking out for their beliefs.

Overall, the commission has truly gone above and beyond to meet its goals. Our meetings were incredibly productive, with important conversations happening all the time. Commissioners felt comfortable asking difficult questions when it came to having discussions regarding which bills to support for the legislative session, or when it came to simple commission decisions that needed to be made.

2. Summary of Year

2A. General Business Report:

- The Commission held full-member meetings twice a month (July 2024 - December 2024) and starting in January of 2025, every Sunday.
- All HiYC members were involved in learning about and connecting with each other through online meetings.
- HiYC took concurrent steps forward on multiple levels, including:
 - The Aloha Spirit law with values of aloha and mālama at HiYC’s core helped to set a foundation of members bonding and developing (virtually but effectively) as ONE HiYC team and ‘ohana.
 - All members completed essential training to meet the requirements to function as a State Commission:
 - *Ethics Commission Training* and
 - All Hawai‘i State requirements to be a commissioner and start HiYC were met.
 - Advanced training on legislative processes was provided to members, especially those on the Campaign Teams, by HiYC Legislative Lead Hana-Lei Ji.

- HiYC members were also offered (and some completed) various training and event opportunities focused on youth issues and civic engagement.
- Further projects that the HiYC completed were the College Webinar, Ma‘i Movement Collaboration, and Local Official Webinar.

2B. Executive Team Report:

The Executive Team of the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission (HiYC) primarily focuses on 1) Internal Commission Administration and 2) External and Public-Facing Communications. Members of the Executive Team consist of the elected officer positions of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Legislative Leads, as well as additional volunteer committee members as applicable.

The Executive Team continues to refine the Three (3) Team System, which divides commission responsibilities between the Executive Team, the Legislative Team, and the Connections and Leadership Development Team.

The Executive Team took on the task of laying out the structural foundation, organization, and protocols of the commission, knowing that we would carve out systems for future cohorts.

The Executive Team accomplished several other foundational milestones for the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission, including:

- Continuing to improve the cadence, scheduling, and culture of Commission meetings,
- Refined and passed the Commission By-Laws and internal Commission procedures,
- Filled all Youth Commissioner vacancies, and
- Running multiple elections and providing Officer Transition Documents and training for the next cohort of officers.

As a passionate and dedicated group of keiki and young adults, the HiYC met for full-commission meetings on a weekly basis during the State of Hawai‘i legislative session and on a biweekly basis when the session was off. This year, the Commission met online over forty (40) times. Members of the Executive Team tended to the day-to-day operation of these Commission meetings, including the creation and publication of meeting agendas, minutes, and recordings, the running of full Commission meetings, and the authorship and distribution of weekly email newsletters to Commission members.

In addition to internal commission administration, the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission was able to update and rewrite our *Communications and Youth Engagement Plan* to accurately represent and model the HiYC’s goals and standards when it came to media usage. This project was spearheaded by Commissioners Jacinto and Chang as they collaborated to read through the previous plan and update it with current information that would accurately represent modern approaches to media.

Along with the completed external communications protocol, the Communications Sub-Team of the Executive Team accomplished the following:

- Administration and moderation of Facebook and Instagram pages for social media,
- Design and publication of the official Hawai‘i State Youth Commission webpage, and
- Creation of original content designs for all media and public communications.

As the team tasked with the internal commission administration and external communications, the Executive Team spent this year focusing on ways to create community engagement through social media. As the present day has shown us, social media can be an influential and impactful way to reach a community of people. We have worked with a social media team to consistently put out posts that reflect the business that the commission is focusing on, projects the commission is pursuing, and updates that may have relevance to our community. We found our engagement to be better than before, with our Instagram account reaching over 1,400 followers.

2C. Campaign Team Report:

In pursuance of the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission’s (HiYC) founding goal of increasing youth participation in the public policymaking process, HiYC created a Legislative Team to provide youth insight on bills through the 2025 legislative session.

The Legislative Team is led by Commissioner Hana-Lei Ji, who provided an analysis of the 2025 Legislative Session below. The Commission then adopted and subsequently focused its efforts on three overarching priorities. With vacancies now filled, the Commission has effectively mobilized efforts to see our chosen priorities represented, advocated for, and supported throughout the 2024 legislative session.

Legislative Session 2025 Analysis by Hana-Lei Ji:

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission advocates for youth interests through our formal and collaborative engagement with the Hawai‘i State Legislature. By tracking key topics and actively participating in the policymaking process, the Youth Commission ensures that the priorities and experiences of Hawai‘i’s youth are represented in state government deliberations. For the 2025 Legislative Session, the Commission’s advocacy efforts focused on Housing, Education, Higher Education, and Public Health.

Over 3,000 bills and nearly 900 resolutions were introduced in Hawai‘i’s legislature. However, less than 10% of proposed bills advanced to become law. This passage rate underscores both the multi-stage complexity of Hawai‘i’s legislative process and the influence of competing political, financial, and procedural factors. In particular, changes in federal funding appeared to impact the passage of bills, including an allocation of funds.

Across our legislative packages, the Commission tracked 22 bills. Twelve bills in the Education/Higher Education committee faced more of the challenging budget environment – ultimately, none passed final reading. Two of the three bills tracked by the Housing committee advanced, focusing on securing housing opportunities for Hawai‘i’s community. Despite the

importance of seven of the Public Health committee's bills, none of the tracked bills progressed to law, again reflecting the session's cautious fiscal climate.

The Commission's topic committees worked diligently this past session to track bills, collaborate with local organizations, write, and submit testimony. While a majority of the tracked bills did not move forward to become law, this past session provided valuable insights and experiences that will strengthen the Commission's future advocacy efforts.

Three priorities for the 2025 legislative session:

A. Education Lead: Andrew Pomai Chang

Over the course of the 2025 Legislative Session, the Education/Higher Education Committee tracked a total of 12 bills in our legislative package. The bills aimed to tackle a number of issues ranging from financial literacy to school supplies, with a strong focus on improving school meals. However, recent federal funding cuts—with a press release from Rep. Ed Case estimating that close to \$200 million was lost—increased hesitancy among legislators to fund many of the programs and initiatives that the Education/Higher Education Committee advocated for.

In total, none of the bills passed final reading, with seven bills not passing first lateral, one not passing first crossover, two not passing second lateral, one not passing second decking, and the final bill, unfortunately, not passing final decking, in spite of efforts to contact legislators. Despite submitting testimony and reaching out to legislators, the potential for further funding cuts created a difficult environment for any money-related education bills to become law. Nonetheless, the Education/Higher Education Committee worked to promote the many causes important to the youth of Hawaii, even in such a challenging environment.

B. Housing Lead: Sophie Chan

After assessing the importance of the housing crisis in regard to Hawai'i's youth, the Hawai'i State Youth Commission adopted affordable housing as one of the three legislative priorities during the 2025 Legislative Session. In total, the Affordable Housing Committee tracked six bills. A majority of these bills supported existing housing programs by designating more funding or extending the sunset date for such programs. While the committee strived to focus on affordable housing in particular, a few bills in our package also addressed other housing issues, such as rental agreements between landlords and tenants (House Bill 464).

The initial package consisted of four House Bills (HB): HB739, SB1140, HB464, and HB431. The committee highly recommended HB739 because, if implemented, the deed restrictions would limit short-term rentals to non-residents, thereby decreasing the opportunity for housing prices to escalate. As youth in Hawai'i, the commissioners believed finding sufficient housing in the future would become near-impossible without

proper policies to mitigate escalating prices.

When 3 of the 4 bills in the committee’s initial package did not pass, the legislative committee agreed to reconstruct a new bill package. In the final package, which added HB703 and HB740, only two bills passed. By early July, HB431 and HB703 passed and were signed by Governor Green. By submitting testimony for bills that build an affordable housing market for future youth, the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission will continue to advocate against the issues that prolong outmigration and escalating rental prices. Ultimately, although a majority of the bills within our package did not pass, the Affordable Housing Committee was grateful for the small steps and successes this legislative session, such as the passage of HB431 and HB703.

C. Public Health Lead: Marley McIntyre

Over the 2025 legislative session, the Public Health Committee tracked 7 bills. The bills primarily aimed to increase support for healthcare education, repeal the sale of tobacco products, establish criteria for overdose prevention centers, and appropriate funds towards the Department of Human Services for court-involved youth. In total, none of the bills passed final reading, with two not passing first lateral, three first crossover, one second crossover, and HB714 passing the final reading. Nevertheless, the HiYC public health committee has worked tirelessly, submitting testimony, attending hearings, and advocating for our selected bills.

Throughout the 2025 Legislative Session, Team Leads were responsible for tracking legislation they deemed pertinent to their respective priority. Team Leads could develop “legislative packages” of the bills they were tracking and come to the Commission for approval to submit testimony. The Commission then voted to support or refuse the legislative package, with the option of amending the packages to exclude specific bills. As the legislative session progressed, the Team Leads proposed additional bills for the Commission to support or oppose. Team Leads tracked the following bills throughout the session:

Education Bills	Housing Bills	Public Health Bills
(i) SB91	(i) HB464	(i) HB756/SB972
(ii) SB221/HB424	(ii) HB739	(ii) HB714/SB294
(iii) HB328/SB235	(iii) SB1140	(iii) HB609
(iv) SB84	(iv) HB431	(iv) HB60
(v) HB440/SB818		(v) HB240/SB957

The Legislative Team, being the policy driver of the Commission, was tasked with maneuvering through the workings of Hawai‘i’s government throughout its fifth year. We were tasked with creating training for Commission members about the basics of the Hawai‘i State Legislature and how a bill becomes law, before we could even select the bills we wanted to support or oppose.

2D. Connections and Leadership Development Team Report:

The Connections and Leadership Development Team focuses on outreach and relationship building with organizations, youth allies, groups, and programs that advocate for youth voices to be heard. This includes HiYC connections with government officials, such as legislators and state programs and staff that link directly to HiYC.

Research and Community Outreach efforts through the past year include:

- a. Collaborative Connections were started with:
 - i. Commissioners worked with Hawai‘i State Legislators to host a youth focused virtual Town Hall in which community members could ask local officials various questions they may have had. Officials also got to speak on their journey to their current positions and offer words of support for the upcoming generation.
 - ii. Hawai‘i State Youth Commissioners collaborated to host a HiYC College Webinar for our community to inform high school students about important dates and resources regarding the college application process.
 - iii. HiYC, along with other members of the Hilo community, held a ma‘i kit making session in collaboration with the Ma‘i Movement Hawai‘i to combat period poverty here in Hawai‘i.

3. Goals for Term from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026:

- Expansion of HiYC Community Outreach. We hope to build the HiYC community for the 2025-2026 term through initiatives to highlight existing youth-led projects, survey youth legislative priorities, connect with youth organizations, and identify and reach out to marginalized youth populations.
 - Transition plans for new HiYC Elected Officers. Officers for the 2025-2026 HiYC Term have been elected. The following newly elected cabinet is:
 - Chair: Jeremiah Jacinto
 - Vice Chair: Andrew Pomai Chang
 - Secretary: Sophie Chan
 - Treasurer: Gizelle Rodrigues
 - Legislative Lead: TBD.
- Legislative Team Management: HiYC plans to get more involved in the legislative process in addition to testimony writing. These goals include forging connections with legislators, preparing for the legislative session earlier to lobby for bills, and spearheading our own bills.
- Community Outreach: Given the success of this fiscal year’s outreach efforts, the commission desires to undertake more community outreach and service projects that

engage and empower youth in the community to get involved with the issues they see. The Commission also hopes to form connections with more public and private schools to strengthen our student network within the state.

- Social Media Presence. A strong Communications and Social Media presence is essential to meeting all goals of the HiYC. The HiYC hopes to further develop its content creation and social media outreach to connect with all youth communities. The HiYC also hopes to continue its work with government officials on efforts such as the creation of a Hawai‘i State Youth Commission Webpage to publicize meeting information and community resources so the HiYC can become the Youth Resource Hub for the entire state.

4. HiYC SUMMARY:

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission has seen tremendous growth over the past fiscal year, both internally and externally. For the first time since its establishment, the Commission will finally see full, complete membership. Additionally, as the reach of the Commission has grown, the makeup of the Commission more fully reflects the diversity of youth on the Hawaiian Islands. We hope to further develop the educational, cultural, and political diversity of the commission in our future recruitment cycles.

The Commissioners have taken direct action in response to numerous pressing concerns facing their homes. In response to the upcoming state and national elections, a voter registration drive at Waiakea High School and an informative social media campaign were created to increase youth political participation. Furthermore, in response to the devastating Maui wildfires, Commissioners held a supply drive in Hilo and launched an online awareness campaign. Notably, in response to the Red Hill water contamination disaster, Commissioners launched a water distribution event of over \$5,000 worth of bottled water, five-gallon jugs, and water dispensers for affected members of the community. Ultimately, the successful activism and community outreach efforts undertaken by the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission demonstrate the effectiveness of youth-driven community service in the State.

Finally, through increased legislative involvement in the 2024 and 2025 sessions, the youth voice was substantially more present in the State legislature than ever before. The HiYC pursued an extensive number of bills in the areas of education, housing, and public, of which a few bills relating to education and the environment were passed. Following these major legislative accomplishments, the Commission aims to increase its involvement within the state through partnerships with legislators, students, and non-profits in the upcoming years to establish intergenerational equity and build a better future for Hawai‘i.