DEPT. COMM. NO. 394

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

MARK PATTERSON
CHAIR

CHRISTIN M. JOHNSON
OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

COMMISSIONERS
HON. R. MARK BROWNING (ret.)
HON. RONALD IBARRA (ret.)
MARTHA TORNEY
HON. MICHAEL A. TOWN (ret.)

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
E HUIKALA A MA'EMA'E NŌ
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March 6, 2026

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker and Members of the
House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

In accordance with Chapter 353L-6, I am submitting the monthly Oversight Coordinator Report for the month of February. This report includes actions taken by the Commission and expenses for the preceding month. These reports may be reviewed electronically at http://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/reports.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 808-849-3580.

Respectfully,

Christin Johnson
Oversight Coordinator

c: Governor's Office
Legislative Reference Bureau Library (1 hard copy)

Enclosure



Hawai‘i Correctional System Oversight Commission

Monthly Oversight Coordinator Report – February 2026

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Introduction

In accordance with Chapter §353L-6, the Oversight Coordinator shall submit a monthly report to the Commission, the Governor, and the Legislature. The monthly report shall include actions taken by the Commission and expenses for the preceding month. In addition to the mandated parties this report must be shared with, the Oversight Coordinator publicly posts the monthly report to increase transparency and accountability. This report will also be shared with each individual who has the responsibility of appointing members of the Commission. This includes:

1) Governor of Hawaii
2) President of the Hawaii Senate
3) Speaker of the Hawaii House of Representatives
4) Hawaii Supreme Court Chief Justice
5) Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs

The Oversight Coordinator monthly reports are released on the first Friday of each month, covering the previous month, and will be discussed on the second Thursday of each month at the monthly Commission meetings.

Death in Custody

On Saturday, February 7, 2026, at approximately 6:33am, a Korean male in custody, 67 years old, at Halawa Correctional Facility was found unresponsive in his cell. Security personnel immediately responded, conducted CPR, and alerted 911 emergency services. EMS arrived on scene at approximately 6:45am. At approximately 7:11am, the individual was pronounced deceased. An autopsy will determine the official cause of death.

Events Attended

2026 WCF Hawai'i Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund Graduation Ceremony

On February 6, 2026, Commission staff attended the Hawai'i Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund graduation ceremony at Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF), in partnership with Honolulu Community College (HCC). Nine men graduated from the two-month pre-apprenticeship program, where they received hands-on training and mentorship from experienced journeymen carpenters. During the ceremony, graduates shared what they learned, highlighted increased confidence, practical construction skills, and a renewed sense of purpose. The program creates a direct pathway to union employment and living-wage careers, demonstrating the value of structured workforce development opportunities in supporting rehabilitation and successful reentry. The Commission applauds the Department for having and supporting this program.

HCSOC Site Visit to Saguaro Correctional Facility, AZ (February 17–18, 2026)

From February 17th to 20th, 2026, Chair Patterson and Commission staff conducted a site visit at the Saguaro Correctional Facility in Arizona to observe operations, programming, and conditions impacting Hawai'i inmates housed out of state. Warden Wead personally provided a tour of the facility, guiding Commission staff through housing units, program areas, and operational spaces while answering questions about daily procedures and system movement. Commission staff met with facility leadership, observed education and vocational programming, surveyed individuals

housed in the Special Housing Incentive Program (SHIP), observed cultural programming including the closing ceremony of Makahiki, and discussed reentry preparation efforts and access to services.

Chair Patterson and Commission staff also interviewed thirty-three individuals regarding specific complaints submitted to the Commission. Much of the trip was utilized for addressing complaints originally submitted to the Commission that have yet to be investigated due to lack of staff. With the Prison Oversight Specialist onboarded, the Commission's complaint backlog is currently being addressed.

The visit offered valuable insight into facility operations and strengthened communication and collaboration to better support incarcerated individuals from Hawai‘i housed in Arizona.

Makahiki – Saguaro Community Correctional Center

On February 18, 2026, Chair Patterson and Commission staff attended the closing Makahiki cultural observance at Saguaro Correctional Center in Arizona. The ceremony focused on bringing traditional Hawaiian cultural practices to the men housed there, emphasizing peace, renewal, and connection to heritage. Commission staff observed chants (oli), protocol, and cultural activities designed to strengthen identity and promote healing. 88 individuals participated in the ceremony, highlighting the importance of maintaining cultural ties for Hawai‘i's incarcerated individuals held out of state. Makahiki and other cultural programming can support rehabilitation, personal reflection, and positive reentry outcomes.

Commission Complaints

After receiving dedicated funding for a case management system from the legislature, the Commission secured and finalized the system and added all pending complaints. In the next Oversight Coordinator report, the Commission plans to begin publicly tracking statistics. As staff finalize the project, the Commission will be better equipped for tracking, monitoring, investigating, and responding to incoming complaints.

Findings on Lack of Movement Throughout the Prison System

Concerns Regarding Lack of Bed Utilization at Minimum Custody Facilities

The Commission has consistently reported on concerns regarding a lack of bed utilization at minimum custody facilities. Hawaii has two minimum custody prisons for men - Kulani Correctional Facility (KCF) and Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF). These facilities are designed for people who pose low public safety risk and are eligible for rehabilitation-focused programming. WCF can hold 334 individuals, and KCF can hold 160 individuals. Despite this:

- Both facilities are less full now than they were in 2023 (WCF is at 50% capacity, KCF is at 48% capacity).
- At the same time, **hundreds of people who qualify for minimum custody** remain housed in Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) (a higher-security prison), or Saguaro Correctional Center in Arizona (AZSC) (higher security, out-of-state prison).

The Commission has found that minimum custody beds are sitting empty while eligible individuals are housed in more expensive, more restrictive, and less rehabilitative settings.

	2023 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications						
Male Prison	*Community*	*Minimum*	*Medium*	*Close*	*Maximum*	*Unclassified*	**Total Population**
AZSC	--	53	455	369	--	--	877
HCF	4	183	435	187	2	11	822
WCF	27	154	--	--	--	--	181
KCF	24	61	--	--	--	--	85

Source: Hawaii Department of Public Safety Roster, Dated Nov. 13, 2023

	2024 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications						
Male Prison	*Community*	*Minimum*	*Medium*	*Close*	*Maximum*	*Unclassified*	**Total Population**
AZSC	--	77	506	411	--	--	994
HCF	6	179	306	204	6	5	706
WCF	23	113	--	--	--	--	136 - **DECREASE FROM 2023**
KCF	13	65	--	--	--	--	78 - **DECREASE FROM 2023**

Source: Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Roster, Dated Oct. 14, 2024

	2025 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications						
Male Prison	*Community*	*Minimum*	*Medium*	*Close*	*Maximum*	*Unclassified*	**Total Population**
AZSC	--	67	409	340	--	--	816
HCF	4	173	351	271	5	8	812
WCF	17	148	--	--	--	--	165 - **DECREASE FROM 2023**
KCF	23	62	1	--	--	--	86 - **DECREASE FROM 2023**

Source: Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Roster, Dated Nov. 17, 2025

	2026 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications						
Male Prison	*Community*	*Minimum*	*Medium*	*Close*	*Maximum*	*Unclassified*	**Total Population**
AZSC	--	52	404	340	--	1	797
HCF	7	172	365	259	4	14	821
WCF	33	135	--	--	--	--	168 - **DECREASE FROM 2023**
KCF	22	51	--	3	--	--	76 - **DECREASE FROM 2023**

Source: Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Roster, Dated March 2, 2026

The above charts highlight that since 2023, between 240–260 people classified as *minimum custody or below* have remained in Halawa or Saguaro. Meanwhile, Waiawa's population dropped from 181 (2023) to 136 (2024) to 165 (2025) and 168 (2026). Kulani's population dropped from 85 (2023) to 78 (2024) to 86 (2025) and 76 (2026). The Commission believes that this is not a year-by-year fluctuation, but a sustained pattern.

Differences Between Minimum and Medium+ Facilities:

Minimum Custody Facilities:

- Are **far less restrictive** than medium or higher custody prisons
- Focus on:
  - Education
  - Vocational training
  - Substance use treatment
  - Reentry preparation
- Allow more movement, work opportunities, and pro-social behavior
- Are designed to prepare people for successful release

Medium and Higher Custody Facilities:

- Emphasize **security and control**, not rehabilitation
- Offer fewer programs
- Often have long waitlists for classes or treatment
- Increase the likelihood that individuals:
  - Serve their entire sentence
  - Are released without skills, treatment, or planning

Impact:

Underusing minimum custody facilities increases the risk of people returning to the community unprepared.

When people are housed in higher custody settings than necessary:

- They are less likely to receive:
  - Treatment
  - Job skills
  - Education
- They are more likely to "max out" their sentence and be released with **no supervision and no preparation.**

By contrast, people in minimum custody are:

- More engaged in programming
- More likely to earn credits
- More likely to transition gradually back into the community

Cost to State:

Cost differences:

- Higher custody incarceration is **inherently more expensive** as they require**:**
  - More staffing
  - More security resources

Leaving minimum custody beds empty while paying for higher custody placements is:

- Operationally inefficient
- Financially wasteful
- Contrary to best practice

What the Commission Has Recommended (and Why)

Since 2023, the Commission has recommended transferring eligible minimum custody individuals from Halawa and Saguaro and fully utilizing Kulani and Waiawa. This recommendation aligns custody level with actual risk, maximizes rehabilitative impact, improves reentry outcomes, and uses state facilities as intended. However, the recommendation has **not been implemented**. The same underutilization continues into 2026.

Leaving minimum custody facilities 50% underused while eligible individuals sit in higher custody settings undermines rehabilitation, public safety, and responsible stewardship of state resources. The Commission will continue to report on this issue until it has been appropriately addressed.

Past Meetings

Monthly Commission Meeting

On February 12, 2026, the Commission hosted its monthly public meeting. All past meeting agendas, video recordings, meeting minutes, and testimonies can be found on our website here: https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/2026-meetings. All meetings are live streamed on our Facebook and YouTube channel.

Expenses for the Preceding Month – February

Item	Cost	Qty	Total	Description
Operating Expenses			**$1,848.17**	
TELEPHONE	$579.27	1	$579.27	DECEMBER
OFFICE SUPPLIES	$920.42	1	$920.42	ONE DAY SIGNS
OFFICE SUPPLIES	$120.00	1	$120.00	CANVA RENEWAL
OFFICE SUPPLIES	$228.48	1	$228.48	EMSS-BUSINESS CARDS
Inter-Island Travel			**$334.58**	
AIRFARE-RI	$137.58	1	$137.58	01/08 - ALASKA
CAR RENTAL-CMJ	$76.50	1	$76.50	12/18 - ENTERPRISE
CAR RENTAL-ANJ	$76.50	1	$76.50	12/13 - ENTERPRISE
P. DIEM MEAL-RI	$20.00	1	$20.00	01/08 - PER DIEM
PARKING-RI	$24.00	1	$24.00	01/08 - TRAVEL PARKING
Mainland Travel			**$3,938.71**	
AIRFARE-KRT	$1,353.99	1	$1,353.99	10/20 - DELTA
ADVANCED P. DIEM MEAL-KRT	$471.25	1	$471.25	02/16-19/2026 PHX, AZ
ADVANCED P. DIEM LODGING-KRT	$495.78	1	$495.78	02/16-19/2026 PHX, AZ
ADVANCED P. DIEM MEAL-CMA	$761.25	1	$761.25	02/16-21/2026 PHX, AZ
ADVANCED P. DIEM LODGING-CMA	$856.44	1	$856.44	02/16-21/2026 PHX, AZ
Conferences			**$66.00**	
NACOLE P. DIEM-KRT	$66.00	1	$66.00	NACOLE P. DIEM
		TOTAL	**$6,187.46**	

** All expenses reflect posted transactions procured*

General Office Information

Mailing Address:	Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission 235 S. Beretania Street, 16th floor Honolulu, HI 96813
Website:	https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov
Submit Testimony:	https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/submit-testimony
Email:	hcsoc@hawaii.gov
Social Media:	YouTube LinkedIn Facebook Instagram

Monthly Meetings

This report will be discussed at the monthly Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission meeting on March 12, 2026. The next monthly meeting is scheduled to occur on April 9, 2026, at the Kaua‘i Community College, 3-1901 Kaumuali‘i Hwy, Room OCET 105, Lihue, Hawai’i 96766 or online via teleconference. More information can be found on the Commission’s webpage here: https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/information.