

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

624

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 13, 2025

RE: H.B. No. 727
H.D. 1

Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Madame:

Your Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs, to which was referred H.B. No. 727 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE WOMEN'S COURT,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to establish a three-year women's court pilot program in the Second, Third, and Fifth Circuits of the Judiciary to acknowledge the distinct pathways that lead women into the criminal justice system and address their individualized needs. Specifically, this measure:

- (1) Requires the pilot program to implement trauma-informed and evidence-based practices, employ gender-responsive programming, collaborate with stakeholders, and provide services to women in the court system with the goal of diverting participants from incarceration, supporting their success in the community, and reducing recidivism;
- (2) Appropriates funds to the Judiciary for equipment; mental health, substance abuse treatment, and other services; and the establishment of seven temporary positions for the pilot program; and
- (3) Requires the Judiciary to submit annual reports on the pilot program throughout its duration.

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Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Health; Judiciary; Office of the Public Defender; Office of the Prosecuting Attorney of the County of Kaua'i; Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the County of Maui; Community Alliance on Prisons; Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition; League of Women Voters of Hawaii; American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i; and two individuals.

Your Committee finds that research has shown that gender-responsive approaches result in far better outcomes for women who face unique barriers to success after incarceration. Women offenders are more likely to be primary caregivers for young children, have lower educational attainment, lack stable work history, and experience economic or social marginalization. This measure seeks to address these barriers and improve outcomes for women offenders.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting language that would have established a three-year women's court pilot program in the Third Circuit of the Judiciary and instead requiring the Third Circuit of the Judiciary and Big Island Drug Court to study and submit a report on establishing a women's court pilot program in the Third Circuit;
- (2) Changing the number of temporary staff positions established in the Judiciary to an unspecified amount;
- (3) Inserting an appropriation for the Department of Health for the women's court pilot program, including the establishment of positions;
- (4) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

Your Committee respectfully requests your Committee on Finance, should it deliberate on this measure, to consider establishing seven temporary positions in the Judiciary and an



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appropriation amount of \$801,802 to the Department of Health, including:

- (1) \$145,000 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) temporary clinical psychologist position;
- (2) \$76,788 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) temporary social worker/human services professional IV position; and
- (3) \$45,216 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) temporary social services assistant V position,

to be placed in the Department of Health.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 727, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 727, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Finance.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Judiciary &
Hawaiian Affairs,


DAVID A. TARNAS, Chair



