



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 18, 2024

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Measure: S.B. No. 3279 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH
Hearing Date: Friday, February 23, 2024
Time: 10:30 a.m
Location: Conference Room 211

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports S.B. No. 3279, defers to the Office of Wellness and Resiliency (OWR).

A comprehensive mental health support system is crucial to address acute and chronic mental health issues. The prevalence of these issues is on the rise, particularly as we continue to address the impacts of COVID, and more recently, the Maui wildfires.

EOEL would like to especially note that supporting early mental health and development in the youngest years is critical. Mental health issues, even at this stage of the earliest years, can be caused by biological and/or development factors, experiences of trauma such as family violence, child abuse and neglect, parental substance abuse, and experiencing systems of poverty. These issues may result in developmental delays that could have long-lasting and detrimental impacts to children's health and development. As such, it is crucial to ensure implementation factors supports for our youngest keiki as well.

We look forward to continuing to work with other stakeholders and departments to continue strengthening the systems of support for our youngest keiki across the State. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

JON N. IKENAGA
STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER

DEFENDER COUNCIL
1130 NORTH NIMITZ HIGHWAY
SUITE A-254
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96817

HONOLULU OFFICE
1130 NORTH NIMITZ HIGHWAY
SUITE A-254
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96817

APPELLATE DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2080

DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2100

FAMILY COURT DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2300

FELONY DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2200

FACSIMILE
(808) 586-2222



STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

HAYLEY Y.C. CHENG
ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER

HILO OFFICE
275 PONAHAHAWAI STREET
SUITE 201
HILO, HAWAI'I 96720
TEL. No. (808) 974-4571
FAX No. (808) 974-4574

KONA OFFICE
75-1000 HENRY STREET
SUITE #209
KAILUA-KONA HI 96740
TEL. No. (808) 327-4650
FAX No. (808) 327-4651

KAUA'I OFFICE
3060 EIWA STREET
SUITE 206
LIHUE, HAWAI'I 96766
TEL. No. (808) 241-7128
FAX No. (808) 274-3422

MAU'I OFFICE
81 N. MARKET STREET
WAILUKU, HAWAI'I 96793
TEL. No. (808) 984-5018
FAX No. (808) 984-5022

**Testimony of the Office of the Public Defender,
State of Hawai'i to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

February 23, 2024

S.B. 3279 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

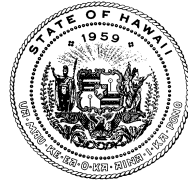
Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender supports the intent of S.B. 3279.

This measure would establish the State of Well-Being Project to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services across the State of Hawaii.

The Office of the Public Defender is in strong support of the establishment of the State of Well-Being Project. We believe this project would be able to review current data, collect statistics, and assess and improve mental health support services for the clients we serve. Many of our clients have experienced trauma and are experiencing a mental health crisis both at the tier 1 and the tier 2 levels of need. We are in agreement that our State is in need of improved mental health training and improved support services for agencies and departments that provide these services. We are in strong support of the development and implementation of best practices for these services through the State of Well-Being Project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 3279
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

February 23, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. Room Number: 211

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR), housed in the Office of the Governor, **SUPPORTS** S.B. 3279, Relating to Mental Health, and offers comments.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022), the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. The Office is focused on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social, and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. It explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

S.B. 3279 proposes the establishment of the well-being project within the OWR. The measure would allow OWR to accelerate and strengthen the Office's mission of creating a trauma-informed state. Since the inception of the OWR, we have initiated training and technical assistance supports with several state departments, specifically around the implementation of trauma-informed care. While the OWR does not provide direct mental healthcare, we provide technical assistance and training on implementing trauma-informed care in all state agencies, including those who provide direct mental health support services. This bill would allow OWR to expand its work and engage entities beyond state departments to incorporate culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programs.

The OWR appreciates the committee recognizing the effectiveness of a tiered approach to comprehensively address the mental health, well-being, and resilience of the people of Hawai'i. The Office understands the two tiers laid out in the measure as population-based well-being interventions, and offers the following definitions of tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support for the committee's consideration. Tier 1 mental health support shall be defined as "well-being service provision that is aimed at the entire system and population within an organization." An example of a tier 1 mental health support is collectively learning trauma-informed wellness practices to promote a more resilient organization. Tier 2 mental health support shall be defined as "well-being service provision that is aimed at populations within an organization that are at higher risk of mental health challenges." An example of tier 2 mental health support is offering specialized training to recognize and respond to trauma that the higher-risk group might endure.

Finally, the OWR offers comments on the timeline that has been put forward in S.B. 3279. With adequate resources, the OWR is confident that we can conduct a landscape analysis that: 1) identifies existing programs that support wellness and resilience in our communities, and 2) assesses the effectiveness of these programs. Data gathered through this landscape analysis will allow our Office to determine what

fiscal resources are needed to enhance existing programs and support communities in building out programs to support wellness and resilience when such programs cannot be identified.

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to understanding and responding to the widespread impact of trauma. By passing this bill, the State would be upholding the TIC principles of Safety, Peer Support, Empowerment, and Voice and Choice, which strengthens our pathway toward a trauma-informed state. As such, the OWR **SUPPORTS** S.B. 3279.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tia L.R. Hartsock', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Tia L.R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3279:
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

TO: House Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Friday 02/23/2024; 10:30 AM; CR 211 & via videoconference

Chair Dela Cruz and Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members, Committee on Ways and Means

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 3279**, which establishes with the Office of Wellness and Resilience the State of Well-being Project to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services for all key stakeholder communities across the State. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 75 years. CCH has programs serving children, families, elders, homeless, veterans, and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii has providing counseling services to individuals and families for years. The needs of the various populations we serve vary and therefore their mental health and well-being needs also vary.

The project addresses a pressing need to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services for key stakeholder communities throughout Hawaii. Mental health is a vital aspect of overall well-being, and ensuring access to high quality, trauma-informed mental health services is a fundamental responsibility of our state.

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports the Office of Wellness and Resilience and their efforts to make Hawaii a trauma-informed state and ensuring we have an array of effective mental health services. By supporting this bill, we are taking a significant step towards creating a healthier and more resilient community that thrives on the well-being of its residents.

We urge your support for this bill and ask for your assistance in its passing during this legislative session.

Please contact our Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Shellie Niles at (808) 527-4813 if you have any questions.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808) 527-4813



SB-3279

Submitted on: 2/16/2024 5:36:58 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bronson Teixeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I would like to vote in support of this bill. Thank you.

Dela Cruz, Donovan M.
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

SB3279 Relating to Mental Health

February 23, 2024

Testimony for WAM

IN SUPPORT

Aloha mai kākou, my name is Richard Dominguez, and I am a student at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health at UH Mānoa. As social work students we are taught that we are agents of change and so I am here testifying in favor of Senate Bill 3279.

I support Senate Bill No. 3279, as through various research studies and data, mental illness is a prevailing matter within the United States that intersects with other social problems such as homelessness, addiction, and substance use. The COVID-19 Pandemic has only intensified the matter as since 2021 over 187,000 adults in Hawai‘i had a mental health condition, 37.6% have reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, and 17.9% were unable to get needed counseling or therapy. Furthermore, with the recent Maui Wildfires, their calls for a comprehensive mental health support system to approach and support those affected by the fires. Most importantly, it is integral to educate our youth at an early age about mental health matters as the adolescent years are crucial in shaping the keiki into their later adult years.

Implementing this Tier system program will not only serve and aid the individuals and communities of Hawai‘i in their contemporary mental health matters but will also strengthen and prepare them for future adversities.

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

Sincerely,

Richard Dominguez

Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health

rpd2@hawaii.edu