

PRESS RELEASE

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Nearly 120 People at Waianae Public Library Receive Free Legal Help to Expunge Arrest Records and Recall Bench Warrants

Honolulu, HI - Nearly 120 people came to the Waianae Public Library for help from volunteer attorneys to expunge criminal arrest records and recall District Court bench warrants. In partnership with the Hawaii State Judiciary and volunteers from the Office of the Public Defender, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, ACLU Hawaii, William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii, Hawaii Workers Center, and Project E4, the clinic provided an essential service to many in the community that were hampered by old arrest and conviction records.

Though the service was meant to focus on helping residents from the Waianae community, many drove from other parts of Oahu to attend the free clinic. During the 4 hour clinic, 72 of the 80 applications for expungement were submitted. In addition, 39 bench warrant recall applicants with several having multiple bench warrants were also processed. Volunteer attorneys continued to help attendees until the very end of the clinic.

The clinic helped attendees begin the process of removing the negative stigma associated with having a criminal arrest and conviction on their record. The negative impact of these records in people's lives are undeniable and consequential. Those with arrest records and outstanding bench warrants are often denied employment after failing a basic background check, are unable to volunteer for their children's sports team, and have been denied the ability to even adopt children. Through this clinic, participants can have a path forward to be able to actively participate and contribute positively in their communities.

The Office of the Public Defender provided 11 volunteer attorneys who helped attendees complete and submit their necessary paperwork. Eddie Aquino, who recruited volunteers from the office shares;

“I am proud of the work that this clinic accomplished because it is truly law at the frontlines. As a career public defender, this work is a great reminder for me that a person’s “big and life changing” case is sometimes, often times, what we may consider the small stuff in our field of work. For the people we had the privilege of helping at this clinic, it really matters. Simply recalling a bench warrant for missing a court date or getting one thing expunged and cleared from their court records, is one less reason to marginalize them. More importantly for me, we did

and are doing this for our people, our community - the public we swore an oath to defend. Nothing could give greater meaning to our work than that.”

Due to the high demand and positive community feedback, plans for future expungement and bench warrant recall clinics are being planned.

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[Link to photos and videos provided by ACLU Hawaii.](#)

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