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STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

P. O. Box 339  
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January 2, 2021

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,  
President and Members of the Senate  
Thirty-First State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 409  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki, Speaker  
and Members of the House of  
Representatives  
Thirty-First State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 431  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

Enclosed is the following report submitted in accordance with House Concurrent Resolution 205 (2019) and Senate Concurrent Resolution 7 SD 1 (2019) relating to visitation centers at state correctional facilities and jails.

In accordance with section 93-16, HRS, the report is available to review electronically at the Department's website, at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/reports/legislative-reports/>.

Sincerely,

Cathy Betts  
Director

Enclosure  
c:  
Governor's Office  
Lieutenant Governor's Office  
Department of Budget & Finance  
Legislative Auditor  
Legislative Reference Bureau Library (1 hard copy)

President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki

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**REPORT TO THE THIRTY-FIRST HAWAII STATE  
LEGISLATURE 2021**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH HOUSE CONCURRENT  
RESOLUTION 205 (2019) &  
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 7 SD 1 (2019),  
RELATING TO VISITATION CENTERS AT STATE  
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND JAILS**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
Office of the Director  
January 2021**

The Department of Human Services submits this report in accordance with House Concurrent Resolution 205 (HCR 205) and Senate Concurrent Resolution 7 SD 1 (SCR 7 SD1).<sup>1</sup>

HCR 205 and SCR 7 SD1 request that the Department of Human Services (DHS), in consultation with the Department of Public Safety (PSD), work with the Keiki Caucus's Family Reunification Working Group and other community stakeholders to develop a plan to establish children-friendly and family-friendly visitation centers at all State correctional prisons and jails to ensure the wellbeing of children of incarcerated parents and their families.

The resolutions further request that the Department of Human Services submit a report:

- on the status of visitation centers, including any findings, recommendations, and proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Sessions of 2020 and 2021; and
- include in its reports to the Legislature an assessment of any child accommodations in current visitation areas in prisons and jails and recommendations to address any specific issues.

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"[C]hildren affected by parental incarceration are a vulnerable population. Losing a parent to incarceration is traumatic, and the disruption of the parent-child relationship and attachment is considered an adverse childhood experience. Adverse childhood experiences are associated with an increased risk of trauma and the potential for lasting effects such as risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, and early death." Cramer, L., Goff, M., Peterson, B., & Sandstron, H. (2017). Parent-child visiting practices in prisons and jails. A synthesis of research and practice. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

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## 2019

The workgroup met six times in 2019. Meetings were accessible by conference call and held in-person at the Capitol. The meetings were primarily to assess visitation status between children and incarcerated parents in Hawaii and to exchange information about best practices.<sup>2</sup>

## 2020

In 2020, the Keiki Caucus introduced SB2345 and HB2111 based on the work group's work and recommendations. SB2345 was well supported and crossed to the House, pending its last

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<sup>1</sup> There are technical differences between HCR 205 and SR 7 SD1.

<sup>2</sup> See the 2020 report to the Legislature at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Visiting-Centers-at-all-State-Correctional-Facilities.pdf>

referral to the House Committee on Finance. As the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis shifted most legislative and executive priorities to the health crisis, SB235 did not pass.<sup>3</sup>

The workgroup met once, virtually, on October 2, 2020. Participants reported significant operational and programmatic changes made to address pandemic conditions, as well as the current challenges. Notably, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) said that due to COVID-19, it suspended physical visits in March 2020, programs for inmates were limited, and volunteer services were also suspended. Public Safety continues to face significant challenges mitigating COVID-19 within its facilities and amongst staff, in addition to budget and staffing shortages.

Community-based organization Blueprint for Change reported a highlight. Incorporating the family visitation and resource center model envisioned by HCR 205 workgroup and addressed in SB2345, Blueprint for Change submitted the concept in its proposal to the Administration for Native Americans in July 2020.

## Recommendations:

Based upon the information shared in 2019 that continues to be relevant, the workgroup renews the following recommendations for the Legislature's consideration:

1. Family Stabilization at time of arrest. The life altering impact that an arrest and incarceration have on a families, family members need assistance navigating, support, and counseling services immediately when a person is taken into custody. Services need to be available to assist with assessment, planning, counseling, and other decision-making that family members need to make following a parent's arrest. Funds should be appropriated to either the Department of Human Services or the Department of Public Safety for supportive services that preliminarily should be centrally located and accessible statewide.
2. Maintaining contact while in custody. To facilitate the increased ability for those incarcerated in jails and correctional facilities to maintain contact with their family members and children, the Legislature should evaluate the costs associated with providing increased phone or contact through electronic devices. Mainland and federal institutions allow electronic and regular telephone contact. Additionally, as we continue to learn to live with COVID-19, the Legislature should appropriate funds to make face to face visits safe for visitors, inmates, and staff.
3. Pilot a visitation center at Waiawa Correctional Facility to enhance visitation and family support services. To increase and improve visitation activities and services at Waiawa Correctional Facility, the Legislature should appropriate general funds for \$100,000 to

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<sup>3</sup> See, SB 2345,

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/Archives/measure\\_indiv\\_Archives.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=2345&year=2020](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/Archives/measure_indiv_Archives.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=2345&year=2020)

the Department of Public Safety to plan and improve existing facilities that may be used for additional visitation activities. These funds will be used to purchase construction materials that will all be assembled and built by inmates. Waiawa staff will involve and teach inmates proper construction techniques and further add to inmates' skill sets.

4. Additionally, the Legislature should appropriate general funds of \$200,000 to the Department of Human Services to purchase additional social work and family support services for families at the time of arrest, during incarceration, and for support services, once the incarcerated individual reenters the community. Visitation and support services to family members would include additional navigation and advocacy support for family members and legal custodians; funds will also be allocated for evaluation.