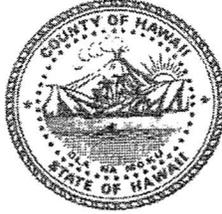


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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

February 13, 2009
Honorable Jon Riki Karamatsu
Chair, Judiciary Committee
State House of Representatives

Dear Chair Karamatsu and Committee Members:

Re: HB 1293, Relating to Law Enforcement

I am here to strongly support HB 1293, which seeks to assure that the Career Criminal Program and the Victim/Witness Program, both mandated by State statute, are adequately funded for the next biennium.

These two programs have been operating statewide for over thirty years, with State general funds going to the Department of the Attorney General (ATG 100) and on to the four counties. For at least the past 15 years, as you can see from the attached chart, while our caseload has increased 58%, the funding for the program has dropped by 50%, resulting in the need for some creative juggling on the part of the counties to assure that the services continue to be provided. This year, because of the financial crisis we all face, the counties have been warned to expect cutbacks that are even more dramatic—40% off our current low funding was threatened earlier in the year; now the number may be even worse.

The counties are struggling financially to meet the needs of our communities, and we will do the best we can with the resources available, but double-digit cuts may put the very existence of the programs in jeopardy. And please understand that there is no clear alternate source of funds; the counties, even if these were not state mandated programs, are in no fiscal condition to pick up the slack.

The Legislature has correctly judged that victims and witnesses, facing a complicated and sometimes uncaring bureaucracy, deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity. The Legislature also has correctly judged that there needs to be a strong response to repeat career

offenders. The next biennium, when we can almost guarantee that crime rates will be rising and there will be an upswing in gang activities, is obviously not the time when we should be reducing these two vital services.

In an ideal world, we would be looking for funding that would restore CCP and V/W funding to 1994 levels, adjusted upward to cover the higher caseload. That, we all know, is not possible, and therefore the counties have agreed to ask that the Legislature give enough in general funds to at least get us back to the level you established for FY 2008. For Hawaii County, that would mean \$530,929 for the Career Criminal Program, and \$181,839 for the Victim Witness Program.

Thank you for your consideration of this measure. I do not envy your task, trying to balance all the financial demands that are being made on you, and appreciate whatever assistance you can provide for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Respectfully submitted,


Jay T. Kimura
Prosecuting Attorney
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Hawaii County CCP and VW Funding Fiscal Years 1994 - 2009

