

## Senate Bill 563

Good afternoon Senators and thank you for taking the time to read my comments in reference to my voice on this Senate Bill 563. My name is Jonathan Bussey and I am a student of Remington College with a concentration of a Bachelors of Applied Science in Criminal Justice. I am exercising my vote in favor of the Hawaii Police Officers receiving mental health treatment. I think this will be an important step to cater to those officers that are in need but suffer due to denial based on their pride or not aware of where to get help because of ashamed to admit help. Not only mental health training will be helpful for the officers in uniform but will help them with the persons that they come in contact with as well.

The Police Suicide Prevention Program for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century known as Emotional Self-Care Training is targeted to get assistance for those officers that need help. With police suicides on the rise even the departments that hide them can't make the numbers any lower. Instead of saying "Get help when you need it." We should say "Get help BEFORE you need it. "It is a totally new approach that walks us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century of mental health for police officers everywhere.

Law enforcement professionals provide up to one-third of all emergency mental health referrals. They interact with more persons with mental illness than any other occupational group outside the mental health field. They are often the first to respond to a mentally ill person in crisis and are called on to determine if and when a person should be referred for mental health treatment; yet, in general, their training in mental illness is limited. Some jurisdictions have developed intervention models that include officers who are specially trained in mental health.<sup>3-6</sup> Officers in the field, however, commonly encounter citizens with mental illness without any more specialized training than they received in their initial academy training. A 1995 survey of California law enforcement agencies found that the average number of mental health training hours in the academy was 6.3, only 83 of 158 agencies provided mental health training after the academy, and only seven percent of departments reported they had specific training on suicide prevention for custody officers.

Deinstitutionalization, more stringent commitment criteria, and cutbacks in treatment programs have resulted in an increase in the number of mentally ill persons involved with the police. When combined with increased demand for intervention, this limited amount of training has become a great source of frustration for law enforcement professionals. The risk of morbidity and mortality related to encounters between law enforcement and persons with mental illness has the potential to be quite high, therefore, it has been suggested that it would be in the best interest of all parties to educate officers about ways to manage officers in uniform and persons with mental illness with an eye toward decreasing the risk of harm.<sup>9-11</sup> recognizing a need, police officers have been turning to mental health professionals to provide training in mental health.

To the Senate committee and chairperson, my name is Edwin Villanueva. I am currently a student at Remington College working on my bachelor degree in criminal justice. I am in total support of senate bill 563 for obvious reasons. Law enforcement officers have always held a high standard of professionalism in society. Part of their job requires that they protect and serve the public. What is disconcerting to me is that a law enforcement officer's job is not easy task especially dealing with public who often look at them with intense scrutiny. The stress of the job can often take toll on law enforcement officers both psychologically and physically which in turn can affect their judgment and ability to perform their job. What makes a bit of a concern is that law enforcement officers carry a firearm which enables them to take a life when danger is imminent. Given the fact that a law enforcement job is stressful because of their working condition is the reason why I believe this bill should be supported.

Thank You,

Edwin Villanueva

2-11-15

# LATE TESTIMONY

## **SB563**

Submitted on: 2/10/2015

Testimony for PSM/HTH on Feb 11, 2015 13:45PM in Conference Room 414

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Deslynn Ching	Remington College Honolulu C.J. Student Coalition	Support	No

### Comments:

Hello my name is Deslynn Ching and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to submit a testimony on SB 563. I am in support of this bill.