

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Sen. Will Espero, Chair

Sen. Robert Bunda, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 5, 2009

1:15 PM

Room 229

STRONG SUPPORT

SB 546 - Electronic Monitoring

PSMTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

LATE TESTIMONY

Aloha Chair Espero, Vice Chair Bunda 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.

SB 546 requires the Department of Public Safety to establish a pilot program on O`ahu that electronically monitors committed persons who are permitted to live and work in the community in lieu of continued incarceration and appropriates funds for this purpose.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support of SB 546. The data confirms that long prison sentences, especially for non-violent lawbreakers, are counter-productive. These austere economic times present us with a great opportunity to re-think what we are doing and analyze what is working and what isn't. The majority of Hawai`i's lawbreakers are non-violent and are incarcerated for drugs or drug-related crimes. Again, the data show that what works for drug offenders are incentives, not sanctions. Knowing this, electronic monitoring presents an incentive for non-violent individuals to stay on track.

This bill also can help our ailing economy because it would save more than a million dollars a year if we released 100 nonviolent felons and put them into the electronic monitoring program. This would give them a chance to reenter the community, rebuild their lives and reinstate themselves back to their communities.

Let's try every available option to help individuals safely and successfully reenter the community.

Please pass SB 546 in the interest of reducing recidivism, protecting public safety, and assisting individuals who are working to rebuild their lives. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.