



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Chair

Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 4, 2016, Room 329

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

Support for HB 2130 - Relating to Children

Mahalo for your public service. I am the executive director of Hawaii'i Friends of Restorative Justice (www.hawaiiifriends.org), a 30+ year old non-profit incorporated to improve our justice system.

We support this measure to require informal adjustment over formal interventions to deal with youth charged with status offenses.

We have conducted diversion programs with the Honolulu Police Department and other agencies. We do research, publish the results, and are current in our knowledge of evidence-based practices for dealing with status offenses.

Often a simple reprimand from an authoritative figure is sufficient "informal adjustment" for dealing with youth who commit status offenses. Informal approaches prevent "net widening" and the effects from negative labeling, and criminalizing normal youthful behavior including occasional truancy.

When more than pointing out to youth that they made a poor decision is truly necessary, diversion programs should be used, but only those diversion programs that: "that offer a direct psychosocial intervention such as evidence-based family-interventions and behavioral programs in addition to case management, to offer opportunities for restorative justice interventions like family group conferencing and victim-offender mediation" should be used. "Broker-only models, mentoring models, and youth courts find little support in the literature for reducing rates of recidivism among diverted youth" *A meta-analysis of experimental studies of diversion programs for juvenile offenders*, 2012, Schwalbe, et al, p. 26, *Clinical Psychology Review* 32 (2012) 26–33. Schwalbe's research is the most comprehensive on diversion to date and should be studied by those working in juvenile justice matters. If you want a copy of the paper please let us know and we are happy to send you it.

This bill could help keep youth out of the juvenile justice system and address their needs for healthy maturing.

Please contact me at (808) 218-3712 and lorenn@hawaii.rr.com for further information about our support for this measure. Mahalo again for your service to the community.

Aloha,

Lorenn Walker, JD, MPH

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