

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 154

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 10 2025

RE: S.B. No. 526  
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2025  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred S.B. No. 526 entitled:

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

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to establish and appropriate funds for a temporary three-year Woman's Court Pilot Program within the Second, Third, and Fifth Circuits.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Judiciary, Department of Health, 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, Sex Abuse Treatment Center, and one individual.

Your Committee finds that there has been a significant increase in the number of women in the State's jails and prisons over the last forty years, resulting in a higher proportion of women who are incarcerated. Research indicates that for women, histories of abuse, trauma, poverty, mental illness, substance use disorders, and unhealthy relationships intersect with their entry into criminal behavior. Women offenders also face unique barriers to success after incarceration. To address these issues, the Legislature enacted Act 243, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, which



established a three-year Women's Court Pilot Program in the Circuit Court of the First Circuit, known as Mohala Wahine. The Program focuses on non-violent women who are at high risk of recidivism and, as of August 2024, currently has twenty-three women participating in the program. Your Committee further finds that thus far, the Women's Court Pilot Program has been successful, with eleven participants in phase one of treatment and twelve participants in phase two of treatment. This measure will allow women on neighbor islands to participate in the successes of the Women's Court Pilot Program by establishing three-year Women's Court Pilot Programs in the circuit courts of the Second, Third, and Fifth Circuits.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Inserting an effective date of April 23, 2057, to encourage further discussion; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

Your Committee notes that this measure contains an unspecified appropriation amount and unspecified numbers of positions. Your Committee further notes that your Committee has requested the Judiciary to provide your Committee with the exact appropriation amount and number of positions needed to implement the Women's Court Pilot Program established by this measure.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 526, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 526, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Judiciary,



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KARL RHOADS, Chair



