

**LATE TESTIMONY**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY**

Rep. Faye Hanohano, Chair

Rep. Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 4, 2010

8:30 a.m.

Room 309

**STRONG SUPPORT - HB 2657 - WELLNESS CENTER IN EAST HAWAII**

**Aloha Chair Hanohano, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,**

I am writing in strong support of HB 2657 - Public Lands, Kulani Correctional Facility, which requires the department of public safety to plan for a model wellness center to be built in East Hawaii and report to the legislature in 2011.

A large percentage of Hawaii inmates are native Hawaiians who have substance abuse problems. The best criminal justice research indicates that programs with cultural competency content and restorative justice practices are effective in significantly reducing recidivism. It is therefore imperative that programs for Hawaiian inmates include Hawaiian cultural content and practices. This would help nurture inmates' self-esteem and sense of cultural identity and belonging to their communities. The success of these wellness programs is based on the fact that people who have a stake in taking care of themselves, their families, and their communities are less likely to return to a life of substance abuse.

I believe that building a wellness Center in East Hawaii is essential to fill the void left by the ill-advised and short-sighted closure of the Kulani Correctional Facility. I hope that, in the interests of the inmates whose programs have been disrupted by the closure of the Kulani facility and for the sake of public safety for all of Hawaii's communities, the report will be commissioned and completed as soon as possible so that the wellness center can be opened in the very near future.

Please pass HB 2657.

Mahalo,

Diana Bethel

Honolulu, Hawaii 96822