



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
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No. _____

TESTIMONY ON HB 2288, RELATING TO PAROLE ELIGIBILITY

by
Gene DeMello, Chairman
Hawaii Paroling Authority

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice-Chair

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 – 8:40 a.m.
Conference Room 411 – State Capitol

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Paroling Authority (HPA) strongly supports HB 2288 and companion bill SB 3107. HPA performs quasi-judicial functions and is the central paroling authority for the State of Hawaii. The Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) govern fixing and reducing minimum terms of imprisonment and granting parole, and other administrative functions.

The proposed HRS amendment to §353-64 addresses participation in additional correctional programs prior to parole eligibility besides academic, vocational education, or prison industries. These additional programs include treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues, work furlough, and other programs necessary to address an inmate's criminogenic needs and/or risk factors. The proposed amendment also allows the parole board to waive these programs

These programs align with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) paradigm shift from a punitive to rehabilitative and re-entry model. DCR administers a Receiving and Diagnostic (RAD) risk and needs assessment upon admission. The RAD assessment identifies and prioritizes an inmate's criminogenic (risk) factors and the necessary programs that address these factors and reduce recidivism. RAD assessments and program recommendations are the blueprint that incentivize progressing through the correctional system and improve readiness for parole. An inmate's risk posed to the community and risk of recidivism are substantially reduced after completion of substance abuse treatment and when mental health issues are addressed and managed. Both issues closely correlate to criminality and perpetual incarceration when they go unaddressed.

The benefits of requiring inmates to participate in work furlough and other correctional programs include a gradual transition with improved stability and readiness for release on parole; facilitates secured housing, employment, and increased financial stability; provides gradual resocialization and reunification with family and community members; and provides a seamless transition from incarceration to parole.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input in support of HB 2288 and SB 3107.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MARK PATTERSON
CHAIR

CHRISTIN M. JOHNSON
OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

COMMISSIONERS
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STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
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TO: The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

FROM: Mark Patterson, Chair
Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission

SUBJECT: House Bill 2288, Relating to Parole Eligibility
Hearing: Wednesday, February 11, 2026; 8:40 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 411

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) submits testimony in **opposition** of House Bill 2288, relating to parole eligibility, which amends section 353-64, HRS, to require participation in work furlough, if recommended, for parole eligibility.

Although more programming and required participation in furlough may seem like a logical requirement for successful integration, the Commission is concerned that this will only keep more people incarcerated as *access* to furlough and programming has been a consistent issue within the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR). In March 2025, the Commission released its first inaugural report, [Hoe Amau](#), on the current state of reentry in Hawaii. This report specifically covered the Department's compliance with Chapter 353H *Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program* of Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Commission determined that the DCR was in compliance with 21 sections, mostly in compliance with 11 sections, mostly not in compliance with 18 sections and not in compliance with 51 sections of Chapter 353H. The Department's lack of compliance resulted in weak or missing reentry planning for the population, gaps in required services and programs, identification and documentation access failures (state IDs, birth certificates, social security cards), poor performance tracking, staffing and capacity shortfalls, and higher risk of failed reintegration. All of these deeply impact the incarcerated population at no fault of their own.

Additionally, the Commission has consistently found that furlough is severely underutilized and people who are currently eligible to be placed in furlough remain at higher level facilities. As of January 28, 2026, there were sixty individuals classified as Community status who were housed in Halawa Correctional Facility, Waiawa Correctional Facility, or Kulani Correctional Facility – none of which have furlough. Additionally, there were 238 individuals classified as Minimum

custody who were housed in higher level facilities (not minimum facilities as required by policy). Since individuals cannot progress to furlough without spending time at a minimum facility, this again highlights how the disregard for policy and law can deeply impact an individual's access to programming and furlough activities, even if they are eligible for such opportunities. If the Department does not provide access, reentry integration will not be successful. For all of these reasons, the Commission does not support this bill.

Should you have additional questions, the Oversight Coordinator, Christin Johnson, can be reached at 808-849-3580 or at christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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February 7, 2026

HB2288: RELATING TO PAROLE ELIGIBILITY

Chair Au Bellati, Vice Chair Iwamoto and Members of the Committee on Public Safety

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **supports HB2288**. This measure amends Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 353-64 to clarify that the Parole Board may require, as a condition for parole eligibility that a committed person participate in work furlough, or "other programs designed to assist the committed person with successful reintegration back into the community."

HRS § 353-64 properly recognizes that the requirement of program participation shall not apply if the committed person is in a correctional facility where such programs are not available. HB2288 further amends HRS § 353-64 to clarify that the "program requirements can be waived at the discretion of the Hawaii paroling authority." Many programs are available only at certain facilities and require a committed person to move through the system via changes in custody level and transfer to participate in those programs. For example, a corrected person generally starts off their incarceration at medium custody. In order to reach a work furlough facility, their custody level must be reduced via the point system from medium to minimum to community custody. The transfer to a minimum, then community custody facility requires available space at those facilities. The Hawai'i Paroling Authority should retain discretion to allow committed persons who, by not fault of their own, are unable to participate in programming due to their inability to transfer to an appropriate facility. This does not create a public safety issue as the Hawai'i Paroling Authority still retains the discretion to require a person, as a condition of granting parole, to participate in appropriate programming in the community.

As this amendment is designed to confirm that the Hawai‘i Paroling Authority may waive any of the programming requirements set forth in the preceding sections of the statute, the OPD suggests the following amendment to the added language.

and [the foregoing] program [participation] requirements can be waived at the discretion of the Hawai‘i [P]aroling [A]uthority.

“Program requirements” in the original added language could be construed to refer to program requirements within a particular program. As it appears that the intent of the amendment is to allow the Hawai‘i Paroling Authority to waive participation in certain programs, “the foregoing program participation requirements” would be more accurate.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2288

RELATING TO PAROLE ELIGIBILITY

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Palekana Lehulehu

Hawai'i State Capitol

Pepeluali 11, 2026

8:40 AM

Lumi 411

Aloha e Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, a me Members of Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Palekana Lehulehu:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB2288** which expands the types of programs considered for parole eligibility. Currently, statutes only include recognition of academic, vocational, and prison industry programs.

OHA supports policies that strengthen rehabilitation, successful reentry, and long-term public safety. Expanding program categories to include treatment, work furlough, and reentry-focused services recognizes that a variety of methods can assist inmates with transitioning back into our community.

Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented in Hawai'i's correctional system and face elevated barriers to employment, health care access, and stable housing upon release. Policies that support treatment, skill-building, and structured reintegration pathways are therefore especially important to improving outcomes for OHA beneficiaries and their 'ohana. For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs respectfully urges this Committee to **PASS HB2288**.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

HB-2288

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:22:35 AM

Testimony for PBS on 2/11/2026 8:40:00 AM

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Date & Time
Feb 11, 2026, 7:36 am

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	CARES	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support

HB-2288

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:15:14 AM

Testimony for PBS on 2/11/2026 8:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edmund "Fred" Hyun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto and Committee Members. My name is Edmund "FRED" Hyun, former chair of the Hawaii Paroling Authority and retired Public Safety (now DCR) employee. I stand in STRONG SUPPORT of HB 2288. Based on my years of experience in Hawaii's Criminal Justice System I have personally witnessed the benefits of correctional programming but also realize there is a need under exigent circumstances to allow the HPA to waive these programs to effect medical/compassionate release from incarceration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure