

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Faye Hanohano, Chair

Rep. Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 12, 2009

9:15 AM

Room 309

STRONG SUPPORT with Amendment

HB 414 - Performance Indicators for Act 8 - Hawai'i's Reentry Law

PBSTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

Aloha Chair Hanohano, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative working to improve conditions of confinement for our incarcerated individuals, enhance our quality of justice, and promote public safety. We come today to speak for the 6,000+ individuals whose voices have been silenced by incarceration, always mindful that more than 2,000 of those individuals are serving their sentences abroad, thousands of miles from their homes and loved ones.

HB 414 requires the Department of Public Safety to establish performance indicators and requires monthly reports to the legislature using key performance indicators.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support of HB 414 and respectfully asks the committee to consider the following amendment: On page 3, line 16 under (6) add:

(a) Record the recidivism rates of those incarcerated individuals who have participated as principals in the Restorative Circle Process.

We respectfully ask for this amendment since new research was released by the University of Cambridge in July 2008 showing that restorative justice practices reduce crime by 27%.

(Source: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/news/dp/2008070103>) Hawai'i needs to think out-of-the-box and be open to innovative strategies that have been developed to reduce recidivism. Act 8, Hawai'i's Reentry Law - the Community Safety Act of 2007 - has been lauded both nationally and internationally as a progressive and innovative way to address rehabilitation and recidivism, partly because of the inclusion of the cutting-edge Restorative Circles Program codified in Act 8.

Establishing performance measures is a growing trend in Corrections. There is lots of literature for Corrections Administrators to review and adapt to their own jurisdictions.

Performance measures are part of good government, they are good business for the Governor and the Department of Public Safety, and they can clearly illustrate to you, our Policymakers, what is working and what isn't and what requires a course correction.

As Governor Lingle wrote in A New Beginning for Hawai'i:

Making Government Work Better

Restoring integrity to government requires us to share information openly with the public so the people of Hawai'i will know the true condition of state government, the programs it operates and the results of its efforts. Both elected leaders and the public must know the information essential to good decision-making. Government resources are limited, so all spending and policy choices must be based on reliable information and clearly articulated values and objectives, rather than short-term political considerations. ...Financial accountability and openness are essential if government leaders are able to make sound decision and then be held accountable for the actual results. They are absolutely necessary to break the vicious cycle of corruption and favoritism in state contracting, and to restore trust and integrity in government service."

We agree with the Governor that good government demands transparency and accountability.

Last October, Col. (RET.) Larry James, Ph.D., who was sent by the Army to 'fix' Abu Ghraib, spoke at the Hawai'i Psychological Association's Conference. He spoke emphatically about the need for accountability and transparency in publicly-funded prisons and jails. He was so compelling that I ran out and bought his book. I read it in a day and recommend it to anyone who wants to know what happened there, but also to anyone who is interested in his 11 recommendations which apply to public and publicly-funded private prisons as well. The book is called FIXING HELL – An Army Psychologist Confronts Abu Ghraib.

Performance Indicators will benefit the department by supplying data on how things are working. Performance Indicators will benefit the Legislature by creating readable and useable data so that assessments on policy can be made. Performance Indicators will benefit the community who can assess how their money is being spent and the outcomes of those expenditures.

Community Alliance on Prisons urges you to pass HB 414 to promote accountability and transparency.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.