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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1 PART I

2 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State has relied  
3 on contracted private, for-profit prisons to house a significant  
4 portion of the State's prison population for more than two  
5 decades. Unfortunately, the inmates who serve their sentences  
6 in these out-of-state facilities are effectively exiled  
7 thousands of miles away from their families, friends, and  
8 crucial support networks. The effects of this isolation are  
9 felt disproportionately by the Native Hawaiian inmates, who are  
10 significantly more likely to be transferred to out-of-state  
11 prisons than inmates of other ethnicities.

12 More specifically, a 2010 report by the office of Hawaiian  
13 affairs, entitled "The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians  
14 in the Criminal Justice System", found that out-of-state  
15 incarceration results in significant trauma to prisoners and  
16 their families. In collecting data and testimony for the  
17 report, the office of Hawaiian affairs found that incarceration



1 outside of the State often resulted in families being torn  
2 apart. For example, one former inmate stated that he "lost  
3 [his] family--wife and kids" when he was forced to serve five  
4 years of his sentence on the mainland. Other individuals  
5 involved in the criminal justice system described how they  
6 witnessed inmates react emotionally when they realized that they  
7 would be moved thousands of miles away from their families  
8 without being able to tell them goodbye. The report also found  
9 that when the inmates returned to the State, they were more  
10 likely to encounter difficulties when reentering society due to  
11 the lack of adequate reentry programs at the out-of-state  
12 prisons and the long length of time that they spent away from  
13 their support networks and Hawaii culture.

14 The legislature also finds that the adverse effects of  
15 incarcerating inmates outside the State were recognized by the  
16 legislature and the former department of public safety even  
17 before the State began the practice of contracting with private  
18 mainland prisons. During the regular session of 1994, when the  
19 legislature was first considering whether to authorize the use  
20 of private, out-of-state correctional facilities to alleviate  
21 prison overcrowding, standing committees in both the senate and



1 house of representatives expressed concerns about inmates being  
2 transferred away from their support networks and the impact this  
3 would have on their rehabilitation. Committees in both chambers  
4 expressed a clear intent that inmates with strong ties to Hawaii  
5 should not be transferred outside of the State. In 1994, the  
6 senate committee on judiciary stated in standing committee  
7 report no. 1902:

8 "Many inmates currently incarcerated in Hawaii's prisons  
9 have lived their entire lives in Hawaii. These inmates  
10 have no support systems in localities other than Hawaii.

11 Accordingly, on the basis of the representations made  
12 by . . . the director of public safety, priority for  
13 transfers should be given first to non-Hawaii resident  
14 inmates, then to those inmates who have lived in our State  
15 for five years or less, and only thereafter will those with  
16 strong roots in Hawaii be considered for transfer."

17 Similarly, in 1994, the committee on public safety and  
18 corrections of the house of representatives stated the following  
19 in standing committee report no. 975-94:



1        "[T]he public defender raised concerns that inmates with a  
2        local support system would be transferred to other states  
3        against their will.

4            An enormous factor in an inmate's rehabilitation is  
5        the inmate's ability to receive visits or phone calls from  
6        friends and relatives. It appears that visits or phone  
7        calls to an inmate would be greatly reduced, if not  
8        eliminated, if an inmate with a local support system is  
9        transferred to a mainland correctional center.

10           In light of this, it is in the intent of your  
11        Committee that any inmate having a strong, nurturing  
12        support system in Hawaii that contributes to the inmate's  
13        rehabilitation shall not be considered for interstate  
14        transfer."

15           Accordingly, the legislature finds that when it enacted Act  
16        208, Session Laws of Hawaii 1994 (Act 208), which authorized the  
17        transfer of inmates to privately operated correctional  
18        facilities outside of the State, it did so with the clear intent  
19        that the former department of public safety would not transfer  
20        individuals with strong community ties. The legislature also  
21        finds that this clear intent has largely been ignored over the



1 last few decades. The legislature further recognizes that fears  
2 regarding the significant detrimental impact that interstate  
3 transfers would have on inmates have turned out to be true.  
4 Furthermore, the problem of prison overcrowding continues to  
5 persist even though Act 208 was enacted specifically to  
6 alleviate this issue. Moreover, larger problems with the use of  
7 mass incarceration have increased since Act 208 was enacted.  
8 Thus, the legislature believes that the State must phase out the  
9 practice of transferring inmates to privately operated mainland  
10 correctional facilities.

11 The legislature notes that the State had the authority to  
12 transfer certain inmates to publicly operated correctional  
13 facilities, such as prisons owned and operated directly by the  
14 federal government or a state, prior to the passage of Act 208.  
15 The State will retain that authority under this Act.

16 The legislature also finds that the department of  
17 corrections and rehabilitation is currently planning for the  
18 construction of a new jail to replace the existing Oahu  
19 community correctional center in Kalihi. In 2018, the governor  
20 announced the selection of the Halawa animal quarantine facility  
21 site as the location for the new jail. The new facility would



1 cost \$525,000,000, and the State planned to fund the facility  
2 using either general obligation bond proceeds or through a  
3 public-private partnership, in which the State would engage with  
4 a private party to develop and operate the jail. However, the  
5 legislature takes notice of the adverse effects of using private  
6 correctional facilities, including a lack of oversight and  
7 accountability and recurring violations of inmates'  
8 constitutional rights. Therefore, the legislature does not  
9 believe it would be prudent to move forward with the  
10 construction of a new, privately operated jail within the State.

11 The legislature further finds that Act 179, Session Laws of  
12 Hawaii 2019, established the Hawaii correctional system  
13 oversight commission to ensure transparency in the State's  
14 correctional system; support safe conditions for employees,  
15 inmates, and detainees; and provide positive reform towards a  
16 rehabilitative and therapeutic correctional system. The  
17 commission is responsible for overseeing the State's  
18 correctional system, establishing maximum inmate population  
19 limits for each correctional facility, and monitoring crucial  
20 reentry programs, facility educational and treatment programs,  
21 rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and parole services.



1 Since its inception, the commission has played a leading role in  
2 addressing the COVID-19 response in the State's correctional  
3 system despite being unable to hire any staff or access any of  
4 its appropriated funding.

5 The Hawaii correctional system oversight commission has  
6 previously expressed concerns that the department of corrections  
7 and rehabilitation's process to construct a new jail on Oahu was  
8 flawed. Despite the project's large costs, plans have been  
9 developed without meaningful input or guidance from the  
10 community, and the facility planners have failed to identify  
11 factors driving the State's jail population. The commission  
12 concluded that the State should reassess the required capacity  
13 of the new jail, noting that many of the assumptions made at the  
14 time the facility's environmental impact statement was written  
15 have changed.

16 In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State markedly  
17 reduced the inmate population at the Oahu community correctional  
18 center to reduce chronic overcrowding. As a result, the  
19 population at the Oahu community correctional center was reduced  
20 from over one thousand inmates to less than eight hundred  
21 inmates. A study conducted by the Lawyers for Equal Justice



1 determined that the vast majority of inmates released did not  
2 reoffend and most of those who did reoffend had been arrested  
3 for "poverty related offenses", such as those related to  
4 homelessness, including entering a closed public park or  
5 obstructing a public sidewalk.

6       These population reduction efforts, as well as future moves  
7 toward pretrial reform and sentencing reform, would alter the  
8 requirements of any new correctional center in the State.  
9 Accordingly, the commission recommended that planning for the  
10 new jail be paused so that additional review and crucial  
11 planning may be conducted. The legislature believes that it is  
12 crucial that the Hawaii correctional system oversight commission  
13 be included in this review and planning. In addition, as the  
14 State phases out the use of private correctional facilities, the  
15 commission's crucial role in establishing important corrections  
16 policies and providing crucial oversight will become even more  
17 important. Therefore, to ensure the State has a coordinated  
18 approach to the management of the State's correctional  
19 facilities as it brings prisoners formerly incarcerated in  
20 private, out-of-state correctional facilities back to Hawaii,  
21 the legislature believes that the commission must be included in



1 the planning and design of any new correctional facility or the  
2 expansion of any existing correctional facility in the State.

3 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to require:

4 (1) The State to phase out the use of private prisons; and

5 (2) The department of corrections and rehabilitation to  
6 obtain the Hawaii correctional system oversight  
7 commission's approval before constructing any new  
8 correctional facility or expanding any existing  
9 correctional facility.

10 PART II

11 SECTION 2. Chapter 353, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
12 amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately  
13 designated and to read as follows:

14 "§353- Use of private correctional institutions

15 prohibited. (a) Beginning on July 1, 2030, the State shall not  
16 commit, transfer, or house any inmate at a private correctional  
17 institution.

18 (b) This section shall not be construed to prohibit the  
19 State from contracting with or housing an inmate at:

20 (1) Any facility providing rehabilitative, counseling,  
21 treatment, mental health, educational, or medical



- 1           services to a minor who is under the jurisdiction of  
2           the family court;
- 3           (2) Any facility providing evaluation or treatment  
4           services to a person who has been detained or is  
5           subject to an order of commitment by a court;
- 6           (3) Any facility providing educational, vocational,  
7           medical, or other ancillary services to an inmate in  
8           the custody of, and under the direct supervision of,  
9           the State or any of its political subdivisions;
- 10          (4) A residential care facility licensed by the department  
11          of health or department of human services;
- 12          (5) Any school facility used for the disciplinary  
13          detention of a pupil;
- 14          (6) Any facility used for the quarantine or isolation of  
15          persons for public health reasons; or
- 16          (7) Any facility used for the temporary detention of a  
17          person detained or arrested by a merchant, private  
18          investigator or guard, or other person pursuant to  
19          section 803-3.
- 20          (c) As used in this section, "private correctional  
21 institution" includes any facility:



- 1        (1) Owned by the State and operated by a non-governmental
- 2                entity; or
- 3        (2) Operated under a public-private partnership."

4        SECTION 3. Section 353-16.2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
5 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

6        "(a) The director may effect the transfer of a committed  
7 felon to any correctional institution located in another state  
8 regardless of whether the state is a member of the Western  
9 Interstate Corrections Compact; provided that the institution is  
10 in compliance with appropriate health, safety, and sanitation  
11 codes of the state, provides a level of program activity for the  
12 inmate that is suitable, and is operated by that state, by any  
13 of its political subdivisions, or by a private institution; and  
14 provided further that the transfer is either:

15        (1) In the interest of the security~~[r]~~ or management of  
16                the correctional institution where the inmate is  
17                presently placed, or the reduction of prison  
18                overcrowding; or

19        (2) In the interest of the inmate~~[r]~~ ;  
20 provided further that beginning on July 1, 2026, the director  
21 shall commence reducing the number of committed felons

1 incarcerated in private correctional institutions. Beginning on  
2 June 30, 2030, no inmate shall be committed or transferred to  
3 any private correctional institution. As used in this section,  
4 "private correctional institution" shall include any  
5 correctional institution operated under a public-private  
6 partnership."

7 SECTION 4. Section 353-16.3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
8 amended to read as follows:

9 **"§353-16.3 Development of out-of-state Hawaii correctional**  
10 **facilities.** Notwithstanding any other provision to the  
11 contrary, the governor, with the assistance of the director, may  
12 negotiate with any appropriate out-of-state jurisdiction for the  
13 development of Hawaii correctional facilities to reduce prison  
14 overcrowding; provided that any agreement negotiated pursuant to  
15 this section shall be subject to legislative approval by  
16 concurrent resolution in any regular or special session[+];  
17 provided further that the authority to negotiate and execute an  
18 agreement under this section shall expire on June 30, 2030."

19 PART III



1 SECTION 5. Chapter 353, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately  
3 designated and to read as follows:

4 "§353- Construction and development of new correctional  
5 facilities; approval of Hawaii correctional system oversight  
6 commission required. (a) No new correctional facility shall be  
7 constructed and no existing correctional facility shall be  
8 expanded unless the construction or expansion is first approved  
9 by the Hawaii correctional system oversight commission.

10 (b) To facilitate the approval or disapproval of a  
11 proposed new or expanded correctional facility as provided in  
12 subsection (a), the department shall submit the following  
13 information to the Hawaii correctional system oversight  
14 commission upon the commission's request:

- 15 (1) The proposed maximum inmate population of the  
16 facility;  
17 (2) Any programs proposed for the facility, including  
18 reentry programs, facility educational and treatment  
19 programs, rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and  
20 parole services; and



1        (3) Any other relevant information required by the  
2                commission as established by rules adopted pursuant to  
3                chapter 91."

4                SECTION 6. Section 353L-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
5 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

6                "(b) The commission shall:

7                (1) Oversee the State's correctional system and have  
8                jurisdiction over investigating complaints at  
9                correctional facilities and facilitating a  
10                correctional system transition to a rehabilitative and  
11                therapeutic model;

12                (2) Establish maximum inmate population limits for each  
13                correctional facility and formulate policies and  
14                procedures to prevent the inmate population from  
15                exceeding the capacity of each correctional facility;

16                (3) Consult with the department of corrections and  
17                rehabilitation on the planning of any new or expanded  
18                correctional facility in the State, and approve or  
19                disapprove those plans before the correctional  
20                facility is constructed or expanded, as provided in  
21                section 353-\_\_\_\_\_;



1        [~~3~~] (4) Work with the department of corrections and  
2                    rehabilitation in monitoring and reviewing the  
3                    comprehensive offender reentry program, including  
4                    facility educational and treatment programs,  
5                    rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and the  
6                    Hawaii paroling authority's oversight of parolees.  
7                    The commission may make recommendations to the  
8                    department of corrections and rehabilitation, the  
9                    Hawaii paroling authority, and the legislature  
10                    regarding reentry and parole services; and

11        [~~4~~] (5) Ensure that the comprehensive offender reentry  
12                    system under chapter 353H is working properly to  
13                    provide programs and services that result in the  
14                    timely release of inmates on parole when the minimum  
15                    terms have been served instead of delaying the release  
16                    for lack of programs and services.

17                    To achieve these ends, the commission shall authorize the  
18                    oversight coordinator to adopt rules in accordance with chapter  
19                    91."

20                    PART IV



# H.B. NO. 1376

1           SECTION 7. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
2 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

3           SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

4

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 23 2025



# H.B. NO. 1376

**Report Title:**

Corrections; Private Prisons; Phase-out; Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission

**Description:**

Requires the State to phase out the use of private correctional facilities to incarcerate Hawaii inmates. Prohibits the construction of new correctional facilities or the expansion of existing correctional facilities without the approval of the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

