

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



JORDAN LOWE
DIRECTOR

MICHAEL VINCENT
Deputy Director
Administration

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TESTIMONY ON
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 217 AND HOUSE RESOLUTION 197
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO
ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE ON ETHICAL POLICING TO EVALUATE
THE EFFICACY AND IMPACT OF WEED AND SEED PROGRAMS IN THE STATE.

Before the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Tuesday, April 2, 2024; 2:00 p.m.

State Capitol Conference Room 325, Via Videoconference

Testifiers: Jared Redulla

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) offers COMMENTS expressing concern of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 217 and House Resolution (HR) 197 that requests: 1) The DLE establish a task force on ethical policing to evaluate the efficacy and impact of Weed and Seed programs in the State; and 2) that the task force is requested to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025. The DLE is concerned with these resolutions for two important reasons.

First, HCR 217 and HR 197 call for the task force to evaluate the efficacy and impact of Weed and Seed programs in Hawaii, including the programs' effect on:

- (1) Crime rates in designated Weed and Seed areas;
- (2) Crime rates in communities adjacent to designated Weed and Seed areas;
- (3) Arrest rates in designated Weed and Seed areas for persons who are black, indigenous, or persons of color, including Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders;

- (4) Arrest rates in designated Weed and Seed areas for low-income persons and unsheltered persons;
- (5) Average sentence lengths for persons arrested in designated Weed and Seed areas and convicted of the subject offense;
- (6) The average number of law enforcement officers present in designated Weed and Seed areas; and
- (7) The perception of residents and workers in designated Weed and Seed areas of the quality and frequency of their encounters with law enforcement officers.

The DLE is concerned that because the evaluation called for in these resolutions is so broad, as illustrated by the list of requirements for the evaluation, that investigating, collecting, compiling, and studying the data collected will require a team of expert researchers, academics, and research staff. As written, HCR 217 and HR 197 not only require a compilation of crime rates, arrest rates, sentence lengths, and measures of community perception, but it also calls for an evaluation of efficacy and impact. Consequently, the DLE believes that the very complex evaluation called for in these resolutions require a team of full-time academic research experts with skill and expertise far greater than the working group of officials from departments and offices listed in the resolution. Moreover, because of the complexities for undertaking the required evaluation in these resolutions, the important need to procure expert assistance to complete that required evaluation, the DLE believes that these resolutions need to be supported by an appropriation of funding to support the required research. As for now, HCR 217 and HR 197 do not have an appropriation, nor a full-time dedicated team to undertake such an evaluation.

Finally, the DLE notes that HCR 217 and HR 197 require that the task force called for in these resolutions submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025. The DLE believes that because the evaluation called for in these resolutions is complex and requires significant expertise, it would be impossible to provide a meaningful evaluation of the efficacy and impact of

Weed and Seed programs in the State within the short period of months between now and the 2025 Regular Session.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on these resolutions.



The Senate
Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 1, 2024

TESTIMONY COMMENTING ON HCR 217 AND HR 197
*REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ESTABLISH A TASK
FORCE ON ETHNICAL POLICING TO EVALUATE THE EFFICACY AND IMPACT OF
WEED AND SEED PROGRAMS IN THE STATE*

Before the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Tuesday, April 2, 2024 – 2:00 p.m.

Conference Room 325, via Videoconference

Submitted by Senator Carol Fukunaga (Senate District 11)
and Senator Karl Rhoads (Senate District 13)

During our collective years as state legislators (2006-present), and as county-state legislators representing the Downtown-Chinatown community (2012-2022), we have experienced first-hand the strong community benefits that Weed & Seed initiatives have brought to Honolulu's Downtown-Chinatown neighborhood.

After 2019-2022, when COVID-pandemic shutdowns shuttered many businesses, and drug-dealing, panhandling, petty crime and assaults in Downtown-Chinatown multiplied exponentially, a majority of neighbors applauded new Prosecuting Attorney Alm's proposed renewal of a Weed & Seed initiative at the county level. For those businesses and condo residents who had participated actively in the earlier Weed & Seed effort, they knew how much the reduction of illegal activities by more than 50% contributed in a major way towards Chinatown's resurgence in the early 2000's.

At the same time, we appreciate the importance of coordinated city/state and federal agency efforts to pursue "Weed" (investigation, prosecution and enforcement against illegal actions in Weed & Seed zones) and community-initiated efforts to "Seed" the same neighborhoods in cleaning-up, rebuilding and revitalizing blighted communities. We look forward to working with law enforcement, Judiciary, business and community partners in making today's Weed & Seed efforts even more impressive.

Thank you for considering our comments on this measure.

Senator Carol Fukunaga
Senate District 11

Senator Karl Rhoads
Senate District 13

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
ILIMA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
91-884 FORT WEAVER ROAD
EWA BEACH, HI 96706

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Shayne Greenland, the Principal at Ilima Intermediate School, and I have been involved with Weed and Seed Hawai'i for the past decade. During my tenure as Vice Principal at James Campbell High School, the Weed and Seed Program significantly aided our efforts in addressing various issues related to drugs, alcohol, and conflicts at the Ewa Beach Community Park and our local community. They collaborated closely with school administrators to mediate potentially harmful situations involving students and families, stemming from altercations on campus and within the community. They are also involved in conducting assemblies associated with: Drugs & Alcohol Prevention, Vaping, Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Human (Sex) Trafficking of students. Additionally, they actively participated in constructive initiatives such as summer programs like the Junior Golf Program, cooking sessions at JCHS, and community clean-up events.

Weed and Seed have been instrumental in maintaining the safety of our school campus. Their prompt response to trespassing incidents, coupled with their familiarity with individuals involved, enabled them to resolve situations swiftly and peacefully. The value of their contributions cannot be overstated, and it would be a disservice to our community to not continue their invaluable support.

Based on our shared history, mission, and ongoing programs, I STRONGLY OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

1. It misrepresents the purposes, value, and effectiveness of the program.
2. It alleges without evidence that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and leads to the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods.
3. It solely emphasizes the law enforcement aspect of the Weed and Seed strategy, overlooking the equally crucial "seeding" component involving prevention, intervention programs, and community engagement. This is the value that they continue to bring to our Ewa Beach Schools.

These are just a few instances highlighting why I remain a steadfast supporter and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i. I urge you to give careful consideration to my perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shayne Greenland', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shayne Greenland - Principal

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Kelli Buenconsejo and I have been involved with Weed and Seed for many years as a Public Health Nurse and more recently as a Waipahu Steering Committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- Weed and Seed Hawai'i knows that crime prevention must start at an early age and thus, have created youth mentoring programs that work with Elementary, Intermediate and High school students to combat and prevent substance abuse, truancy, and gang involvement.
- Through organized graffiti paint outs and beautification projects, Weed and Seed Hawai'i has given residents the opportunity to clean up and care for their neighborhoods.
- Weed and Seed Hawai'i has assisted in creating neighborhood security watches in the most at-risk neighborhoods and have empowered the residents to report illegal activities promptly.

- Weed and Seed Hawai'i was instrumental in hosting the first meeting in Waipahu to discuss how the community can support the state and federal government concerning prison re-entry into the community.
- Weed and Seed Hawai'i worked with UH Manoa to host the first discussions regarding the over representation of Polynesian youth in the Juvenile Justice System. These early discussions lead to the creation of the Civil Citation program implemented in Kalihi to divert first time offenders into culturally based services.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i and **I urge you to consider my comments.**

Sincerely,

Kelli L. Buenconsejo, RN PHN
State of Hawaii
Department of Health
Public Health Nursing Branch
Leeward Oahu Nursing Office
94-275 Mokuola Street Rm 101
Waipahu, HI 96797

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

STEVEN S. ALM
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
LOIO HO'OPI'I

ALII PLACE
1060 RICHARDS STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 768-7400 • FAX: (808) 768-7515 • WEBSITE: www.honoluluprosecutor.org

THOMAS J. BRADY
FIRST DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I



**THE HONORABLE DAVID A. TARNAS, CHAIR
THE HONORABLE GREGG TAKAYAMA, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2024
State of Hawai'i**

April 1, 2024

RE: H.C.R 217 / H. R. 197; REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE ON ETHICAL POLICING TO EVALUATE THE EFFICACY AND IMPACT OF WEED AND SEED PROGRAMS IN THE STATE.

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu (“Department”) submits the following testimony, **objecting** to the passage of HCR 217/HR 197.

My name is Steve Alm, and I am the Prosecutor of the City and County of Honolulu.

The Department would first like to clear up some apparent misunderstandings of the Weed & Seed (W&S) and Safe & Sound (S&S) strategy (same strategy, different name). Comments regarding this strategy have, unfortunately, mischaracterized the intent of this strategy and failed to recognize its benefits.

The HCR appears to assume that W&S/S&S only involves arresting people, over-policing, and “militarizing” our low-income neighborhoods. That is not accurate. Yes, some of the W&S/S&S sites are in low-income, high crime areas. That is because the residents in those areas are afraid and reluctant to be involved in their community. Thus, the first step in the W&S/S&S strategy, Weed/Safe, is coordinated law enforcement to reduce criminal activity. Then, in the second step, Seed/Sound, in a now safer community, residents and businesses are

more willing to participate in community activities. Both the crime priorities and social service improvements are identified by the residents in those communities.

Any arrests or citations in a W&S/S&S site are treated the same in court and the sentences handed out by our judges are no longer than for arrests/citations from other neighborhoods. Significantly, the number of arrests/citations is dependent on the populations involved and the level of criminal activity. For example, the crime-reducing efforts in the S&S initiative in Waikīkī, certainly not a marginalized community, has resulted in many more arrests/citations than the other three sites combined in a shorter period of time: 3,626 versus 1,143. S&S Waikīkī began on September 6, 2022. Chinatown/Kalihi-Pālana W&S began on July 12, 2021. Both the Waipahu and ‘Ewa/‘Ewa Beach/Kapolei W&S sites started on June 1, 2022.

Arresting law breakers is certainly part of the W&S/S&S strategy. Previously, many site residents were afraid to go outside due to the criminal activity. When law breakers are held accountable, the community feels safer. That results in more involvement in community activities, many of which are requested by area residents.

W&S/S&S Initiatives

W&S/S&S is a strategy of collaboration. It brings together law enforcement to work collaboratively with businesses and residents to reduce crime and improve the quality of life for neighborhoods in Honolulu by striving to:

- Maximize coordination of existing resources and initiatives
- Support responsible community-driven initiatives
- Engage all members of the community
- Support economic and social well-being
- Encourage institutions and organizations to change the way they operate to be more responsive
- Teach and model collaboration
- Focus on sustainable results
- Hui Mālama (caring for others)

This strategy has been consistent from the start of the first W&S site in Chinatown and Kalihi-Pālana in September 1997. Community meetings had previously been held at Ka‘iulani Elementary School, across the street from Mayor Wright Homes. There, area residents told us of their greatest concerns regarding criminal activity and what programs and services would help the community and make it stronger. A survey was also sent to 3,500 residents in four languages asking them to prioritize crime problems and other neighborhood issues. They identified the drug dealers operating out in the open on nearby Pua Lane (the highest crime rate spot on O‘ahu) as the number one crime problem. Those dealers were a gauntlet through which all of the elementary school students had to walk through to go to Ka‘iulani Elementary School. Those dealers didn’t even live in Kalihi. They came from other neighborhoods to sell drugs there. This had been going on for decades. Lowell Kalapa, one of our original W&S partners, managed a senior citizen apartment complex on Pua Lane. He spoke of how the residents there were afraid to go on early morning walks for fear of being harassed and assaulted by these drug dealers on Pua Lane.

The residents said they wished that their keiki could get help with their school work and have more activities after school. They wished for early childhood educational opportunities. They also said they were worried about cars speeding on Pua Lane. They would not let their kids play there for fear that they would chase a ball into the street and get run over.

The W&S partners listened to the community. In short order, the drug dealers were arrested, prosecuted, and sent to the Federal prison for an average sentence of 20 months with no other drug dealer taking their place. Pua Lane was now safer. With the help of a full-time coordinator, W&S engaged with the community. Lili'uokalani Trust paid for tutoring at Ka'iulani Elementary School from 2:30 – 3:30 every school day and an after-school sports program run by Bernard Lewis, Ka'iulani custodian, ran from 3:30 – 5:30 every day for 125 students. That included all of the kids living with their moms at the Institute for Human Services. The Sisters of St. Francis, who own Kukui Gardens across from Mayor Wright Homes, provided a two-bedroom unit, and a Head Start Program was opened there. This provided early education employment opportunities for area moms as well as freeing others to pursue employment elsewhere while their keiki were at Head Start. The Hawai'i Public Housing Authority gave up a two-bedroom unit at Mayor Wright Homes to be used as a W&S Community House, for students to study after school, with computers donated by Aloha United Way (AUW). They also installed a new set of playground equipment at Mayor Wright Homes. The City Council acted swiftly and speed humps were placed on Pua Lane, solving the speeding problem. The entire W&S initiative was officially begun in the two neighborhoods in September 1997 with AUW's Day of Caring, bringing a thousand volunteers to help beautify the site.

The combination of all these positive, prosocial activities, coupled with a coordinated law enforcement response, produced tremendous reductions in crime in the W&S site. From 1997 through 2000, violent felonies (e.g., murders, rapes, robberies, assaults) were reduced by 75% from 3041 in 1997 to only 746 in 2000. That meant that 2,295 residents or visitors to Chinatown or Kalihi-Pālama were not victims of the serious felonies in 2000. The human misery that was avoided by the non-occurrence of these crimes was priceless. The cost savings to taxpayers of HPD not having to investigate these cases and the prosecution, the defense, probation, prison, and the parole systems not having to deal with all those felony cases was enormous. Misdemeanor crimes such as gambling, theft, vandalism, and disorderly conduct were similarly reduced by 69%. From 7,686 offenses in 1997, to 2,346 such cases in 2000. Currently, this collaboration continues in several O'ahu neighborhoods: Chinatown/Kalihi-Pālama, Waipahu, 'Ewa/'Ewa Beach/Kapolei, and now Waikīkī. The same strategy with a different name, Safe & Sound Waikīkī, started in September of 2022.

There are numerous outstanding Seed/Sound efforts going on in these four sites as well, from a culinary arts program at Campbell High School, with the assistance of famed Chef Roy Yamaguchi, to multiple neighborhood cleanups, to increased services for those with mental health and substance issues, to the recent Celebrate Safe Communities event at Pearlridge.

Seed/Sound, like crime reducing Weed/Safe efforts, is geared towards the needs of the individual community. For example, when W&S was reinvigorated in Chinatown/Kalihi-Pālana in 2021, it was apparent that while the crime situation was not as out-of-control as it was in 1997, the homeless situation was much worse. We were convinced that the vast majority of the chronically homeless in Chinatown had mental health and/or substance abuse problems. The current criminal justice system was not working well for many. Those arrested for drug possession (typically methamphetamine) in Chinatown would be transported to the O‘ahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC). Once in court, a week later at arraignment and plea, they might be released pending trial, in which case they would likely go right back to the streets. Alternatively, they would sit in jail for months unable to make bail, only to eventually be put on probation and then try to get into treatment with their probation officer’s assistance for their mental health and/or substance abuse problems.

To improve that situation, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney led the effort to create a new way to help those chronically homeless to get off and, hopefully, stay off the streets, starting at the front end, soon after their arrest, rather than months later. SUDA-Fast (Substance Use Disorder-Fast) was created to get these defendants assessed at OCCC soon after their arrest and then driven directly to treatment. A large team of collaborators (prosecutors, public defenders, Department of Health, Intake Service Center, Hawai‘i Cares, and treatment providers) worked to develop and implement procedures to implement SUDA-Fast. Seeing that the assessments were not happening as quickly as possible, the Department secured a grant and recently hired a Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (CSAC) to go into OCCC to do the assessments and get those chronically homeless into needed treatment as soon as possible. Walking the walk, our new hire is an ex-offender who has his own history with the criminal justice system and thus has great credibility with the homeless arrestees.

In addition to the successful Seed/Sound initiatives, the current W&S/S&S sites are also showing impressive reductions in crime. For example, in Chinatown/Kalihi-Pālana, comparing the time period from January 1, 2022, through March 31, 2022, with a year later, from January 1, 2023, through March 31, 2023, the following reductions were noted:

- Drugs – down by 38%
- Liquor – down by 65%
- Robbery – down by 61%
- Burglary – down by 12%
- Criminal Property Damage – down by 32%
- Sex Assault – down by 40%

Similarly, in Waikīkī, crime was reduced in the first full year of S&S’s implementation between September 2022 and August 2023, compared with the year before:

- Drugs/Liquor – down by 67%
- Robbery – down by 35%
- Burglary – down by 32%
- Car break-ins – down by 31%
- Criminal Property Damage – down by 27%

- Theft – down by 6%
- Assault – down by 4%
- Calls for Service – down by 8%

In addition, in comparison with those people arrested in other areas, defendants arrested in the W&S sites (primarily for petty misdemeanors and misdemeanors) actually have a chance at a better sentence in court. While other defendants are typically sentenced to a jail term only, the Department often recommends a probation sentence for W&S/S&S defendants so they can get needed supervision, guidance, and services.

HCR 217/HR 197

I have three comments regarding the Department's potential involvement with the proposed Task Force.

Participating in and assisting with the research called for in HCR 217/HR 197 would take a tremendous amount of time and effort. We would much rather spend that time and effort on starting new W&S/S&S initiatives in other neighborhoods. We have gotten a lot of interest and requests by elected officials and community members to bring this strategy to their neighborhoods. They want to help and get involved and make their communities safer and stronger, and this strategy has a proven record of doing that.

Second, the data collection requested by this Task Force would be costly and extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain and it would take an enormous investment of resources to attempt to accomplish it. Currently, some of this data (e.g., racial makeup) is not even collected and the various criminal justice systems are not integrated. Retrieving this data is problematic and would require a manual inquiry into individual files dating back to 1997, many of which have been destroyed or otherwise not maintained. These data integration challenges and the need to create linkages with HPD are exactly what led to the Department's applying for, and securing, the FY 2021 Smart Prosecution grant, rather than being mandated by the Bureau of Justice Administration as related in the testimony by the ACLU regarding HB 2621. In order to comply with this resolution, we estimate that our Department would need at least two (2) full-time paralegals to work on this effort.

Third, if ever attempted, there are other agencies or individuals who should be added to the list of Task Force participants, and others who may not have to be involved. As the W&S/S&S strategy is an O'ahu-only initiative, the three other county prosecutors and the other public defender branch offices may not have a useful role to play and may not need to be involved. Instead, as all four W&S/S&S sites are on O'ahu, a member of HPD should be included in any task force, particularly as they hold much of the data. As many people do not understand the W&S/S&S strategy, one person involved with W&S and one with S&S should be included to ensure that participants aren't operating under wrong impressions and misunderstandings of the strategy.

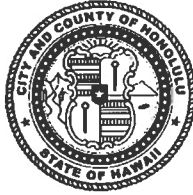
We, at the Department, are tremendously proud of our involvement and leadership in designing and implementing the four current W&S/S&S sites and look forward to continuing

to help reduce crime there and in helping those neighborhood's residents to make their community better places to live, work, and play, and to help any who get arrested deal more effectively with their criminogenic risk factors. We also hope to expand to other neighborhoods in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HCR 217/HR 197.

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA MĀKA'I O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

801 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 529-3111 • WEBSITE: www.honolulupd.org



RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA

ARTHUR J. LOGAN
CHIEF
KAHU MĀKA'I

KEITH K. HORIKAWA
RADE K. VANIC
DEPUTY CHIEFS
HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE **PO-MS**

April 2, 2024

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Tarnas and Members:

SUBJECT: House Concurrent Resolution 217, Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Task Force on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

I am Paul Okamoto, Major of District 1 (Central Honolulu) of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD has deep concerns regarding the language contained within House Concurrent Resolution 217, Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Task Force on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the state. We completely reject the suggestion or implication that the men and women of the HPD target and over police marginalized communities based on race or income. We also reject the premise that the application of responsible law enforcement, which is in response to complaints generated by the people that live, work, and play in our communities, and criminal activity that is witnessed and reported to us by the people is a militarization of our neighborhoods. Since its implementation, programs like Weed and Seed Hawai'i have transformed neighborhoods like Chinatown for the better.

The HPD, which has played an integral part of the Weed and Seed and Safe and Sound Programs from creation to inception to enforcement, is being excluded from

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
and Members
April 2, 2024
Page 2

participation in this group. If this resolution should move forward, we request the inclusion of the HPD so that we may have a representative in the task force.

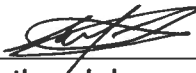
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Paul Okamoto, Major
District 1

APPROVED:


Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police

wholeheartedly approve this statement -

January 19, 2024

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Senate Ways and Means Committee Chair
Representative Kyle Yamashita, House Finance Chair

RE: State GIA - Weed and Seed Hawaii, Inc.

My name is Gayleen Balais and I am a Recreation Director with the Project Ho'omana Program and Waipahu Complex Supervisor under the City and County of Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation, which provides services to the youth in partnership with Weed and Seed Hawai'i and the HPD District 3 CPT Officers for 21 years.

I support Weed and Seed Hawai'i because they have been an integral part in making the Waipahu community a better and safer community for our youth, adult and seniors to live. They have afforded our community residents with various resources to better enrich their lives and daily living. They understand the "needs" of the community and thus, has created a very strong working relationship/partnership with various community groups, businesses and organizations. Project Ho'omana has been very fortunate to have been working with Weed and Seed Hawai'i for 21 years. Their support and resources to my program have been innumerable and beneficial to all individuals in our program. My partnership with Weed and Seed Hawai'i has been a blessing to myself on a professional and personal level. Not only do I work in the Waipahu community, I am also a proud resident of the Waipahu community. Through their efforts, I have seen many positive changes and am very happy that the Waipahu community has been provided with such a rich community resource like Weed and Seed Hawai'i.

Weed and Seed is an important community resource which needs to be continued. Your continued support of this important initiative will ensure that community leaders and partners continue to build a strong network of committed citizens that will work toward preventing crime and growing strong, healthy communities.

I urge you to support Weed and Seed Hawaii by supporting their State GIA application.

Sincerely,



Gayleen Balais
Recreation Director, Dept. of Parks & Recreation
94-230 Paiwa Street, Waipahu HI 96797

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Hercules Huihui and I have been involved with Weed and Seed since its inception in 2000. I am a long time Waipahu resident and current chair of the Waipahu Steering Committee. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact the "weeding" and seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- When a major drug dealer moved in across the street from where I lived, I worked with the Honolulu Police Department through Weed and Seed Hawai'i to take him down. It took 3 years of surveillance but in the end, all his drug houses were shut down across O'ahu.
- Being a part of Weed and Seed Hawai'i has given me the opportunity to serve my community as a caretaker for the people and especially my keiki. That is why I am grateful to Weed and Seed Hawai'i for inviting me to help with the Keiki and Cops Christmas shopping event every December. Weed and Seed Hawai'i takes needy children and pairs them up with a local hero or helper who serves as a positive role model. The keiki are treated to breakfast and given the opportunity to shop for gifts.
- As the konohiki of the Pupuu area, I am also called upon to speak on behalf of the residents and support positive programs like the Gardening Project at Waipahu Intermediate School and the Pupuuole Bike Path Cleanup. Projects like these give our

keiki the opportunity to learn the importance of food sustainability, to give back to their community and teaches them how to be servant leaders.

I can cite many examples of why I continue to advocate for and support Weed and Seed Hawai'i. But perhaps my biggest reason for being a part of Weed and Seed Hawai'i is because I firmly believe that it is my kuleana, my responsibility, to take care of my own neighborhood. Weed and Seed Hawai'i has given me a voice and countless learning opportunities and I am grateful to Weed and Seed Hawai'i for continuing to help us to help ourselves.

I urge you to take my comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Hercules Huihui
94-335 Pupuole Street Apt. 1
Waipahu HI 96797

Aloha Members of the Committee,

As the Executive Coordinator of Safe & Sound Waikiki, I am writing to provide commentary and to highlight the impactful work of this new, community-based initiative (modeled after Weed & Seed) which is aimed at addressing public safety concerns while simultaneously tackling the complex issues of mental health, substance use and homelessness within our community. In my role, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact this program has had on individuals and the broader community.

The intersection of public safety, mental health, and homelessness presents significant challenges that we here locally are no stranger to. We also recognize that they cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. Safe & Sound Waikiki is a coordinated effort between the City & County of Honolulu, the Honolulu Police Department, the Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Institute of Human Services, inc. (IHS), the Waikiki Business community, and its residents - and I believe that it's making a real, tangible difference here in Waikiki. Our partnership with IHS allows for a dedicated case coordinator to focus specifically on the Waikiki area and offer comprehensive, individualized outreach support for those who are in critical need of services through the IHS network - services that many times may be a barrier to a healthier, more productive and independent life. To date, this partnership has resulted in:

- 190+ individuals within the Waikiki area receiving outreach support and services (this includes assistance with obtaining IDs, Social Security, health insurance, EBT cards, etc.)
- 2 individuals relocating to their home out of state, with family members
- 30 individuals successfully transitioning out of homelessness and into short-term or long-term shelter
- 4 individuals entering stabilization, treatment, and/or respite centers
- 12 individuals receiving on-the-spot street medication to treat severe mental health issues

Additionally, in the first year of the program, in partnership with local law enforcement and the city prosecutors, we've noticed a decrease in crime in the area:

- Robberies down 35%
- Burglaries down 32%
- Criminal Property Damage down 27%
- Theft down 6%
- Assault down 4%

Safe & Sound Waikiki also recognizes the importance in emphasizing prevention and early intervention efforts for our youth and young adults.

Through continued community education, events in partnership with HPD's D6 Community Policing Team, and proactive engagement, Safe & Sound Waikiki works to promote resilience and help residents foster a sense of belonging - which may be one of the biggest drivers to helping someone deter from criminal activity down the road.

By providing integrated services and support, we work to keep our community members, businesses, and families safe in live-time, while addressing the root causes of criminal behavior such as trauma, poverty, and lack of access to resources. The program helps individuals address underlying issues and ultimately build healthier, more fulfilling lives. This two-fold approach takes into account the importance of addressing both ends while honoring opportunities to help our vulnerable individuals receive the support they need.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Katie Kaahanui
Executive Coordinator,
Safe & Sound Waikiki



HCR217 HD1 & HR197 HD1
Weed and Seed Ethics
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
Tuesday, Apr 2, 2024: 2:00: Room 325 Videoconference

HSAC Comments HCR217 & HR197

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

The Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition comments to redirect the task force goals.

Many of the people who come under Weed and Seed strategies need help.

1. Most of them have issues of substance use disorders, mental health issues, physical health conditions, and have a criminality behavioral orientation.
2. HSAC advocates for a strategy that justice-involved are offered a dismissal of charges provided they go to treatment to get help.
3. Probation and Parole could be the deciding authority for determining if a temporary weed and seed strategy is advantageous for the persons coming out of a treatment program.
4. **This solution, we believe, is best for going forward.**
 - a) Going to treatment is effective even if mandated.
 - b) Residential itself is 30-45 days away from their environment to learn recovery, coping skills, support systems, mental health therapy and address new attitudes to replace criminality tendencies.
 - c) Often a temporary relocation after residential treatment is most helpful so they can develop new friends in a new environment who support their recovery.

Justice-involved people need help, and many have treatable medical issues of behavioral health conditions such as substance abuse and mental health coupled with criminality, which can also be treated.

Let's divert to new solutions because we all want the community to feel safe as well as support people who are working on their recovery to return to their families and get jobs. Then all restrictions can end.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.



STATE OF HAWAII ORGANIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS
" A Police Organization for Police Officers Only "
Founded 1971

April 1, 2024

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: **HCR 217 – Task Force on Weed and Seed Programs**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Takayama, and Honorable Committee members:

I serve as the President of the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (“SHOPO”) and write to you on behalf of our Union in **opposition** to HCR 217. This bill seeks to urge the Department of Law Enforcement to establish a task force to evaluate the efficacy and impact of Weed and Seed programs. The resolution states that there is a need to these programs for “ethical policing,” and that evidence suggests the programs “disproportionately target marginalized communities and results in militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods.” The resolution also states that that the programs may also result in “unjustly high criminal sentences for persons who are arrested in designated Weed and Seed areas.”

As you may know, the Weed and Seed program was originally implemented in 1998 with the Honolulu Police Department as its first partner. This multiagency program requires teamwork between prosecutors, police and community members and while not perfect, is an example of people working together to make their communities safer. The “weed” function of the program, i.e., removing criminals from a particular district by police, was carried out for a few years before being discontinued for roughly twenty years. The “seed” function of the program has continued throughout and includes providing services, such as substance abuse treatment, to help people get off the streets. In approximately 2021, the “weed” aspect of the program was reactivated in Chinatown and Kalihi-Palama and then planned for Waikiki in 2022. Media reports on the revival and expansion of the program have featured numerous positive messages regarding the negative impact of the program’s long absence and its immediate results. We cannot agree more. Our residents should not feel afraid outside of their homes and this program has made a difference. Moreover, Honolulu City Prosecutor Steven Alm has represented that there are no unique penalties imposed on those arrested in connection with the program except that bail may be set higher and that these arrests provide the “quick attention” needed in the area.

Main Office & Honolulu Chapter Office
1717 Hoe Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819-3125
Tel: (808) 847-4676 "84 SHOPO"
www.shopohawaii.org Fax: (808) 841-4818

Hawaii Chapter Office
688 Kinoole Street, Room 220B
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-3877
Tel: (808) 934-8405
Fax: (808) 934-8210

Kauai Chapter Office
3176 Oihana Street, Suite 104, Lihue
Mailing Add: P. O. Box 1708
Lihue, Hawaii 96766-5708
Tel: (808) 246-8911

Maui Chapter Office
1887 Wili Pa Loop, Suite 2
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793-1253
Tel: (808) 242-6129
Fax: (808) 242-9519

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
April 1, 2024
SHOPO Testimony Page 2
Re: HCR 217 – Task Force on Weed and Seed Programs

Ironically, this resolution speaks of potential “over-policing of low-income neighborhoods.” Our county police departments are experiencing a severe staffing crisis. Our communities are begging us for *more* presence, but this legislature seems only to be interested in allocating resources to studies, reducing incentives to recruit officers, and passing new measures that make an already difficult job as a police officer even harder. The Weed and Seed program needs *more* resources, not energy lost on identifying any possible way to dismantle it. Rather than urging more “studies,” how about helping us find ways to fill the empty beats so that our neighbors can feel safer.

We thank you for allowing us to be heard on this very important issue and we hope your committee will unanimously oppose HCR 217.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT “BOBBY” CAVACO
SHOPO President

RC jmo

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Rochelle Kalili and I have been involved with Weed and Seed for the past 14 years as a former resident and current Steering Committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "weeding" and "seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- As a parent of 6 children and 6 grandchildren who once lived in Waipahu, my priority is the safety of my family. Unfortunately, my former home, Waipahu, had the stigma of being a bad place to live. While I acknowledge that there may still be criminal and drug issues, I also know that Waipahu is a safer place to live and work **because of Weed and Seed Hawai'i**. Through Weed and Seed Hawai'i, a team of officers has worked closely with us to address community issues. In fact, they arrested some people for prostitution near where I used to live and arrested two people for distributing crystal meth near a park where children play.
- As a parent-community facilitator at an area elementary school, I have seen the improvement in the way our students/children relate to police officers. In the past, many of our children viewed officers as aggressive people who only caused harm to their 'ohana. Through the partnerships that the Weed and Seed Hawai'i has created, **it has changed their views**. They now see police officers as people who are looking out for their best interests; people they can trust. Weed and Seed Hawai'i has educated individuals on how drugs and other negative influences ruin families and community. **Weed and Seed Hawai'i has empowered current and former residents like me to**

take back their community. We are no longer afraid to call 9-1-1 to ask for help. As the saying goes, "Ohana means no one is left behind." I believe that because of Weed and Seed Hawai'i, no one in Waipahu is left behind.

- Through their RAP youth mentoring program that takes place at the school I work at, students are educated on the laws, taught the importance of making good decisions as well as presented information on Bullying, Internet Safety, and Drug Education, to name a few.
- In addition, the Waipahu Complex Area schools have for several years worked closely with Weed and Seed Hawai'i to address safety concerns on and off campus. Weed and Seed Hawai'i has brought in presenters to educate our staff and families on Harassment, Internet Safety, Inappropriate Touching and Exposure, Dangers of Tobacco Products and E-Cigarettes, Gangs, etc. These educational opportunities help our families to make educated choices and to be aware of the challenges that our youth may be facing today.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i. **I urge you to take my comments into consideration.**

Sincerely,



Rochelle Kalili
85-203 McArthur Street
Waianae, HI 96792



WEED AND SEED HAWAII, INC.

91-884 Ft Weaver Rd Suite A
Ewa Beach HI 96706

Site 1: Kalihi-Palama-Chinatown-Ala Moana-Sheridan
Site 2: Waipahu
Site 3: Ewa-Ewa Beach

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tamas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tamas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR 217/HR 197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State.

I am Gale Braceros, Executive Director of Weed and Seed Hawaii, Inc. During my tenure, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of our community-driven programs on the communities we serve.

Weed and Seed Hawaii, Inc. was founded with a mission to empower distressed communities by fostering collaboration between residents and law enforcement to ensure safety and prosperity for all. Over the years, we have remained committed to this mission adapting our strategies to meet the evolving needs of our communities.

Our youth mentoring programs continue to be in high demand, for example, our Culinary Arts Summer Program at James Campbell High School recently celebrating its 20th year. By offering youth mentoring programs, we have served countless individuals, providing guidance support, and opportunities for personal growth.

Our success is not only based on our “weeding” component but, more importantly, on our “seeding” component, our commitment to social investment in our communities, providing long term solutions, lifelong skills, and opportunities for our youth to experience lifetime opportunities, as well as resources and education to our kupunas to enhance their quality of life.

Based on our history, our mission, and programs, I oppose HCR217/HR197.

Sincerely,

Gale Braceros
Executive Director
808-376-7005

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Evie Ahlo and I am a longtime Waipahu resident. I have been involved with Weed and Seed for 15 years as a volunteer and Waipahu Steering Committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

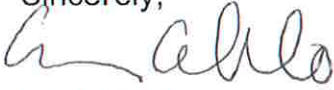
I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- Although I have lived in Waipahu for most of my lifetime, it was Weed and Seed Hawai'i who helped to educate me on many of the challenges that exist in our community. This is one of the main reasons that I felt the need to volunteer with Weed and Seed Hawai'i. I helped with mini Kupuna Fairs providing safety information to our senior citizens. I helped with the collection of school supplies and backpacks for needy keiki.
- Through safe and drug free family events such as Celebrate Safe Communities, the Candy Crawl at Pearlridge and 'Ohana Thanksgiving Bingo Night, we can engage with families and create a positive atmosphere of learning and fun.
- While in my former position with Hawai'i's Plantation Village, Weed and Seed Hawai'i spearheaded a Fair to provide homeless persons with resources and support to get their lives back on track.

- Whenever there is a concern, Weed and Seed Hawai'i has given me an opportunity to voice my concerns, make suggestions on how to deal with the situation(s) and/or directly get involved in the organization and implementation of the event. My resource and support base has expanded with the support of Weed and Seed Hawai'i.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i and **I urge you to consider my comments.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evelyn Ahlo', written in a cursive style.

Evelyn Ahlo
94-473 Awamoi Street
Waipahu HI 96797

Representative David Tarnas, Chair
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Judiciary &
Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813



Aloha Chair Tarnas and Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

REGARDING HCR 217/HR197-REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE ON ETHICAL POLICING TO EVALUATE THE EFFICACY AND IMPACT OF WEED AND SEED PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

For your background and education, we would like to humbly offer some information to describe Weed & Seed Hawaii more accurately, its mission and purpose to serve our communities.

Currently in its 26th year of operation, Weed & Seed Hawaii's mission is to bring people and resources together to reduce crime in our communities through law enforcement, community engagement, social and economic revitalization, neighborhood beautification, and an investment in the future of our youth. We do this by mobilizing community residents to assist law enforcement in identifying and removing violent offenders and drug traffickers from their neighborhoods, assisting human service agencies in identifying and responding to social service needs and fully participating in community planning and decision-making processes.

In each of our three designated sites across Oahu – Site 1: Kalihi/Palama/Chinatown/Ala Moana/Sheridan, Site 2: Waipahu, Site 3: Ewa/Ewa Beach – we develop comprehensive community-based strategies to control and prevent violent crime, gang activity, drug trafficking and drug-related crime. We also coordinate existing and new government and private-sector initiatives, criminal justice efforts and human services to serve our youth, kupuna and all families.

Weed & Seed Hawaii began as a federal initiative but after 8 years of federal funding, all sites across the nation were faced with the decision to continue operations with their own funding resources. Thankfully in Hawaii, we have been able to sustain Weed & Seed Hawaii through State and County grants and private donations from corporate and individual donors who believe in our work.

Empowering and Strengthening the Community

WEED AND SEED HAWAII

91-884 Ft. Weaver Road Ste. A

Ewa Beach Hawaii 96706

Tel: 808-376-7005 (Direct)

Board of Directors

Lee Tokuhara, President

Richard Quiamzon, Vice-President

Jon Yoshimura, Secretary

Anna Kobashigawa, Finance

Joy Barua

Russell Henna

Maile Kanemaru

Corporal Roland Pagan

Monique Wall

Gale Bracerros, Executive Director

Lorrie Kanno, Program Director

WSHI is a non-profit organization



While we work closely with the local area schools, businesses, elected officials, and others to implement our strategies, one of our main partners continues to be the Honolulu Police Department. With HPD we are able to hold a variety of events in our sites, including RAP sessions with youth to teach students skills in problem solving and make positive choices, sports programs such as golf and bowling, and a summer culinary arts program that offers life skills beyond the kitchen.

As our name suggests, there are two sides to Weed & Seed Hawaii. The Weeding component involves:

1. Law Enforcement: Weed & Seed Hawaii works with law enforcement officers to areas; and
2. Community Policing: Community residents work with law enforcement officers to develop solutions for crimes in their neighborhoods.

The Seeding component includes:

3. Prevention, Intervention and Treatment: Crime and violence can be prevented by involving resident and human service organizations, such as the YMCA of Honolulu, to create a positive community environment.
4. Neighborhood Restoration: Weed & Seed Hawaii is designed to revitalize and improve the quality of life by assisting to address community blight and support education and economic development.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs to successfully execute our Weeding AND Seeding strategies, we oppose HCR217 / HR197.

Sincerely,

Weed and Seed Hawaii
Board of Directors

Lee Tokuhara
Richard Quiamzon
Jon Yoshimura
Anna Kobashigawa
Joy Barua
Russell Henna
Maile Kanemaru
Roland Pagan
Monique Wall

WEED AND SEED HAWAII

91-884 Ft. Weaver Road Ste. A

Ewa Beach Hawaii 96706

Tel: 808-376-7005 (Direct)

Board of Directors

Lee Tokuhara, President

Richard Quiamzon, Vice-President

Jon Yoshimura, Secretary

Anna Kobashigawa, Finance

Joy Barua

Russell Henna

Maile Kanemaru

Corporal Roland Pagan

Monique Wall

Gale Bracerros, Executive Director

Lorrie Kanno, Program Director

WSHI is a non-profit organization

Empowering and Strengthening the Community



ABC Stores
766 Pohukaina Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813-5391
www.abcstores.com

Telephone: (808) 591-2550
Fax: (808) 591-2039
E-mail: mail@abcstores.com

To: Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Re: HCR217/ HR197 Weed and Seed: Law Enforcement; Ethical Policing; Task Force

Date: April 2, 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 325

Position: Comments

Good afternoon, Chairperson David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Greg Takayama and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs. I am Curtis Higashiyama Employee Relations and Government Affairs Manager and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

ABC Stores Would like to offer **Comments** on HCR217/ HR197. Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to establish a task force on ethical policing to evaluate the efficacy and impact of Weed and Seed programs in the State.

The Weed and seed Program is a Federal Program which is under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Justice (Executive Office for Weed and Seed) with the following objectives: Weed and Seed integrates law enforcement, community policing, prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood restoration efforts.

What has started over 20 years ago in the Kalihi-Chinatown area and in another form today known as Safe and Sound that serves the Waikiki area has helped both reduce if not controlling criminal driven activities and, more importantly, onboarded and enabled many supportive agencies to offer rehabilitation and corrective measures in addressing issues of normalcy and addressing actions deemed inappropriate.

While we are not opposed to a task force examining Weed and Seed/Safe and Sound initiatives, we do ask the committee to review all data and see the good both programs do for the community and individuals, before voting on the resolutions.

We would like to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify and **Comment** on HCR217/HR197.

Mahalo,
Curtis Higashiyama
ABC Stores
Employee Relations and Government Affairs

HCR-217

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 2:09:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jerald Dolak	Hawaii Visitor Industry and Security Association (HHVISA)	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Waikiki Safe and Sound program and to provide testimony on behalf of the Hawaii Hotel Visitor Industry Security Association (HHVISA) and the Hilton Hawaiian Village. As a Director of Safety and Security Outrigger and now Hilton, I have dedicated 36 years of my professional life to ensuring the safety and well-being of our guests, employees, and the community in Waikiki.

The Waikiki Safe and Sound program, along with initiatives like Weed and Seed, are instrumental in making our communities safer and more vibrant. These programs not only hold individuals accountable for their actions but also create positive environments and activities that promote community cohesion and well-being. Additionally, they provide crucial resources to individuals struggling with addiction, mental health issues, and housing instability, helping them to access the support they need to improve their lives.

Throughout my tenure in Waikiki, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges posed by crime and homelessness in our community. For too long, we have struggled to address these issues effectively, often resorting to temporary solutions that merely push the problem elsewhere. However, with the implementation of the Waikiki Safe and Sound program, I am beginning to see a significant reduction in crime and homelessness in our area.

By investing in proactive measures that address the root causes of crime and homelessness, such as addiction, mental health, and housing insecurity, the Waikiki Safe and Sound program is transforming our community for the better. It is providing hope and support to those who need it most, while also enhancing the safety and vibrancy of Waikiki for residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

In conclusion, I urge you to continue supporting the Waikiki Safe and Sound program and similar initiatives that prioritize community safety, well-being, and compassion. Together, we can create a safer, more inclusive, and thriving Waikiki for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Hearing: Tuesday, April 2, 2024; 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of House Committee Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

My name is Debbie Luning, testifying on behalf of Gentry Homes, Ltd. in OPPOSITION to the subject resolutions. This resolution urges the Department of Law Enforcement to establish a task force of ethical policing to evaluate the efficacy and impact of Weed & Seed programs in the State.

Gentry has been a member of the Ewa Weed & Seed Steering Committee for over 20 years, and we have witnessed the good that comes out of collaborating with all sectors of the community in order to fight crime in high crime areas. I am perplexed that these resolutions were introduced because Kalihi-Palama-Chinatown is one of the three designated sites in the State that have benefitted from Weed & Seed's programs. These areas have thereby been made safer places in which to live. Noteworthy is that the resolution fails to mention the "seeding" programs which are used to thwart crime through community engagement, social and economic revitalization, neighborhood beautification and investing in the future of our youth through unique programs and activities.

It appears that there is a misunderstanding of Weed & Seed's mission and I therefore urge you to hold these measures in Committee.

Sincerely,

GENTRY HOMES, LTD.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Debra M. A. Luning".

Debra M. A. Luning
Director of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Task Force on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Susan Moniz and I am a longtime Waipahu resident and have been involved with Weed and Seed for 17 years as a Waipahu Steering Committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, **I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:**

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. **Note that it offers no evidence.**
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.
- 4) It appears the proposed task force's aim is to prove the redundancy of Weed & Seed's mission by not acknowledging its "Seeding" component.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- For a long time, Weed and Seed Hawai'i provided a safe space for the Safe Haven Immigrant Center to flourish. Through the immigrant center families were able to develop sewing skills which in turn, provided part-time employment for the participants.
- Through organized graffiti paint outs and beautification projects, Weed and Seed Hawai'i has given residents the opportunity to clean up and care for their neighborhoods which results in a positive and safe community.
- Weed and Seed Hawai'i created more opportunities for police officers to be visible and to mentor the youth through programs developed at the Elementary, Intermediate and High Schools.

- Through safe and drug free family events such as Celebrate Safe Communities, Community Safety Presentations and Thanksgiving Bingo Night, families can spend time together in a positive atmosphere learning, receiving education and resources and having fun.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i and **I urge you to consider my comments.**

Sincerely,

Susan Moniz

Susan Moniz
94-534 Awamoi Street
Waipahu HI 96797

March 31, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Dee Gettle (White) and I been involved with Weed and Seed for 22 years part of the 22 years I am on the steering committee member for the last 10 years. As a resident/home owner of Ewa Beach community for 40 years I find the NEED for Weed and Seed. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had with our schools and community in the following ways:

- *Multi safety campaigns to bring safety awareness in our community.
- *Internet safety and bullying presentations for our families and students in grades five and six.
- *Provide keiki and Kapuna ID's
- *Most important, their positive role model for our youths in our community

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i. **I urge you to take my comments into consideration.**

Sincerely,
Dolores (Dee) Gettle, Counselors Aide

Dee Gettle
P.O Box 2402
Ewa Beach, Hawaii 96706

April 1, 2024

To: David A. Tarnas, Chair
Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
Members
Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawaii State House of Representatives

SUBJ: HCR 217 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE ON ETHICAL POLICING TO EVALUATE THE EFFICACY AND IMPACT OF WEED AND SEED PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

My name is Rochelle Lee Gregson and I am speaking as a founding member of Hawaii's Weed and Seed collaborative and member of its Rump Group.

I don't know if I support or not, the intent of HCR 217. I think that I have a responsibility to clarify that Weed and Seed is not a program and that a better measure of its effectiveness is the degree to which collaborative relationships exists between and among the various levels of Federal, State and County governments together with private business and health and human services providers.

Weed and Seed is a comprehensive strategy of collaboration bringing law enforcement, community, businesses, schools and service providers to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods in Hawaii. The Weed and Seed strategy stresses collaboration, coordination, and community participation.

This approach gives communities experiencing high crime and social and economic decay a comprehensive structure, critical planning tools, and access to a network focused on crime prevention, citizen safety, and neighborhood revitalization.

Weed and Seed was introduced to Hawaii first in 1998 by Steve Alm who was then U.S. attorney. Steve successfully recruited individuals from all levels of government, businesses and human service agencies.

The first meeting of the Weed and Seed collaboration in 1998 was convened by the U.S. Attorney's office and brought together representatives from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Governor's staff, Honolulu Community College representing the University of Hawaii, the Superintendent of Education, the Mayor's Office, Officers of the Honolulu Police Department, the Honolulu Prosecutors office, and the Aloha United Way representing the non profit service community and businesses.

Kalihi/Palama/Chinatown area was the first Weed and Seed site. Residents and businesses were asked to identify their crime and community priorities which was drug dealing and use as their biggest issue.

The hardest hit was the Mayor Wright Housing project. Kids who lived in the housing complex attended Kaiulani Elementary School and would walk along Pua Lane through a phalanx of drug sellers and buyers in the mornings and afternoons. There was always a concern and a fear on the part of the families that their kids would be recruited in the business of drugs. Kaiulani Elementary Schools' principal would make it a point to maintain a presence along Pua Lane before and after school.

Under the joint leadership of the U.S. Attorney and the Honolulu Police Department, undercovers stings and reverses on Pua Lane resulted in a clean up of the area. Dealers were taken to federal court and prosecuted under the Safe Streets Act which mandates at least a year in prison for the sale of any amount of drugs within a thousand feet of a school, playground, or a public housing project.

Week and Seed partnered with the successful Drug Court Program which meant that all cases from the Weed and Seed site would be referred to a single courtroom with a single judge and probation officers permanently assigned to this courtroom. This arrangement has led to high compliance rates.

This weeding effort made way for interesting and unique seeding activities. An empty apartment within the Mayor Wright complex was set up as an afterschool tutoring site manned by off duty officers of HPD. Computers were donated by the business community for this project. A playground that met all of the safety standards was installed within an area of the complex; Head Start centers started up within the site; an all-volunteer after school sports program was started at Kaiulani Elementary with equipment and shoes donated by a sports store and businesses. Community Policing, Citizens Patrol and the Neighborhood Security Watch were activities that let to a more positive engagement between the police and residents.

Crime within the first year in Kalihi/Palama/Chinatown fell by more than 70% overall.

It is important to note that those dealing in drugs with the Weed and Seed site area did not live in the area; many individuals who bought the drugs did not live in the area. The Pua Lane sting underscored this. For the residents of Mayor Wright as well the those within the Kalihi/Palama/Chinatown area, weeding efforts by law enforcement gave them respite from the tension and fears that come with living in an area targeted by criminals.

Thank you for the opportunity to write about a community collaboration that worked well. Based on my experience with Weed and Seed, I am a great believer that change can happen and it takes a willingness to chance `em.

HCR-217

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 1:58:05 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Reyes Oda	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I OPPOSE HCR 2217!

Communities of 'Ewa and 'Ewa Beach **benefit** from the Weed and Seed program. Please listen to the "seeding" part of what this program has and is doing.

HCR-217

Submitted on: 3/28/2024 4:58:27 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Deutzman	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas and Vice Chair Takayama,



The Safe and Sound Program in Waikiki, which began September 6th 2022 has been an enormous success so far. Crime has been reduced dramatically in every category. Crystal meth and cocaine drug dealers , who were operating from city pavilions on the side of Kalakaua were put out of business and the amount of chronic offenders lurking in the streets in the heart of our tourist district has gone down significantly .

The notion that programs like Safe and Sound are some sort of “militarized operation” by police is preposterous. There's an implication that something is wrong or unethical. That's unfair to police and all involved in this community effort.

The below crime statistics compare crime in the relevant categories in the one year period BEFORE Safe and Sound Waikiki (Sept 2021 to August of 2022) vs. The ENTIRE FIRST YEAR year of Safe and Sound(September 2022 through August of 2023). From the Waikiki Community Policing Team:

Drugs/Liquor Down 67%

Robbery Down 35%

Burglary down 32%

Car Break Ins Down 31%

Criminal Property Damage Down 27% Theft Down 6%

Assault down 4%

Calls for Service down 8%

John Deutzman Waikiki

March 31, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Gale Mejia and I have volunteered with Weed and Seed for the past 16 years as a Steering Committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:


- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- Through their RAP youth mentoring program at Waipahu and Honowai Elementary Schools, students are educated on the laws, taught the importance of making good decisions as well as presented information on Bullying, Internet Safety, and Drug Education, to name a few.
- In collaboration with Waipahu High and Intermediate Schools Law and Justice Academies, officers introduce skillsets in notetaking, problem solving, de-escalation, etc.
- Their support and coordination of beautification events engage community members, both young and old, to take pride in our community.
- Through the coordination and implementation of family-oriented events such as the Celebrate Safe Communities, Town Hall on Underage Drinking and Drug Use, etc. family members are connected to much needed resources that can strengthen their family unit.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i. **I urge you to take my comments into consideration.**

Sincerely,


Gale Mejia
91-544 Huleia Place, Ewa Beach HI 96706

March 31, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Roland Pagan and I have been involved with Weed and Seed for the past 14 years as a steering committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had on the Ewa / Ewa Beach community in the following ways: Interaction and relationships with Police Officers and the community, especially with the youth in the community has drastically improved. The willingness of youth and community members to assist HPD in identifying suspects as well as problem areas within the community has proven invaluable. The willingness of business owners to work with and along side HPD while attempting to improve conditions within these communities are benefits to everyone in the community.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i. **I urge you to take my comments into consideration.**

Sincerely,

Roland Pagan
91-1137 Hoowalea St., Ewa Beach Hawaii. 96706

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

My name is Barbara Tom and I am a retired Public Health nurse. I have been involved with Weed and Seed for 22 years as a volunteer and Waipahu Steering Committee member. Each site is led by a Steering Committee, which is responsible for providing leadership to implement the site's strategies.

Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It claims to have evidence that suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. Note that it offers no evidence.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or "weeding" component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important "seeding" component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact "seeding" activities have had on the Waipahu community in the following ways:

- Weed and Seed Hawai'i's approach to attacking crime by providing prevention education in the schools and community is one that I wholeheartedly support.
- As a founding member of the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant Center, we could not have started this effort without the support of Weed and Seed Hawai'i who provided space for us in their office in the Pupuole community. It was initially created as a way for students to complete their homework with assistance from volunteer tutors in the community. Its creation was supported by Weed and Seed Hawai'i through a collaboration with Waipahu Community Coalition, Parents and Children Together, Ho'omaka Hou Learning Center, the DOE's ESL Leeward District, Americorp/Vista, and the community members. In addition to student education, the center also provides education for limited English speaking adults through adult education as well as digital literacy in hopes of getting them jobs. Additionally, it also provides limited English speaking women with the opportunity to improve their economic situation

through learning how to sew. These innovative approaches to prevention in the community are all helping to decrease the crime rate as it provides education to an extremely needy population.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i and **I urge you to take my comments into consideration when making your decision.**

Sincerely,

Barbara Tom RN
98-1854 Mikinolia Place
Aiea, HI 96701

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
State Capitol Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

RE: HCR217/HR197 Requesting the Department of Law Enforcement to Establish a Taskforce on Ethical Policing to Evaluate the Efficacy and Impact of Weed and Seed Programs in the State

Aloha,

Weed and Seed has been an integral part of the Ewa community for over 22 years. I have been involved with Weed and Seed for the past sixteen years as a steering committee member for the Ewa site. Based on our history, mission, and current programs, I OPPOSE HCR217/HR197 for the following reasons:

- 1) It misrepresents the purposes, value of, and effectiveness of the program.
- 2) It suggests that this strategy disproportionately targets marginalized communities and results in the militarization or over-policing of low-income neighborhoods. I disagree with this statement and they have provided no evidence to support it.
- 3) It only focuses on the law enforcement or “weeding” component of the Weed and Seed strategy and fails to take into consideration the equally, if not more important “seeding” component of prevention and intervention programs and services as well as creating opportunities for the community to get involved in strengthening their community.

I have seen and experienced firsthand the positive impact “seeding” activities have had on the Ewa community in the following ways:

- Building relationships with our youth through a variety of programs. One of my favorite programs is the Annual Culinary Arts Program with James Campbell High School students. This program has been sustained for 18 years and it offers an amazing opportunity for youth to be introduced into the world of culinary arts. Every year, this program also host an annual luncheon where the kids share the knowledge that they have gained and the struggles that it has helped them overcome.
- Weed and Seed program also touches the lives of the kupuna in our area by having regular activities with the residents at Franciscan Villa. They have also hosted annual Senior Citizen fairs that have brought vital resources to our Kupuna. Also, assisted with regular food drives for our community.

These are just a few examples of why I continue to support and advocate for Weed and Seed Hawai'i. **I urge you to take my comments into consideration.**

Sincerely,



Lisa Enanoria Widrlechner

HCR-217

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 1:51:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tesha Malama	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a 50 year resident of Ewa Beach. The Ewa Weed and Seed Program was vital in removing major illegal drug activities, gambling, graffitti, and addressing homelessness. This program worked with the community to WEED out the illgal activity and people. The Ewa Weed and Seed was vital to securing the Boys and Girls Club, the culinary arts in the schools and yes made the community realize the power we had to make meaningful changes to protect our kids and our community in Ewa Beach. I am dissappointed to see Rep. Martinez sign on to such a measure.

Mahalo