



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2024 Regular Session

Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair

Monday, April 1, 2014 at 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

by:

Dr. Erin E. Harbinson
Director, Criminal Justice Research Institute

Bill No. and Title: SCR 31 / SR 20 – Requesting the Women’s Corrections Implementation Commission to develop a strategy and make recommendations to reduce the number of women incarcerated at the Women’s Community Correctional Center by twenty-five percent over the next five years.

Judiciary’s Position:

The Criminal Justice Research Institute (CJRI), which is administratively attached to the Judiciary, supports the intent of SCR 31 / SR 20, which requests that the Women’s Corrections Implementation Commission (WCIC) develop a strategy and make recommendations to reduce the number of women incarcerated at the Women’s Community Correctional Center (WCCC) by 25% over the next five years, and respectfully offers comments.

SCR 31 / SR 20 references a report by CJRI, “Exploring Violent Offenses Among Incarcerated Women in Hawai‘i,” which examined a snapshot of data on women at WCCC during September 2022 to better understand the number of women incarcerated for violent offenses. The state does not have a definition for violent crime, as such, CJRI examined data with the definition of violent offenses developed by WCIC and offense classifications used by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR). The report found that according to the

WCIC definition, 86.5% of women incarcerated at WCCC had no violent offenses related to their current stay of incarceration. When analyzing the data using DCR's offense classifications, 59.5% of women incarcerated at WCCC had no violent offenses related to their current sentence. Though there are varying approaches to studying violent crime, the data suggests that a sizeable portion of the women's prison population is not incarcerated for violent offenses and potentially eligible for diversion given the WCIC's focus on diverting nonviolent women from prison.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

**Testimony to the Thirty-Second State Legislature
2024 Regular Session**

Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice-Chair

Monday, April 1, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

by
Trish K. Morikawa
Circuit Court Judge
Circuit Court of the First Circuit

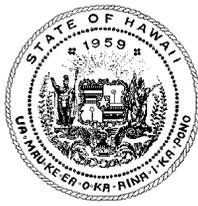
Resolution No. and Title: Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 31 and Senate Resolution No. 20, Requesting the Women's Corrections Implementation Commission to Develop a Strategy and Make Recommendation to Reduce the Number of Women Incarcerated and the Women's Community Correctional Center By Twenty-Five Percent Over the Next Five Years

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports the intent of this measure, and recognizes the distinct pathways that lead women into our courts. The Judiciary is committed to work collaboratively with the Women's Corrections Implementation Commission and other stakeholders to improve outcomes and divert women from the criminal justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Pamela J. Sturz
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalu Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 31 /
SENATE RESOLUTION 20
REQUESTING THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION TO
DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER
OF WOMEN INCARCERATED AT THE WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL
CENTER BY TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

By
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair

Monday, April 1, 2024; 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & via Videoconference

Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) supports Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 31 / Senate Resolution (SR) 20, which requests the Women's Corrections Implementation Commission to develop a strategy and make recommendations to reduce the number of women incarcerated at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) by twenty-five percent over the next five years.

The DCR stands ready to work with the commission, the Judiciary, the Office of the Public Defender, Prosecutors, County Police Departments, and other stakeholders to implement sound recommendations to assist in this important effort. To aid in this effort, the DCR also commits to reviewing our internal processes to ensure we are moving offenders through our unified correctional system as quickly and efficiently as possible without jeopardizing public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SCR 31 / SR 20.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair

DATE: Monday, April 1, 2024
TIME: 3:00 PM
PLACE: Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: SCR 31 / SR 20 REQUESTING THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN INCARCERATED AT THE WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER BY TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Chair Wakai and Committee Members:

I am writing as a founding member of the Women's Prison Project in **strong support of SCR 31 / SR 20** which will help bring about a 25% reduction in the number of women incarcerated at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) by 2029.

Between 1978 and 2021, there was a 950% increase in the number of women incarcerated at WCCC, from only 19 women in 1978 to around 200 today. The Hawaii Criminal Justice Research Center's 2023 Annual Report says that 86.5% of the 200 women are non-violent offenders.

The Women's Prison Project believes there has been little progress diverting non-violent women offenders from prison, and the recidivism rate has remained at 50%, because there has been a lack of financial support for proven community-based rehabilitative programs and because the state has never set a specific measurable goal by which it seeks to reduce the female incarcerated population.

SCR 31 / SR 20 seeks to address both deficiencies by calling on the Women's Corrections Implementation Commission (WCIC) to develop a strategy and make recommendations to reduce the number of women incarcerated at WCCC by 25% by 2029. It requests the WCIC to work with various state and county criminal justice departments and agencies as well as community-based organizations.

The Women's Prison Project wants to thank WCIC Chair Judge Trish Morikawa and Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Director Tommy Johnson for their help and support in drafting this resolution.

I appreciate the chance to share my thoughts with you on this important matter and request your enthusiastic support for SCR 31 / SR 20.

Linda Lingle
Women's Prison Project

SCR-31

Submitted on: 3/29/2024 5:11:59 PM

Testimony for PSM on 4/1/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tadia Rice	Testifying for BEYOND BARS REENTRY PROGRAM Sponsored by the Tahirih Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I was a volunteer trainer at the Women’s Community Correctional Center for nearly a decade, and saw first hand so many non-violent women offenders sentenced to prison for periods of time that seemed disproportionate to the crime. This caused a life trajectory that not only disrupted them and their families, but also damaged their ability to reenter society as a productive citizen. The mental, emotional, and physical toll it took contributed to the long standing and high recidivism rate of 50%.

Now I am involved in a reentry program that witnesses a severe lack of financial support for proven community-based rehabilitative programs. The fundamental problem lies either Hawai‘i State due to the fact that it has never set a specific measurable goal by which it seeks to reduce the female incarcerated population.

Although the Finance Committee on HCR160/HR139 unanimously passed in the Corrections, Military & Veterans (CMV) Committee, there remains deficiencies, therefore the Women’s Corrections Implementation Commission (WCIC) needs to develop a strategy and make recommendations to reduce the number of women incarcerated at WCCC by 25% by 2029. WCIC should work with various state and county criminal justice departments and agencies as well as community-based organizations to achieve this important goal. It can develop a specific plan to reduce the WCCC population to produce better outcomes for the women. It will produce better outcomes to save taxpayer’s money.

It costs \$250 a day to incarcerate a woman at WCCC; it costs only \$50 a day to serve non-violent offenders via community-based rehabilitation programs.

Please support and pass SCR 31 that will move us forward to be more efficient and compassionate about how we treat our female offenders.

Mahalo,

Tadia Rice for the BEYOND BARS REENTRY PROGRAM and proud member of the Women’s Prison Project

SCR-31

Submitted on: 3/31/2024 9:43:18 AM

Testimony for PSM on 4/1/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Loren Walker	Testifying for Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

COMMITTEE ON SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Hearing: April 1, 2024 • 3:00 PM • Conference Room 225

RE: SCR 31 & SR 30: REQUESTING THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN INCARCERATED AT THE WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER BY TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Mahalo for your public service work. Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice (HFRJ) supports this measure to set specific targets to help reduce the number of incarcerated women in our state. HFRJ is a 40+ year old non-profit dedicated to improving our justice system. We work to generate evidence-based strategies to assist people harmed by crime and injustice, those who've caused harm, the state and federal judiciaries, other government agencies, non-profits, individuals, families, and communities. The result of our work is published in over 50 [articles](#) (many peer reviewed). We are frequently contacted by others nationally and internationally for assistance with evidence-based programs and policies.

Having specific targets for the number of incarcerated people is part of [effective strategic planning](#). Specific targets help to operationalize a vision for the future. Our state prison system lacks visionary planning, and it is hugely costly both materially (over \$300 million a year) and socially (harm caused to individuals, families and communities). Our corrections department needs major changes. We incarcerate the same number of people today as we had in 2007 when our organization and others were making a clear case for systemic change. Research is often ignored by those who direct the corrections department. And while there is a movement for *rehabilitation*, the legislature must mandate specific goals, and monitor the department's work to ensure that this becomes a reality. We cannot afford to continue funding high levels of incarceration with its outrageous material and social costs. Despite Hawai'i's hard working people struggling to find homes, etc., our state spends hundreds of millions on a system that is ineffective (e.g., high repeat crime rates) and is dangerous for the community (e.g., recent acid throwing case, that allegedly was caused from people who met while incarcerated, illustrates how people learn from the criminal behavior of others while incarcerated).

If you have any questions regarding our position concerning our strong support for this resolution, please contact me at lorenn@hawaiiifriends.org. Mahalo again for your public service.

Aloha, Lorenn Walker, JD, MPH, Director HFRJ

SCR-31

Submitted on: 3/31/2024 11:58:44 AM

Testimony for PSM on 4/1/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nadia Al-Alawi	Testifying for Women's Prison Project	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing on behalf of the Women’s Prison Project to formally request you support SCR31. There was no testimony in opposition, and the Director of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Tommy Johnson, appeared in person to testify in support of the Concurrent Resolution.

The Women’s Prison Project believes there has been little progress diverting non-violent women offenders from prison, in addition to the recidivism rate remaining at 50%, because there has been a lack of financial support for proven community-based rehabilitative programs and because the state has never set a specific measurable goal by which it seeks to reduce the female incarcerated population.

SCR31 / SR20 seeks to address both deficiencies by calling on the Women’s Corrections Implementation Commission (WCIC) to develop a strategy and make recommendations to reduce the number of women incarcerated at WCCC by 25% by 2029. It requests the WCIC to work with various state and county criminal justice departments and agencies as well as community-based organizations.

Developing a specific plan to reduce the WCCC population will produce better outcomes for the women and the community. It will also save taxpayers money. It costs \$250 a day to incarcerate a woman at WCCC; it costs only \$50 a day to serve non-violent offenders via community-based rehabilitation programs.

Thank you for considering the views of the Women’s Prison Project.