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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO OFFENDER REENTRY PROGRAMS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that House Concurrent  
2 Resolution No. 85, H.D. 2, S.D. 1 (2016), requested the  
3 convening of a task force to make recommendations to the  
4 legislature on ways to improve Hawaii's correctional system.  
5 The final report of the House Concurrent Resolution 85 Task  
6 Force on Prison Reform was submitted to the legislature in  
7 December 2018. According to the 2018 report, "the State's  
8 correctional system is not producing acceptable, cost-effective,  
9 or sustainable outcomes and needs immediate and profound  
10 change." Prison populations have risen noticeably since the  
11 1980s, with Hawaii experiencing an eight hundred and seventy per  
12 cent increase in prison populations between 1980 and 2018. This  
13 increase has had a disproportionate impact on native Hawaiians,  
14 with the task force finding that native Hawaiians make up forty  
15 per cent of the prison population but only twenty per cent of  
16 the overall population in the State. Additionally, prisons are



1 failing to correct unwanted behavior, leading to higher rates of  
2 recidivism.

3       The legislature further finds that the 2019 Recidivism  
4 Update to the 2002 Hawaii Recidivism Baseline Study shows that  
5 nearly fifty-four per cent of criminals in Hawaii are repeat  
6 offenders. The State correctional system's high rate of  
7 recidivism, and the corresponding overall increase in prison  
8 populations since the 1980s, produces a serious financial burden  
9 on local communities. A 2020 study evaluating the corrections  
10 system in Hawaii estimates that it costs the State approximately  
11 \$72,000 to incarcerate an inmate for one year. By lowering  
12 recidivism rates, the State could save significant amounts of  
13 money that it could invest into other programs, such as  
14 education, infrastructure, or social services.

15       The legislature further finds that offering extensive and  
16 high-quality educational and vocational programs to inmates is  
17 effective in reducing rates of recidivism and the overall cost  
18 of the correctional system.

19       The legislature further finds that inmate participation in  
20 mentorship reentry programs translates to higher rates of  
21 employment and lower rates of recidivism. According to a



1 Public/Private Ventures study, inmates who participated in  
2 mentorship programs were more than twice as likely to find a job  
3 after release than inmates who did not. The same study found  
4 that one year after release, participants who were mentored were  
5 thirty-five per cent less likely to recidivate than inmates who  
6 were not mentored.

7 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 8 (1) Encourage inmates to participate in correctional  
9 educational programs and vocational training;
- 10 (2) Increase the quality and quantity of correctional  
11 mentorship, counseling, educational, and vocational  
12 training programs available to interested inmates;
- 13 (3) Allow inmates to earn an income and engage in  
14 supervised apprenticeship training to obtain licensure  
15 and increase marketability and work-force-readiness  
16 upon the completion of their sentencing; and
- 17 (4) Appropriate funds to expand model programs to include  
18 more quality educational and vocational programs.

19 SECTION 2. Section 353H-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
20 amended to read as follows:



1           " [†]§353H-4 [†] **Model programs; department of corrections**  
2 **and rehabilitation.** Subject to funding by the legislature, the  
3 department of corrections and rehabilitation shall enhance the  
4 State's comprehensive offender reentry system by developing  
5 model programs designed to reduce recidivism and promote  
6 successful reentry into the community. Components of the model  
7 programs shall include but are not limited to:

- 8           (1) Earn and learn programs. The department shall expand  
9 existing career training opportunities and work  
10 furlough programs to include earn and learn programs.  
11 For purposes of this paragraph, "earn and learn"  
12 programs means programs that allow eligible inmates to  
13 participate in supervised apprenticeships to allow  
14 inmates to work toward licensure while getting paid;
- 15           (2) Highly skilled staff who are experienced in working  
16 with offender reentry programs;
- 17           (3) Individualized case management and a full continuum of  
18 care to ensure successful reentry;
- 19           (4) Life skills development workshops, including  
20 budgeting, money management, nutrition, and exercise;  
21 development of self-determination through education;



- 1           employment training; special education for the  
2           learning disabled; social, cognitive, communication,  
3           and life skills training; and appropriate treatment  
4           programs, including substance abuse and mental health  
5           treatment;
- 6           (5) Parenting and relationship building classes. The  
7           department shall institute policies that support  
8           family cohesion and family participation in offenders'  
9           transition to the community, and, where possible,  
10          provide geographical proximity of offenders to their  
11          children and families; [~~and~~]
- 12          (6) Ongoing attention to building support for offenders  
13          from communities, community agencies, and  
14          organizations[~~-~~];
- 15          (7) Programs that encourage inmates without a high school  
16          diploma or equivalency certificate to obtain a high  
17          school equivalency certificate while incarcerated by  
18          matching inmates with an advisor, mentor, or guidance  
19          counselor to support the inmates' understanding of  
20          incarceration's impact on family, emotions, society,  
21          and the self;



1 (8) Programs that encourage eligible inmates to attend  
2 community college or university by teaching inmates  
3 the benefits of a college education;

4 (9) Programs that shift the focus of career training  
5 programs to relevant and useful opportunities,  
6 highlight job prospects and benefits that inmates can  
7 obtain after completion of specific career training  
8 programs, and teach inmates about the benefits of  
9 stable employment beyond incarceration and its  
10 benefits on themselves, family, and society;

11 (10) Programs that work with non-profit organizations and  
12 the business community to secure job positions for  
13 inmates that have completed necessary career training  
14 programs and have the required qualifications; and

15 (11) Programs that compel inmates convicted of a felony to  
16 undergo emotional, academic, and behavioral mentoring  
17 or counseling by recommending that inmates be granted  
18 parole or early release upon completion of the  
19 program."

20 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
21 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so



# H.B. NO. 911

1 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
2 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
3 year 2026-2027 for the department of corrections and  
4 rehabilitation to expand existing model programs to provide more  
5 educational and vocational training opportunities for interested  
6 inmates.

7 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
8 corrections and rehabilitation for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
10 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

11 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY:

JAN 21 2025



# H.B. NO. 911

**Report Title:**

Recidivism; Offender Re-entry Programs; Appropriation

**Description:**

Expands programming and training for the comprehensive offender reentry program under the department of corrections and rehabilitation to reduce the rate of recidivism and increase inmate marketability. Appropriates funds.

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

