



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
AND REHABILITATION**  
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalua Kalaima  
a Ho'oponopono Ola*  
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Rehabilitation Services  
and  
Programs

No. \_\_\_\_\_

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2094, SENATE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO CORRECTIONS.

By

Tommy Johnson, Director  
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Corrections, Military & Veterans  
Representative Mark J. Hashem, Chair  
Representative Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair

House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs  
Representative David A. Tarnes, Chair  
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Friday, March 15, 2024; 9:45 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 430 & via Videoconference

Chairs Hashem, Tarnes, Vice Chairs Chun, Takayama, and Members of both  
Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) supports Senate Bill (SB) 2094, Senate Draft (SD) 1, and its intent to establish a one-year pilot program to allow inmates incarcerated at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) to foster pets while incarcerated and requires the DCR to submit a report to the legislature of the department's findings and recommendations regarding the pilot program no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2025.

Although Sections 3 and 4 of the bill seeks appropriation to carry out the intent of the pilot project in fiscal year 2024-2025, DCR requests no appropriation at the present time. DCR will work on laying the foundation for this pilot project to be incorporated into programs at WCCC in the fiscal year 2024-2025. That effort can be done within WCCC's resources.

The DCR thanks the legislature for its interest and support in exploring innovative program initiatives and looks forward to moving this pilot program forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2094, S.D. 1.



## UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2024

### COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS, MILITARY, & VETERANS

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair  
Rep. Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair

### COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair  
Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Friday, March 15, 2024, 9:45 AM  
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

**Re: Testimony on SB2094, SD1 – RELATING TO CORRECTIONS**

Chairs Hashem and Tarnas, Vice Chairs Chun and Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW provides comments on SB2094, which requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (“DCR”) to establish a two-year pilot program to allow inmates incarcerated at the Women's Community Correctional Center (“WCCC”) to foster pets while incarcerated. This bill also requires DCR to submit a report to the Legislature and appropriates funds to DCR for program implementation.

Without specific details, UPW cannot comment on the merits of the proposed program, nor are we able to theorize how such a program will impact the individuals incarcerated at WCCC. However, we believe that current staffing levels are not adequate to support the current programs at WCCC. We are concerned with how an additional program, one that involves the care for pets, will ultimately impact the duties and responsibilities of adult corrections officers that are assigned to this facility.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kalani Werner', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kalani Werner  
State Director

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Hawai'i

Committee: Corrections, Military, & Veterans and Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs  
Hearing Date/Time: Friday, March 15, 2024 at 9:45am  
Place: Room 430 & Videoconference  
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i IN SUPPORT of SB2094 SD1 Relating to Corrections

Aloha Chairs Hashem and Tarnas, Vice Chairs Chun and Takayama, and Members of the Committees:

The ACLU of Hawai'i **supports SB2094 SD1**, which requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) to establish a one-year pilot program to allow inmates incarcerated at the women's community correctional center to foster pets while incarcerated, requires DCR to submit a report to the Legislature, and appropriates funds.

The ACLU of Hawai'i is committed to Reimagining Public Safety in Hawai'i. We advocate for the State to divert people from our jails and prisons and shift resources toward housing, education, health and human services in our community.

There is significant data to support the potential positive outcomes this bill could establish.<sup>1</sup> Pets can and often do have positive effects on mood and overall outlook. They can also help reduce stress.

As it relates to ACLU of Hawai'i's Smart Justice goals of reducing Hawai'i's jail and prison populations,<sup>2</sup> there is strong evidence that programs like the one established in this bill can help improve personal responsibility, self-esteem, and work ethics. All of which are important personal skills which can increase post-incarceration readiness for employment and can reduce recidivism.

For all these reasons, we urge the committee to move this bill forward.

Sincerely,

**Josh Frost**

Josh Frost  
Policy Assistant  
ACLU of Hawai'i  
[jfrost@acluhawaii.org](mailto:jfrost@acluhawaii.org)

*The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for over 50 years.*

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<sup>1</sup> A New Leash on Life: Benefits of Dog Training Programs in Prisons:  
<https://lsj.washington.edu/research/undergraduate/new-leash-life-benefits-dog-training-programs-prisons>

<sup>2</sup> Blueprint for Smart Justice Hawai'i: [https://www.acluhi.org/sites/default/files/SJ-Blueprint-HI\\_1.pdf](https://www.acluhi.org/sites/default/files/SJ-Blueprint-HI_1.pdf)

**SB-2094-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 9:46:20 AM

Testimony for CMV on 3/15/2024 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Inga Gibson	Animal Welfare Institute	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**RE: SUPPORT SB2094; Relating to Corrections**

Dear Chairs Hashem and Tarnas and Committee Members,

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony in support of SB2094 to initiate a pilot program with the Department of Corrections to allow the fostering and care of pet animals in need, in coordination with local animal shelters and rescue organizations.

In my 20+ years of work in animal protection, I have seen the direct benefits of these programs, for humans and animals alike, through similar prison pet partnership programs in Idaho, Arizona, Washington and Louisiana, and although many states have long had such programs in place. In addition to providing pets in need with necessary care and socialization, these programs provide occupational/work opportunities to inmates who often go on to work with animals in a variety of fields, including in veterinary care and animal shelters.

We encourage your support of this measure that equally benefits people, pets and communities.

Thank you,

Inga Gibson, On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute



**Hawaiian Humane Society**  
*People for animals. Animals for people.*

2700 Waiālae Avenue Honolulu, Hawaii 96826  
808.356.2200 • [HawaiianHumane.org](http://HawaiianHumane.org)

Date: March 13, 2024

To: Chairs Reps. Mark Hashem and David A. Tarnas  
Vice Chairs Reps. Cory Chun and Gregg Takayama  
and Members of the Committees on Corrections, Military & Veterans  
and Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement  
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of SB 2094, SD1: Relating to Corrections  
Friday, March 15, 2024, 9:45 a.m., Room 430 and Via Videoconference

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On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Bill 2094, SD1, which requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to establish a one-year pilot program to allow inmates incarcerated at the women's community correctional center to foster pets while incarcerated; requires DCR to submit a report to the Legislature; declares that the general expenditure ceiling is exceeded; and appropriates funds.

Hawaiian Humane's mission is to promote the human-animal bond and the humane treatment of all animals. We hope this pilot program will be a demonstration of that mission in action.

Foster care saves animal lives. Kittens need time to grow before they can be spayed/neutered and find permanent homes. Ill or injured animals need a place to recover. With an average of 50 animals coming to Hawaiian Humane for help every day, we could not address all their needs without the help of dedicated foster volunteers.

Caring for animals can also save human lives. The unconditional love and vulnerability of an animal companion teach compassion and responsibility like few other things we can do in life. They need us and being needed can be transformative.

Please lend your support to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation by passing SB 2094, SD1, with a good effective date and providing the seed funding needed to launch this pilot.

Mahalo for your consideration.

**SB-2094-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:13:35 PM

Testimony for CMV on 3/15/2024 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tadia Rice	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill would create a pilot program WCCC for women at the facility to foster pets.

Dogs have a well-known reputation for having therapeutic benefits. From reducing anxiety, stress, and depression to living a longer life, having a dog has an array of emotional and health benefits for humans. The human-canine bond is powerful, so it is no surprise that dog programs inside prisons have similar benefits when helping incarcerated people.

The presence of dogs and the ability to work with them have had outstanding benefits on incarcerated individuals in correctional facilities. In this post we will identify four ways that dog programs benefit incarcerated people, and why these programs are a win-win.

There is a myriad of ways that a dog program in the prison system helps the incarcerated individuals who interact with them. Here are 4 benefits of having a dog program inside a prison:

**1. REDUCE RECIDIVISM** One of the most important benefits that dog programs have in the prison system is that it reduces recidivism. Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to re-offend. Having a dog program in prison has shown that this rate goes down with individuals that work with dogs while they are incarcerated.

**2. IMPROVE BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH** Not only do dog programs reduce recidivism, but they can also help improve an incarcerated individual's behavioral and mental health. This includes a decrease in aggression, depression, isolation, and anxiety. They also help incarcerated people develop trust, empathy, patience, and understanding. Overall, dog programs have considerable positive effects on the behavior and emotions of the incarcerated individuals involved.

**3. PROVIDE SKILLS TO INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS** Dog programs help incarcerated people while they serve their time and they also give them skills they can take with them into the world. Incarcerated individuals gain employable skills, helping them with life outside of prison, and thus making the

**transition from prison to freedom go much smoother. These skills include training skills, social skills, and responsibility.**

**4. MORE EFFECTIVE REHABILITATION Dog programs help enhance and improve the lives of the incarcerated individuals. They can help boost morale, give them purpose, and give them a will to lead a better life. These positive feelings and the confidence that goes with them help them have a better life after incarceration.**

But the benefits of dog programs in prisons go beyond helping incarcerated people. Similar programs also help people in need of a service dog. WCCC could focus on taching service dogs to place them with veterans and first responders with PTSD. In this way, both parties benefit: incarcerated dog handlers get all the benefits listed above, and a person in need gains a well-educated service dog that will transform their lives for the better. One unique thing about our program is that it helps build relationships between our incarcerated dog handlers and the recipients of our dogs.

Pets have been shown to have a very positive effect on prison environments and the incarcerated individuals. They create opportunities for affection, responsibility, empathy, increased self esteem, and joy in an environment where those are scarce commodities.

Please SUPPORT **SB2094. Mahalo!**

Here is a short excerpt from the bill;

Research shows that pet programs improve personal responsibility for offenders; relationships between inmates, prison staff, and administrators; and inmates' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and empathy. Pet programs have also been shown to increase emotional intelligence, coping skills, and work ethic and employability, which improve the chances of job readiness and are critical factors in reducing recidivism. Pet programs also help to address staffing problems in the American animal sheltering system by having inmates care for animals and prepare them for adoption.

**SB-2094-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 7:37:18 PM

Testimony for CMV on 3/15/2024 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Virginia Hinshaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Such programs have been shown to be beneficial both to the incarcerated individuals and the prison personnel.

**SB-2094-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 12:44:52 AM

Testimony for CMV on 3/15/2024 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Linda Rich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS, MILITARY, & VETERANS

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair Rep. Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

DATE: Friday, March 15, 2024

9:45 am

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE Conference Room 430

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

My name is Linda Rich and I am testifying in strong support of SB 2094, SD1 RELATING TO CORRECTIONS, which would establish a pet program at the Women’s Community Corrections Center (WCCC)

Prison pet programs are not new. The first program began in 1975. The first animal training program in a women's correctional facility was the Prison Pet Partners, founded at the Washington Corrections Center for Women in 1981. Similar programs now have been established in prisons across the US and have been found to have multiple positive benefits. Programs vary from training service dogs, to working with rescue dogs from animal shelters to rehabilitate them and teach behaviors that make them better candidates for adoption. They continue to grow in popularity across the country because they work.

Numerous benefits of prison animal programs have been reported anecdotally and through research. It is consistently reported that pet programs reduce violence; relieve stress, and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. These benefits are felt by staff as well as by those who are incarcerated. The prison environment changes. Inmates learn responsibility, develop new skills, and may develop increased empathy, and improved self image, all of which support a more successful transition to the community. Caring for a pet reduces the sense of isolation and some studies have noted reduced suicide rates in facilities with animal programs.

A pilot program at WCCC would provide an opportunity for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation learn, on a small scale, the realities of operating this kind of program and assess where it might fit within the efforts to move Hawaii toward a truly rehabilitative corrections system. I hope you will approve and fund this pilot project

Thank you.

Linda Rich

**SB-2094-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 7:40:17 AM

Testimony for CMV on 3/15/2024 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara Krasniewski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support having women inmates at the WCCC foster and train shelter pets. For years, I have followed and supported Puppies Behind Bars which operates within the men's prisons and has been highly successful in changing the lives of inmates as well as the puppies trained in service areas. Such a program to work with shelter animals at WCCC will benefit the women inmates, the shelters, the community and the animals that will be more readily adopted. I encourage the committees to move forward with this excellent life-changing bill.

**SB-2094-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 12:16:35 PM

Testimony for CMV on 3/15/2024 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Hee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill because of the benefits for both incarcerated individuals and animals, as demonstrated by similar pet programs that have long existed in other states.

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**February 15, 2024**

**S.B. NO. 2094, S.D. 1: RELATING TO CORRECTIONS**

**House Committee on Corrections, Military & Veterans**  
**House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs**  
**Joint Hearing: March 15, 2024 at 9:45 a.m.**

**Chairs Mark J. Hashem and David A. Tarnas**  
**Vice Chairs Cory M. Chun and Gregg Takayama**  
**Honorable Committee Members:**

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) supports<sup>1</sup> this bill which establishes a pilot program at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) to allow incarcerated persons to foster pets while incarcerated.

There are numerous programs across the country which allow incarcerated persons to train and socialize shelter animals. These programs not only benefit the incarcerated persons by teaching them trust and responsibility but can also be used to rehabilitate animals which might otherwise face euthanasia due to various behavioral issues.<sup>2</sup> Many incarcerated persons have been told repeatedly from a young age that they are not to be trusted, that they make a mess of things and that they're not fit to take responsibility of anything. Foster pet programs challenges the "branding" the incarcerated persons have had imposed on them from an early age and allows them to create

<sup>1</sup> To clarify, the OPD supports this bill so long as it does not adversely impact priorities identified in the Executive Supplemental Budget Request for FY2025.

<sup>2</sup> See Burke, H., "Pets in prison: the rescue dogs teaching Californian inmates trust and responsibility," The Guardian, April 19, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/apr/19/pets-in-prison-the-rescue-dogs-teaching-californian-inmates-trust-and-responsibility>

new narratives for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Participants in such programs, even those who are incarcerated for serious crimes, have reported learning compassion and responsibility which are qualities that are integral toward rehabilitation.<sup>4</sup> Foster pets that go through such programs demonstrate increased signs of trust and respect for humans, decreased symptoms of nervousness, insecurity and fear, decreased tendencies toward possessiveness and territoriality and increased balanced social behavior toward other animals. At the end of the program, such animals are far more likely to be adopted.<sup>5</sup> Some programs even allow incarcerated persons to train dogs to become certified service dogs.<sup>6</sup>

The OPD suggests that the program expand to allow not only fostering of animals but eventually expand to give incarcerated persons the opportunity to gain certification as trainers, handlers or groomers of animals – these are valuable skills which could be used when the persons are released from incarceration. Hawai`i currently has a shortage of kennel workers and veterinary technicians. If incarcerated persons are allowed to gain certificates or degrees through collaboration with community colleges, they would help to fill these needs on work furlough and upon release.

This bill is one of the first steps toward a prison model which promotes rehabilitation and education, rather than punishment. The OPD supports this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.B. NO. 2094, S.D. 1.

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<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Dafnis, J., “Prison program trains fostered dogs,” Hillsdale Daily News, March 2, 2015. <https://www.hillsdale.net/story/lifestyle/pets/2015/03/02/prison-program-trains-fostered-dogs/35082643007/>

<sup>5</sup> Burke, H., supra.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, N., “Prison program betters the lives of dogs, inmates and veterans with PTSD,” Best Friends – Save Them All. <https://bestfriends.org/stories/features/prison-program-betters-lives-dogs-inmates-and-veterans-ptsd>