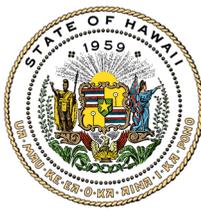


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Vacant
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

No. _____

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalua Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 05, 2026, 3:32 pm
Amended

LATE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 676
RELATING TO YOUTH AND ADULT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES. **AMENDED**

by
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Public Safety
Representative Bella Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

AND

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026; 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Via Video Conference

Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of both Committees:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports the intent** of House Bill (HB) 676, which proposes to require the State's youth and adult correctional facilities to provide free and accessible voice communication services for those committed to or incarcerated in those facilities. As written, this measure proposes adding a new section to Chapter 352, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) to codify the office of youth services' current practice of not charging or imposing fees related to voice communication services for persons committed to its facilities; and Chapter 353, HRS to require adult correctional facilities to provide persons in custody with accessible and functional voice communication services that are free of charge to the person initiating and the person receiving the communication.

In addition, this measure further amends both chapters to prohibit any state agency from receiving any form of revenue or financial benefit from voice communication services or any other communication services to a person confined in a detention or state correctional facility. HB 676 also seeks to appropriate \$1,000,000 or so thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same amount for fiscal year 2026-2027 to provide free voice communication services to incarcerated persons in the State. This measure further seeks to appropriate an unspecified amount for the Hawai'i statewide automated victim information and notification system (SAVIN) for fiscal year 2025-2026 and fiscal year 2026-2027.

In 2019, Connecticut was considered the second highest state in costs for phone calls (\$3.50 to \$4.50 for 15 minutes). In 2020, Connecticut became the first state to offer free inmate communication in their facilities allocating over \$11 million dollars. They saw phone minutes use over double from 494,000 to 1,081,000. Although they continue to offer free telephone calls, they recently had to cut free tablet, email and text communications to save \$3.5 million.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) began providing free inmate phone calls in March 2020 with monies from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act) and in recognition of the significant costs associated with these services Congress provided supplemented funding in 2020 and 2021. Between April 2020 and May 2024, FBOP reported \$350 million dollars in telephone calls occurred. After Federal Cares Act funding expired in 2022, and supplemental funding was no longer provided, FBOP continued to fund the calls at their own expense. However, in October 2024, FBOP cited budget constraints requiring them to reallocate resources to other critical needs such as programs, staffing, and contraband interdiction, and as a result, modified the program to incentivize free phone calls for inmates on the waitlist or engaged in certain programs.

In 2023, California passed legislation requiring the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to provide free phone calls for approximately 95,000 incarcerated people. In July 2023, inmates used 119 million minutes and increased to 125 million minutes in August 2023. Based on those numbers, California's

Governor proposed budget for 2024 to 2025 to fund the required CDCR “free” phone calls was \$36.7 million. While HB 676 proposes free phone calls, the cost of free phone calls is not free as the tax paying citizens of the states ultimately end up paying for the free calls.

For the past two (2) years, DCR’s inmate phone system records confirm its population of approximately 3,800 uses about 1.2 million minutes per month in voice communications. Under DCR’s current contract with ViaPath, a privately-owned prison telephone communications provider, it costs \$0.054 per minute for local, interstate, and international calls. A 15-minute direct call costs less than a dollar (\$0.81). DCR does not receive State general funds to pay for this service. To provide free telephone calls using the current rate of \$0.054 per minute, the Legislature will have to provide State general funds to DCR that equals \$64,800 per month or approximately \$777,600 annually. Based on other states that passed similar measures to provide free inmate phone calls, prison officials saw an average of 50% increase in telephone calls. Using a projected 50% increase, and to maintain accessible and functional voice communication services, the Legislature will have to provide DCR funding for “free” phone calls that equals to approximately \$1,166,400 annually. These projections do not take into consideration any potential Information Technology (IT) costs that may be associated with these services, as correctional telephone services are not the same as residential services and require additional security features to ensure the safety, security and good governance of our facilities.

Additionally, according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), 2025 Incarcerated People’s Communications Services (IPCS) Order, effective April 6, 2026, the previous rate cap (\$0.06 per minute) would increase to \$0.12 for medium facilities (population 350-999) and \$0.13 for small facilities (100-349). At these new rates, the cost of the free telephone service would be \$144,000 per month or approximately \$1,728,000 annually, calculating at the lower \$0.12 per minute rate. Considering that jurisdictions offering free telephone calls saw an increase of about 50%, the annual funding to maintain this system would be \$2,592,000.

Currently, each inmate receives a 5-minute free telephone call weekly. DCR is working on increasing those minutes to a 15-minute free telephone call weekly for every inmate. This will ensure that each inmate is able to maintain connectivity to their loved ones without taxpayers bearing additional costs for this service. This also ensures that DCR does not have to potentially sacrifice programs or services in other areas.

More importantly, under DCR's current contract with ViaPath, it is ordered that commissions to the State are deposited into DCR's Special Fund set-up for the State Automated Victim Information Notification System (SAVIN). The Legislature created the SAVIN program to enable DCR and the Hawai'i Paroling Authority (HPA) to meet their statutory obligation to notify crime victims of offender transfers, planned hearings before the HPA, and release on parole. SAVIN does not receive State general funds; SAVIN is strictly funded by 1) Commissions derived from the inmate phone system; and 2) A four percent (4%) assessment on inmate commissary purchases. Without the SAVIN program, victims would be unable to exercise their rights, or engage in safety planning, if they did not receive statutorily mandated notification about offender escape/release/transfer/movement or parole hearings. This important program protects crime victims and the community and ensures we continue to remember and protect them as well.

As written, HB 676 requires DCR to provide committed persons with free voice communications (inmate telephone calls) and prohibits DCR from receiving any form of revenue or financial benefit (commissions) from voice or any other *communication service within the statewide correctional facilities*.

With the prohibition of receiving commissions, the Legislature will have to fund an additional \$1.4 to \$1.5 million per year, if rates remain at the lower rate cap (\$0.054), or approximately \$2.8 to \$2.9 million per year, at the higher rate cap (\$0.12). This does not include any potential IT related costs.

If the Legislature does not provide and maintain the appropriate funding for the continued telephone services and the system updates that may be necessary, DCR may be forced to end communication services (personal and legal) for its committed persons

statewide, and the SAVIN program will be terminated leaving both DCR and the HPA in violation of its statutory obligations to provide victims with proper notification.

DCR appreciates the intent of this bill, however, as demonstrated by other states, there are costs associated with these free services which are difficult to maintain. Free telephone services may also have unintended consequences that result in cutting services in other areas. The FCC guidelines were intended to cut the cost of exorbitant fees being charged by service providers and facilities. At present, DCR remains in compliance and under the current \$0.06 rate cap of the FCC.

It should be noted, the appropriations sought to carryout the provisions of this measure falls outside of the priorities as listed in the Governor's executive budget for FY 2027-2028 and passage of this measure may have negative impacts on existing programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of the intent** of HB 676.

JON N. IKENAGA
PUBLIC DEFENDER

DEFENDER COUNCIL
1130 NORTH NIMITZ HIGHWAY
SUITE A-254
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96817

HONOLULU OFFICE
1130 NORTH NIMITZ HIGHWAY
SUITE A-254
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96817

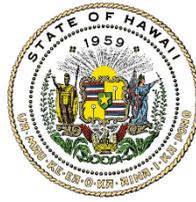
APPELLATE DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2080

DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2100

FAMILY COURT DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2300

FELONY DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2200

FACSIMILE
(808) 586-2222



STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

HAYLEY Y. C. CHENG
ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER

HILO OFFICE
275 PONAHAHAWAI STREET
SUITE 201
HILO, HAWAI'I 96720
TEL. No. (808) 974-4571
FAX No. (808) 974-4574

KONA OFFICE
75-1000 HENRY STREET
SUITE #209
KAILUA-KONA HI 96740
TEL. No. (808) 327-4650
FAX No. (808) 327-4651

KAUA'I OFFICE
3060 EIWA STREET
SUITE 206
LIHUE, HAWAI'I 96766
TEL. No. (808) 241-7128
FAX No. (808) 274-3422

MAUI OFFICE
81 N. MARKET STREET
WAILUKU, HAWAI'I 96793
TEL. No. (808) 984-5018
FAX No. (808) 984-5022

February 4, 2026

HB 676: RELATING TO YOUTH AND ADULT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Chair Belatti, Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, Vice-Chair Olds, Members of the Committee on Public Safety, and Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness:

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **strongly supports** HB 676 which would require youth and adult correctional facilities to provide free and accessible voice communication services for incarcerated persons and prohibit the State from deriving revenue from these services. This measure promotes fairness, public safety, and successful reentry, while ensuring that poverty is not used as a barrier to maintaining meaningful human connection.

Our clients are among the most economically vulnerable individuals in Hawai'i. All are indigent, many are unemployed, or supporting families on limited income even before incarceration. When communication with loved ones comes at a significant financial cost, families are forced to choose between staying connected and meeting basic necessities. For many, that choice is impossible. The inability to afford phone calls results not from lack of effort or interest, but from lack of means, a reality this bill appropriately acknowledges and addresses.

From our direct experience representing individuals throughout the criminal legal process, communication with loved ones is not a luxury. It is essential. Regular contact with family members helps incarcerated individuals remain grounded, informed, and emotionally supported during an extremely destabilizing period. These connections are especially critical for parents maintaining relationships with their children, for individuals managing mental health conditions, and for those preparing for eventual reentry into the community.

Research and lived experience consistently show that individuals who maintain strong family and community ties while incarcerated have better outcomes after release, including lower rates of recidivism and increased stability in housing and employment. Most of our clients will return to their families and communities. Facilitating regular, reliable communication during incarceration is one of the most effective and humane ways to support that transition and enhance public safety overall.

This measure also appropriately recognizes and addresses the harms caused by predatory pricing practices in the jail and prison communication industry. When the State or its contractors profit from communication services, the financial burden is shifted onto families who are already struggling. This bill rightly rejects that model and affirms that staying connected to loved ones should not depend on a family's ability to pay.

Importantly, this measure does not eliminate in-person visitation or replace other forms of contact. Instead, it ensures that voice communication remains accessible as a baseline form of connection, particularly for families who face geographic, transportation, health, or scheduling barriers to in-person visits.

The OPD supports this measure because it reflects a clear understanding that communication is fundamental to human dignity, rehabilitation, and fairness. No one should be further punished simply because they or their family lack financial resources. This bill takes a meaningful step toward a more just and effective correctional system in Hawai'i.

For these reasons, the Office of the Public Defender **supports** HB 676.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
465 S. KING STREET, #103
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

JON S. ITOMURA
CHAIR

NAOMI U. KUWAYE
COMMISSIONER

COLIN A. YOST
COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (808) 586-2020
Facsimile: (808) 586-2066

Website: puc.hawaii.gov
E-mail: puc@hawaii.gov

Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the
House Committees on
Public Safety
and
Human Services & Homelessness

February 6, 2026
10:00 a.m.

Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees:

Measure: H.B. No. 676
Title: RELATING TO YOUTH AND ADULT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.

Position:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") offers the following comments for consideration.

Comments:

The Commission supports the intent of this measure and offers comments.

The Commission observes that Section 4 of the measure would require the Commission to undergo rulemaking without specifying the program or regulation over which the Commission has jurisdiction. The Commission notes that there are existing administrative rules regarding Institutional Pay Telephone Service under section 6-82-58, Hawaii Administrative Rules. The Commission could amend the administrative rules if necessary. That said, the Commission respectfully requests amendments to this measure to effectuate quality standards by rule promulgation or issuance of orders, rather than by rulemaking only, with an extended timeframe to allow for robust discussions with stakeholders and a complete record.

As such, the Commission requests that the Committee consider the following amendments:

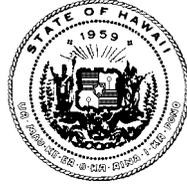
Page 6, Line 18 to Page 7, Line 6:

SECTION 4. (a) The public utilities commission shall establish service quality standards, ~~and rules by rule or order~~, pursuant to Chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for free voice communication services provided to youth and adult correctional facilities pursuant to sections 352- and 353- , Hawaii Revised Statutes.

(b) The commission shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than ~~forty~~ twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 20268.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



LEANNE GILLESPIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LUNA HO'OKELE

Phone: (808) 587-5710
Fax: (808) 587-5734

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES
KE'ENA LAWELAWE 'ŌPIO
1010 Richards Street, Suite 314
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

February 4, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Leanne Gillespie, Executive Director

SUBJECT: HB 676 – RELATING TO YOUTH AND ADULT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
Friday, February 6, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 441 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Office of Youth Services (OYS) supports the intent of this bill as it relates to the Office of Youth Services, offers comments and defers to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to require the State's youth and adult correctional facilities to provide free and accessible voice communication services for incarcerated persons and appropriates funds.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

The Office of Youth Services (OYS) operates the State's only correctional facility for minors committed by the courts. The purpose of the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) is to provide for the custody, rehabilitation and institutional care and services to prepare youth for reentry into their families and communities. One of the primary goals for youth committed to HYCF is to reconnect and strengthen family and community relationships, and every effort is made for youth to make these connections free of financial limitations. Youth at HYCF have access to communication via both telephone and electronic virtual services. The majority of youth committed to the custody of HYCF are minors and do not typically have any employment history or available funds, and many are disconnected from their families or have families without financial means. As such, the OYS does not charge, impose, or pass on any costs or fees related to voice or virtual communication services to youth or their families nor derives any form of revenue or financial benefit from providing these services. The OYS does not require additional funding to maintain its current communication services to youth at HYCF.

The OYS defers to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on how this bill relates to, and effects, their operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

TESTIMONY ON
H.B. 676
RELATING TO YOUTH AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
February 5, 2026

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Public Safety

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

My name is Ana Malafu-Eliesa, and I am currently the Victim Witness Director for The Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui as well as the Chairperson of the SAVIN Governance Committee. Respectfully, I submit the following comments in **opposition to the current draft of H.B. 676, Relating to Youth and Correctional Facilities, and request that it be deferred.**

This bill proposes that state correctional facilities provide free and accessible voice services to persons committed or incarcerated therein. We appreciate the legislature's intent to facilitate communication between offenders and their loved ones through free and accessible communication services. We have no objection to providing such services to incarcerated or committed individuals.

However, our primary concern is that this bill would adversely impact public safety by eliminating one of the key funding sources for Hawai'i's Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) Program, without establishing a sustainable, long-term funding solution. A significant portion of SAVIN's funding currently comes from the telephone tax, which this bill would eliminate.

The SAVIN Program plays a vital role in our community by providing timely notifications via phone, text, and email regarding inmate releases and parole hearings. Without access to SAVIN, crime victims may remain unaware of critical opportunities to participate in parole hearings or may be unprepared for the release of individuals who have harmed them. Without ensuring a long-term funding source for SAVIN, this bill unnecessarily jeopardizes public safety and victim support services.

For these reasons, I respectfully **oppose the current draft of H.B. 676 and strongly urge that the bill be deferred.** Please feel free to contact me at (808) 270-5718 if you have any questions or inquiries.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Sincerely,
Ana Malafu-Eliesa
Victim Witness Director
Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui
Chairperson, SAVIN Governance Committee

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

ANDREW H. MARTIN
Prosecuting Attorney

SHELLY C. MIYASHIRO
First Deputy Prosecuting Attorney



DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
PHONE (808) 270-7777 • FAX (808) 270-7625

TESTIMONY ON
H.B. 676
RELATING TO YOUTH AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

February 5, 2026

The Honorable Della Au Belatti
Chair
The Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto
Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Public Safety

The Honorable Lisa Marten
Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds
Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui respectfully submits the following comments **opposing the current draft of H.B. 676, Relating to Youth and Correctional Facilities and requests that it be deferred.** This bill would require state correctional facilities to provide free and accessible voice services to persons committed or incarcerated therein.

We appreciate the intent of the legislature to help offenders contact their family and friends via free and accessible communication services while incarcerated or committed. We have no concerns with providing free communication services to incarcerated or committed persons.

We are, however, concerned that this bill would negatively impact public safety by removing one of the primary funding sources for Hawai'i's Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) Program without providing an alternative long-term source of funding for one of our most vital victim communication services. A significant amount of the SAVIN Program's funding comes from the current telephone tax, which this bill would eliminate. Our community relies

on SAVIN to provide timely phone, text and email notification of inmate release and parole hearing dates. Without SAVIN, crime victims may be unaware of opportunities to provide input at parole hearings or be unprepared for the release of the person who violently assaulted them. Without ensuring a long-term funding source for SAVIN, this bill unnecessarily jeopardizes public safety.

For these reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui **opposes the current draft of H.B. 676 and requests that it be deferred.** Please feel free to contact our office at (808) 270-7777 if you have any questions or inquiries. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

KELDEN B.A. WALTJEN
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

SHANNON M. KAGAWA
FIRST DEPUTY
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



655 KILAUEA AVENUE
HILO, HAWAII 96720
PH: (808) 961-0466
FAX: (808) 961-8908

74-675 KEALAKEHE PARKWAY
KAILUA-KONA, HAWAII 96740
PH: (808) 322-2552
FAX: (808) 322-6584

64-1067 MAMALAOHA HIGHWAY, C-3
KAMUELA, HAWAII 96743
PH: (808) 887-3017
FAX: (808) 887-3016

OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 676

A BILL FOR AN ACT
RELATING TO YOUTH AND ADULT
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

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

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS
Representative Lisa Martin, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference
State Capitol Conference Room 411
415 South Beretania Street

Honorable Chairs Au Belatti & Martin, Vice-Chairs Iwamoto & Olds, and Members of the Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness: The County of Hawai'i, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney respectfully submits the following testimony **in opposition** to House Bill 676.

While we share the Legislature's concern for maintaining family connections for incarcerated individuals, we have significant concerns about the approach taken in this measure and its potential unintended consequences. This Office is deeply concerned about the negative effects the bill may have on the Hawai'i Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification program (SAVIN).

H.B. 676 was drafted with the intent to prohibit all user fees for communication services in state correctional facilities, to prohibit any state agency from deriving any revenue or benefit from the provision of communication services in correctional facilities, and to require the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to bear the cost of providing all communication services in correctional facilities, with no reduction in services compared to those previously provided through user fees.

Currently, the primary funding for the SAVIN victim notification program comes from revenue from user fees for communication services in state correctional facilities. The SAVIN program provides crime victims, witnesses, and concerned members of the public with automated, timely, and accurate updates about an offender's custody status or release, accessible

through a user-friendly website, VINELink. The program is also utilized by law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges to quickly verify custody status. It has been essential to the success of the SAVIN program that it has had a stable and reliable funding source.

It is impossible to overstate how important the SAVIN victim notification system has become to public safety and crime victims' rights in Hawai'i. The automated notifications made possible by the SAVIN program are vital in assisting crime victims to participate in the justice system and giving victims a modicum of assurance in knowing that they will be notified immediately and automatically when an offender is released. Our office is deeply concerned that H.B. 676 would eliminate the primary revenue source for SAVIN, likely leaving SAVIN underfunded.

H.B. 676 acknowledges that its statutory changes will require additional legislative appropriations in two ways. First, there is a \$1 million appropriation for DOCR to fund the provision of communication services. Second, there is a blank appropriation for DOCR to fund the SAVIN victim notification program.

The Office of the Prosecuting Attorney is concerned about the blank appropriation for the SAVIN program in H.B. 676. We urge the Legislature to not only fully fund the SAVIN program as it currently exists, but to provide additional funding to expand the SAVIN program beyond state correctional facilities to encompass police department cell blocks and Judiciary facilities as well. Now is not the time to cut back on funding for this enormously successful program that provides an important resource for crime victims.

For the foregoing reasons, the County of Hawai'i, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney respectfully **opposes** the passage of House Bill 676. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

Phone/E-Mail: (808) 927-1214 / kat.caphi@gmail.com

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair

Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026

10:00 am

Room 411 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 676 - FREE VOICE COMMUNICATIONS IN ADULT AND YOUTH PRISONS

Alohas Chair Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for almost three decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,654 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on January 26, 2026. We are always mindful that 799 - 43% of Hawai'i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to express our **strong support for HB676** that requires the State's youth and adult correctional facilities to provide free and accessible voice communication services for incarcerated persons to

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, January 26, 2026
[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-01-26.pdf](#)

our people at these facilities. The bill prohibits any state agency from deriving revenue or financial benefit from the provision of communication services to persons confined in state correctional facilities and requires the Public Utilities Commission to establish service quality standards and rules for the free voice communication services. It appropriates funds and requires a report to the Legislature.

We understand that the Youth Prison has free phone calls, which is great, however, putting this in HRS gives it more weight and underscores the importance of keeping loved ones connected.

THE FOLLOWING JURISDICTIONS HAVE IMPLEMENTED FREE ADULT AND YOUTH PRISON PHONE CALLS:

- **New York:** Effective **August 1, 2025**, all prison and jail communication, including phone calls, will be free. This includes unlimited calling and will save families over \$13 million annually.
- **Massachusetts:** Passed precedent legislation to make all prison and jail communication free, including phone calls, video calls, and electronic messages. This policy went into effect in **December 2023**.
- **Minnesota:** Passed legislation to make all prison calls free, implementing it quickly in **July 2023**.
- **Colorado:** Passed legislation to make all prison calls free, with a graduated implementation timeline.
- **California:** Passed legislation to make all prison calls free, implemented in **January 2023**.
- **Miami-Dade County:** Made jail communication free after extensive advocacy and negotiations.

WHY ARE PRISON PHONE CALLS AND VISITS SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?²

Below are the words of incarcerated individuals from the research cited below about the importance of staying connected to loved ones and the outside world. Continuing communication is a reentry strategy, as some of the comments indicate, and it facilitates rehabilitation that helps people move forward with their lives. Prison makes moving forward difficult when people feel alone and unwanted.

² **VISITS AND PHONE CALLS**

https://www.nj.gov/correctionsombudsperson/documents/Special%20report%20on%20visits%20and%20phone%20calls_Corrections%20Ombudsperson_Final.pdf

It is shameful and painfully revealing that DCR has consistently testified against keeping folks connected and validates what we hear from people inside who say that the name change is merely cosmetic. So sad when Hawai`i touts itself as being family oriented. This is not true when people are incarcerated.

Visits and Phone Calls

NJ Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson

Special Report April 2024:

Source: [Visits and Phone Calls](#)

- “I need it for my own sanity.”
- “Helps me de-escalate after a rough day.”
- “Keeps me positive.”
- “It makes my life feel purposeful.”
- “It’s my only connection to the people who genuinely care about me.”
- “They are all I got... helps me be a better man.”
- “Keeps me grounded.”
- “It’s important for my mental health.”
- “It calms me down to talk to one of my kids.”
- “It helps me feel human... helps knowing that people love you.”
- “Helps get through the stressful conditions of prison.”
- “It stops me from making regretful decisions.”
- “You need to know your loved ones are safe and they need to know the same.”
- “It gives you purpose and something to look forward to.”
- “It feels good to know I’m loved and not forgotten.”
- “So I’m not lost when I get out.”

LOSS OF PHONE AS A DISCIPLINARY SANCTION

A person’s telephone access can also be taken away.³ While 75% of people surveyed by the Ombudsperson Office reported never having lost telephone privileges, a review of

³ NJAC §10A:4-5.1

the Department's disciplinary data showed that some are unable to call loved ones for extended stretches of time.

In 2023, the Department of Corrections imposed 4,925 disciplinary sanctions involving the loss of telephone privileges on 2,475 unique individuals (about 19% of the incarcerated population). Four hundred and seventy-five of these sanctions took away the person's ability to call loved ones for periods lasting 180-360 days, and 89 sanctions suspended phone privileges for a full year.

LOSS OF PHONE In 2023, nearly 2,500 people had their phone privileges taken away, including 475 people punished with loss of phone for longer than six months.

The large majority of loss-of-phone sanctions appear unrelated to behavior while on the telephone, imposed instead as a response to refusing to follow orders (1,192 sanctions), assaultive behavior (1,445 sanctions), threatening remarks or weapons (604 sanctions), controlled dangerous substances (541 sanctions), or other disciplinary charges (1,143 sanctions).

The Department's policies allow sanctions for multiple charges to run consecutively. In one case example, a 21-year-old at South Woods State Prison lost telephone access for 3,265 days (almost 9 years) in response to a series of rule violations in 2023. A 32-year-old at New Jersey State Prison lost telephone access for 1,620 days (about 4½ years) in 2023, the sanctions extending far beyond his maximum prison release date. Cases like this are not common, but they illustrate a practice that is currently permissible in state regulations and under official Department policy and that deserves scrutiny.

Phone calls are also limited for people who are sanctioned to serve a term in the Department's Restorative Housing Units (RHUs) NOW CALLED RESTRICTIVE HOUSING. Current policy limits those in RHU Level 1 to one 15-minute phone call per week, while those who advance to Level 2 are permitted up to five 15-minute phone calls per week. Anyone serving a sanction for loss of phone privileges while in RHU is not permitted any phone calls for the duration of the sanction. People on Level 1 are also denied access to electronic communication with loved ones over JPay, and are limited to one non-contact "window visit" each month.

Community Alliance on Prisons urges the committees to understand that every incarcerated person comes from a family, a neighborhood, a larger community. They are our neighbors and are human beings with human rights. Please urge Hawai'i to rise up to embrace the community values that we share. We are one family, one community and we care for and about each other.

Mahalo for this opportunity to share our passion for the people that feel forgotten.



Date: February 4, 2026

To: Rep. Della Au Bellati, Chair
Rep Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Public Safety

From: Lynn Costales Matsuoka, Executive Director
The Sex Abuse Treatment Center
A Program of Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children

RE: Testimony on HB 676
Relating to Youth and Adult Correctional Facilities

Hearing: February 6, 2026, Conference Room 411, 10am

Good morning, Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the House Committee on Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity for the Sex Abuse Treatment to provide comment on the HB 676, relating to youth and adult correctional facilities. .

The Sex Abuse Treatment Center opposes HB 676 as it eliminates the dedicated funding source for SAVIN as it prohibits the any “state agency” from deriving “any form of revenue or financial benefit from the provision of voice communication services or any other communication services to a person under the custody of the department.” As is, the current funding to keep SAVIN operational is derived from a nominal communication fee which is necessary to assure the safety of victims. The SAVIN program provides notification to victims of the release of their offenders from custody providing victim’s time to develop and implement a safety plan prior to their offender’s release.

We recognize an inmate’s need to remain in contact with loved ones is key to the successful reentry into the community for an incarcerated person. SAVIN notification is key to the safety of victims whose offender is being released from custody. Both interests should not be mutually exclusive to the other and efforts to support the equitable needs of the offender and victim are important factors to consider under this bill.



85 Delancey St., 2nd Fl.

New York, NY 10002

www.worthrises.org

[Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [Facebook](#) @worthrises

Committee: House Committees on Public Safety and Human Services & Homelessness

Hearing Date/Time: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 10:00am

Place: Conference Room 411 via Videoconference

Re: Testimony of Bianca Tylek, Worth Rises in SUPPORT of HB 676

Dear Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Bianca Tylek, and I am the Executive Director at Worth Rises, a national organization specializing in corporate accountability within the prison industry. I am writing in strong support of HB 676, making phone calls free for incarcerated people in Hawai'i and their families. I submit my testimony specifically to address confusion around the new federal regulations and their impact on SAVIN.

Worth Rises' expertise has been relied upon heavily by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which cited Worth Rises' analyses more than 130 times in its 2024 Order on incarcerated people's communications services. We have also advised state and local correctional agencies across the country on RFPs drafting, bid evaluation, and contract negotiations. In addition, I have served as an amicus and consulting expert in litigation involving correctional telecommunications and recently even published a book on the prison industry that includes a substantive chapter on correctional telecom. I share this just to give you confidence that we are intimately knowledgeable on this subject matter.

Before diving in, I also want to share that I am also a survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence and suffered the murder of a loved one. As a crime victim, I understand the importance of the SAVIN system and want to ensure it continues to be funded. At the same time, I do not believe that the most marginalized families — those with incarcerated loved ones — should be forced to shoulder that cost, especially when they can least afford it. That said, recently adopted federal regulations will prohibit states from funding programs like SAVIN through revenues generated by prison phone and video calls, making it both inequitable and legally untenable to continue relying on that funding structure.

The topline is that, as of April 2026, the FCC's absolute prohibition on site commissions will prohibit the state from using any revenue from prison phone or video calls to fund SAVIN, regardless of what rates are charged. If the state continued to fund SAVIN using these revenues, paid to the state as site commissions from the DOC's telecom provider, the state would be in violation of federal law and exposed to substantial legal risk. Accordingly, without another funding mechanism, SAVIN is at risk. However, this legislation, HB 676, includes an appropriation for SAVIN that would allow it to stay funded when this prohibition goes into effect. I fear that without a clear understanding of the FCC's rules, some may oppose the legislation against their own interests based on incorrect counsel.

The FCC rules and their impact SAVIN:

First, Hawai'i does not directly collect revenues from the provision of phone or video calling services. The revenues are collected by the contracted telecom provider, or ViaPath/GTL, and then a portion is shared with the state in the form of "site commissions." The FCC defines [site commissions](#) as "**any form of monetary payment**, in-kind payment, gift, exchange of services or goods, fee, technology allowance, or product **that a Provider of Incarcerated People's Communications Services** or affiliate of a Provider of Incarcerated People's Communications Services **may pay, give, donate, or otherwise provide to an entity that operates a Correctional Institution**, an entity with which the Provider of Incarcerated People's Communications Services enter into an agreement to provide Incarcerated People's Communications Services, a governmental agency that oversees a Correctional Facility, the city, county, or state where a Facility is located, or an agent of any such Facility." For years, Hawai'i has used site commissions paid by ViaPath/GTL — its share of calling revenues — to fund SAVIN, an arrangement that is also spelled out in state law and the DOC's telecom contract.

Second, in its most recent [Report and Order](#), the FCC explicitly and absolutely, without exception, bans site commissions in its final rule "**§ 64.6015 Prohibition against Site Commissions. A Provider must not pay any Site Commissions associated with its provision of Incarcerated People's Communications Services**" (page 58 of the PDF, APPENDIX A: FINAL RULES). This ban is separate and distinct from the requirement that rates are compliant with the new rate caps, meaning that **even if a state's calling rates fall below the rate caps, it still cannot collect a commission**.

Note that the new Report and Order allows providers to pay agencies up to \$0.02 per minute "facility rate additive" but ONLY to cover the costs agencies incur to provide phone and video calling services in their facilities. This rate additive is explicitly not meant to replace site commissions, which could previously be used for anything (there's a long discussion of this on pages 20-27, paragraphs 37-51). As such, the facility rate additive cannot be used to fund SAVIN because SAVIN does not facilitate the provision of phone and video calling services to incarcerated people. It is an inherently unrelated service, and exactly the type of cost the FCC determined is not an appropriate to pass through to users of prison calling services.

Third, with regard to the effective date (page 43 of the Report and Order, paragraph 83): "The compliance date, 120 days after publication in the Federal Register ... becomes the date on which compliance will be required for the three rules temporarily suspended in the 2025 IPCS Waiver Order— the IPCS interim rate caps (as modified herein), **the prohibition on the payment of site commissions**, and the per-minute rate requirement for IPCS offerings." The Report and Order was published in the Federal Register on December 5, 2026, making the **compliance date April 6, 2026**. Note again, the explicit distinction between the rate caps and the prohibition on site commissions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this issue has now been put to rest by the FCC. The prohibition was first asserted in the FCC's 2024 Order and then again in its 2025 Order, despite the rollback of other rules. Further, the FCC decided not to reopen the matter of site commissions

for discussion in its latest notice for proposed rulemaking. **The decision on the prohibition is now final.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Tylek', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bianca Tylek
Executive Director
Worth Rises



**Testimony in Support of HB 676 to Provide Free Communication
to People Incarcerated in Hawai'i Prisons and Their Families**

Committee: House Committees on Public Safety and Human Services & Homelessness

Hearing Date/Time: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 10:00am

Place: Conference Room 411 & via Videoconference

Dear Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Celina Chapin, and I am the Chief Advocacy Officer at Worth Rises, a national non-profit dedicated to ending the exploitation of people impacted by incarceration. I submit this testimony in support of HB 676 to make prison communication free for incarcerated people and their families in Hawai'i, and include a letter from the Connecting Families coalition, a state fact sheet on prison communication, a policy fact sheet regarding the legislation, testimonials from impacted Hawaiians, and a fiscal analysis of the legislation.

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony in regard to this important legislation, namely on the cost of prison communications and its impact. We also are grateful to Representative Belatti for sponsoring this legislation. We hope you will take particular note of the powerful stories of people who have been directly impacted by incarceration and how the exorbitant cost of prison communication has weighed on their lives. I will focus my testimony, instead, on the policy arguments and fiscal considerations that support this bill.

Worth Rises strongly supports SB 676, which would make communication in prisons free for incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. Worth Rises has helped jurisdictions across the country pass similar policies to provide free communications for incarcerated people and their support networks. We led the first successful state campaign in Connecticut and additional state campaigns in California, Colorado, Minnesota, and Massachusetts. We also led or supported successful local campaigns in New York City, San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Miami. We are currently supporting similar campaigns in over a dozen state and

local jurisdictions. Accordingly, we know what it takes to implement this policy and are committed to helping Hawai'i do so.

Hawai'i has the opportunity to join others on the forefront of this national movement to connect families with incarcerated loved ones and provide overdue relief to millions by simply making communication free. Today, we estimate that **Hawai'i families spend more than 1.26 million each year to speak to their incarcerated loved ones.** This money comes from the families — including grandparents, parents, spouses, siblings, children, and friends — of those incarcerated in Hawai'i. They are often forced to choose between paying for basic necessities like housing and food and paying to hear the voices of their incarcerated loved ones. In fact, one in three families with an incarcerated loved one goes into debt trying to stay connected, and 87% of those bearing this enormous financial burden are women.¹

However, family support can change how successful a person is both during and after their incarceration. It increases hope, reduces desperation, and encourages positive behavior, which in turn, reduces violence and improves the correctional environment for incarcerated people and correctional officers alike. One correctional administrator from Connecticut remarked about the policy and implementation there, “It’s not going to stop all the incidents, but it’s definitely curbing a lot of them. I understand that there has been some frustration among taxpayers about bearing the burden of the phone calls, but as someone who works inside the walls I can say that it is working and we do appreciate it.” And families have endless stories of how free calls have changed their lives.

Based on our prior work, **we estimate that providing free phone calls to incarcerated people and their loved ones will and cost the state around \$1 million per year.** We base our estimate on known rates charged by leading vendors around the country and start as low as \$0.009 per minute. We use our model to then measure the expected increase in volume based on expected tablet infrastructure from 27.9 minutes per person per day to 43.4 minutes. We conduct similar analyzes for the other includes services, namely video calls and electronic messages. Please note that there are always new compensation models rolling out that could further lower the cost, however, what the agency has been offered outside of a competitive bidding process doesn’t represent that.

Additionally, our estimate accounts for new regulations passed by the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC), which beyond significantly lowering rates for phone and video calls and prohibiting ancillary fees, including deposit fees, also banned commissions and the pass through of surveillance costs to incarcerated people and their families. As of April 2026, the FCC’s

¹ Criminal Justice Budget and Funding Opportunity Analysis. Public Sector Consultants, 2021.; See also, Program and Special Equipment Fund Revenues and Expenditures. Michigan Department of Corrections. https://www.michigan.gov/corrections/0,4551,7-119-1441_1513-519821--,00.html

absolute prohibition on site commissions will prohibit the state from using any revenue from prison phone or video calls to fund SAVIN, regardless of what rates are charged. If the state continued to fund SAVIN using these revenues, paid to the state as site commissions from the DOC's telecom provider, the state would be in violation of federal law and exposed to substantial legal risk. Accordingly, the state will have to find alternative funding for the Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) system, which is currently funded through such commissions. This bill provides an additional appropriation to address that need.

The bottom line is that the cost of providing free prison communication pales in comparison to what families are currently paying as well as what the state spends on its correctional system and would return much more. Again, studies have consistently shown that communication between incarcerated people and their support networks increases hope inside, strengthens families, mitigates trauma for children facing parental incarceration, improves reentry success, and increases public safety.² Providing such communication at no cost would lift a critical burden off the shoulders of Hawai'i families, making these benefits more accessible.

In closing, we ask that you vote yes on HB 676. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions at cchapin@worthrises.org.

Sincerely,



Celina Chapin
Chief Advocacy Officer
Worth Rises

² Wong, Leah. "Research roundup: The positive impacts of family contact for incarcerated people and their families." Prison Policy Initiative, 2021. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2025 at 10:00 AM
Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

Strong Support for HB 676 Relating to Youth and Adult Correctional Facilities

Dear Members of the Committees,

[Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice](#) (HFRJ) strongly supports HB 676 that would provide free communication for incarcerated juveniles and adults. HFRJ incorporated as a non-profit in 1980 to pilot a juvenile diversion project for the Honolulu family court. Since then HFRJ has worked with courts, schools, prisons and others to develop, provide, research and [report on pilot projects](#). HFRJ's focus includes determining evidence-based interventions to assist those affected by wrongdoing and injustice, and to increase criminal desistance.

Ian Crabbe, HFRJ's Vice Chairperson, was imprisoned in Hawai'i over 20 years ago. He understands from personal experience the importance and value of communication with loved ones while one is incarcerated. Through communication, Ian was able to rebuild his relationships, which were vital to his and his family's well-being.

It is also unquestionable from [research](#), and common sense, that supportive relationships with loved ones is vital to a person's [criminal desistance](#). Having [caring relationships has been found to be a vital](#) need for people desisting. Communication is absolutely required for building and nurturing these relationships, which not only assist incarcerated people, but very importantly their loved ones too. The whole community also benefits from more law-abiding members.

Communication with an incarcerated loved one for families and children, who are often traumatized from their loss, helps repair their emotional harm and can help mitigate their suffering.

Further, incarcerated people are from some of the most economically disadvantaged groups in our community. To charge them money, that corporations and our state profit from, is a sad testament to our state's values, and illustrates its lack of knowledge about how people stay law abiding, and what is necessary for a healthy community.

Please pass this measure and contact me if you need more information about our STRONGEST support for this bill: lorenn@hawaiifriends.org. Mahalo for your public service.

Lorenn Walker, JD, MPH
Director, HFRJ



Committee: House Committees on Public Safety and Human Services & Homelessness
Hearing Date/Time: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 10:00am
Place: Conference Room 411 & via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB676 Relating to Youth and Adult Correctional Facilities**

Dear Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i (ACLU of Hawai'i) **SUPPORTS HB676** which requires the State's youth and adult correctional facilities to provide free and accessible voice communication services for incarcerated persons in state correctional facilities. It also prohibits any state agency from deriving revenue or financial benefit from the provision of communication services to persons confined in state correctional facilities. The bill also requires the Public Utilities Commission to establish service quality standards and rules for the free voice communication services, requires a report to the Legislature, and appropriates funds for the Hawai'i statewide automated victim information and notification (SAVIN) system.

The ACLU of Hawai'i is committed to Smart Justice policies that reduce the number of people in our jails and prisons, while also enhancing opportunities for successful reintegration. When someone is incarcerated, it is crucial for them to stay in touch with those they love so they can help each other through the trauma of the criminal legal system. And for families, who worry about their loved ones, communication is vital – especially for families with children.

Currently, 1-in-3 families with a loved one incarcerated goes into debt just trying to keep in contact¹ and 87% of those carrying the costs are women of color.² What's more, this issue is particularly egregious in Hawai'i, approximately 800 people³ are

¹ Prison Policy Initiative, *10 ways that mass incarceration is an engine of economic justice*. August, 27, 2024. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2024/08/27/economic_justice/#:~:text=Meanwhile%2C%20an%20estimated%201%20in,at%20the%20very%20same%20time.

² Lan Foundation, *The Cost of Calling Incarcerated Loved Ones*. April 29, 2024. <https://www.lanfoundation.org/post/the-cost-of-calling-incarcerated-loved-ones#:~:text=These%20rates%20have%20consequences%20on,contacts%20of%20incarcerated%20loved%20ones>.

³ Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Weekly Population Report, January 26, 2026. <https://dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-01-26.pdf>

transferred to out-of-state private prisons. This only increases the difficulty for families wanting to remain in contact with incarcerated loved ones.

When a person is imprisoned, the phone is a lifeline to the outside 'free' world, therefore it is vital that people stay connected to help them serve their time. Sadly, in the carceral system phone calls are used as sanctions.

Last year the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted new rules which will:

- Lower existing per-minute rate caps for voice services by more than half and establishing initial interim per-minute rate caps for video communications services, such as video conferencing and video visitation;
- Simplifying the pricing structure by incorporating the costs of ancillary services into the rate caps and prohibiting providers from imposing any separate ancillary service charges on incarcerated people's communications services (IPCS) consumers;
- Limit the costs associated with safety and security measures that can be recovered in the per-minute rates to only those costs that the Commission finds are used and useful in the provision of IPCS;
- Allow IPCS providers to offer alternate pricing plans for IPCS;
- Prohibit IPCS providers from making site commission payments for IPCS and preempting state and local laws and regulations requiring such commissions, subject to a transition period;
- Revise and strengthen IPCS accessibility requirements for incarcerated people with disabilities; and
- Strengthen the Commission's IPCS consumer disclosure rules.

Given that the new FCC rules will prohibit communication fees to fund other government agencies or programs, it is important to ensure the SAVIN program, which currently receives revenues from this system, is fully funded by the Hawai'i Legislature. We support an appropriation necessary to cover the costs associated with free phone calls and continuation of the SAVIN notification system.

Sincerely,

Josh Frost

Policy Advocate

ACLU of Hawai'i

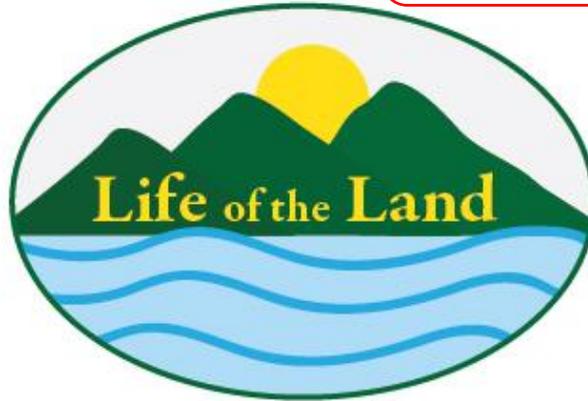
jfrost@acluhawaii.org

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for over 50 years.

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i
P.O. Box 3410
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96801
T: 808.522.5900
F: 808.522.5909
E: office@acluhawaii.org
www.acluhawaii.org

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 06, 2026, 12:18 pm

LATE



P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, Hawai`i 96837-0158
Phone: 927-0709 henry.lifeoftheland@gmail.com

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

DATE: Friday, February 6, 2026
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: Conference Room 411

HB 676 Youth and Adult Corrections

COMMENTS

Aloha Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the Committees

Life of the Land is Hawai`i's own energy, environmental and community action group advocating for the people and `aina for 56 years. Our mission is to preserve and protect the life of the land through sound energy and land use policies and to promote open government through research, education, advocacy and, when necessary, litigation.

The Public Utilities Commission proposed amendments:

SECTION 4. (a) The public utilities commission shall establish service quality standards, ~~and rules by rule or order~~, pursuant to Chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for free voice communication services provided to youth and adult correctional facilities pursuant to sections 352- and 353- , Hawaii Revised Statutes.

(b) The commission shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than ~~forty~~ twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 20268.

Life of the Land supports the proposed modification in section a. The third word of section b should be changed from shall to may, as section be is not needed to file anything with the legislature nor is it needed to carry out section a.

Henry Curtis
Executive Director

HB-676

Submitted on: 2/5/2026 10:00:26 AM

Testimony for PBS on 2/6/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tsofit Ohayon	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Tsofit Ohayon. I was incarcerated at WCCC for over three years. Throughout that time I was very lucky to have the support of my family and money always on the phone so I could speak with them daily. While there, I witnessed many people who were not able to use the phone or tablet due to the fact that their families didn't have the means. It led to much anger and aggression. Access to the outside world is vital for a person's wellbeing and ability to either gain support or at the very least, be able to line up whatever they need when released. Due to my ability to use the phone daily, I was at peace internally and able to focus on my studies and am now pursuing an engineering degree and hold a 4.0 GPA. All people should have the ability to do the same. Maybe then, they can find a way to break the cycle of recidivism.

Thank you.

Dennis M. Dunn
(dennismdunn47@gmail.com)
Kailua, HI 96734

TO: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

TO: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

RE: House Bill 676, Relating to Youth and Adult Correctional Services

HEARING: Friday, February 6, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 411

Good morning, Chair Au Bellati and Vice Chair Coco Iwamoto and members of the House Committee on Public Safety and Chair Marten and Vice Chair Olds and members of House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness . My name is Dennis Dunn, and I am the former Director of the Victim Witness Kokua Services in the Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney's Office, having retired at the end of 2022 after 44 years of service with the program. I am testifying today in strong opposition to H.B. 676, which proposes to prohibit any state agency from deriving revenue or financial benefit from the provision of communication services to incarcerated persons.

The current provisions of HB 676 would eliminate a critical funding source for SAVIN, the State's Automated Victim Notification System. The establishment of SAVIN by the Legislature in 2012 was a monumental accomplishment for crime victims in Hawaii as it insured automated notifications about the custody status of individuals in the custody of the Department of Public Safety on a 24/7 basis. The SAVIN system ensures that critical information relating to victim safety is available to victims on a timely basis, allowing them to make important decisions and take timely actions to protect themselves from offenders who are being released. To ensure that the SAVIN system was reliable and sustainable the Legislature established several funding streams derived from offenders as illustrated in the excerpted language from HRS Section 353-16 below.

[\$353-136] Automated victim information and notification system special fund; authorization of payment. (a) *There is established a special fund to be known as the automated victim information and notification system special fund, to be administered by the department. Interest and investment earnings credited to the assets of the fund shall become part of the fund. Any remaining balance in the fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried over to the next fiscal year.*

(b) *Any item purchased by an in-state or out-of-state inmate from a correctional facility commissary shall be subject to a four per cent surcharge on the item's*

price. The proceeds from the surcharge shall be deposited into the automated victim information and notification system special fund.

(c) All proceeds or revenues that are derived from any commission that is realized pursuant to a telephone service agreement executed by the department for the provision of telephone services for inmates shall be deposited into the automated victim information and notification system special fund.

(d) Moneys received pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) shall be used for the development and operating expenses, including salaries and benefits of positions as authorized by the legislature, of the system.

(e) The sum total of all moneys expended for development and operating expenses, including salaries and benefits of positions as authorized by the legislature, shall not exceed the special fund ceiling related to the fund established by the legislature; provided that the total moneys expended for these purposes shall not exceed \$600,000 in any one fiscal year.

(f) Federal funds shall not be transferred to, or deposited into, the automated victim information and notification system special fund. [L 2012, c 190, pt of §1]

Totally eliminating all communications fees would ultimately mean fiscal insolvency for SAVIN. What that would translate to in terms of impact on victims would be the elimination of a critical informational lifeline and safety planning tool. Thousands of crime victims depend daily on SAVIN notifications to prepare themselves to seek safety options when an offender is released from custody. Victim advocates also depend on this system to alert them that victims will need immediate safety planning assistance, crisis counseling, and emotional support. Elimination of funding for this critical victim service for crime victims would be a disaster. Therefore, I request that you oppose this measure in its current form and support the SAVIN system.

This measure would completely obliterate the original intent of the SAVIN legislation which was to insure victims that they need not worry about the future solvency of financial support for this critical service that so many crime victims and their families depend upon. This Bill would also eliminate the important concept that the burdens of our responsibilities to victims of crime be borne by the criminals who have caused them harm and not the taxpayers.

Totally eliminating or significantly reducing communications fees, without creating an alternative **permanent** funding source, could ultimately mean fiscal insolvency for SAVIN. What that would translate to in terms of impact on victims would be the elimination of a critical informational lifeline and safety planning tool. Thousands of crime victims depend daily on SAVIN notifications to prepare themselves to seek safety options when an offender is released from custody. Victim advocates also depend on this system to alert them that victims will need immediate safety planning assistance, crisis counseling, and emotional support. Elimination of funding for this critical victim service for crime victims would be a disaster. Therefore, I request that you not pass this measure unless commensurate **permanent** alternative funding sources are established

to support the SAVIN system. Alternatives do exist, such as increasing the commissary surcharge, SAVIN's other dedicated funding source as cited above.

Although HB 676 does contain a blank appropriation to pay for the SAVIN Notification System, there is no guarantee that the amount is sufficient, that it will actually be appropriated by the Legislature, approved by the Governor, or expended by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. In addition, there is similarly no predicting what any of those entities may do in the future. This measure would completely obliterate the original intent of the SAVIN legislation which was to insure victims that they need not worry about the future solvency of financial support for this critical service that so many crime victims and their families depend upon. This Bill would also eliminate the important concept that the burdens of our responsibilities to victims of crime should be borne by the criminals who have caused them harm and not the taxpayers.

Without these dedicated funding streams victims and their families would not be assured of receiving important custody updates that they have signed up for, thus creating additional anxiety and trauma. Please do not eliminate or weaken this important statutory provision. SAVIN must have a dedicated funding source, or its existence will not be assured for the many individuals who depend upon it. Crime victims and their families are counting on you.

Thank you for your time and consideration



February 6, 2026

Members of the House Committee on Public Safety:

Chair Della Au Belatti
Vice Chair Kim Coco Iwamoto
Rep. Mark J. Hashem
Rep. Linda Ichiyama
Rep. Dee Morikawa
Rep. Mahina Poepoe
Rep. Justin H. Woodson
Rep. Garner M. Shimizu
Rep. Kanani Souza

Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness:

Chair Lisa Marten
Vice Chair Ikaika Olds
Rep. Terez Amato
Rep. Daisy Hartsfield
Rep. Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy
Rep. Gregg Takayama
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi
Rep. David Alcos III
Rep. Diamond Garcia

Re: HB676 Relating to Youth and Adult Correctional Facilities

Dear Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and Members of the House Committees on Public Safety and Human Services & Homelessness:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) mission is to unite Hawai'i to end all forms of domestic violence. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 20 member programs, I respectfully submit testimony in opposition to HB676. HB676 would eliminate a critical funding source for SAVIN, the State's Automated Victim Notification System.

The Legislature's establishment of SAVIN in 2012 was a monumental accomplishment for crime victims in Hawai'i. SAVIN provides automated notifications on the custody status of individuals in the Department of Public Safety's custody, 24/7. The SAVIN system ensures that critical information on victim safety is available to victims in a timely manner, allowing them to make informed decisions and take timely actions to protect themselves from offenders being released. To ensure that the SAVIN system was reliable and sustainable, the Legislature established several funding streams derived from offenders under HRS § 353-16.

Totally eliminating or significantly reducing communications fees **without establishing a permanent alternative funding source could ultimately lead to fiscal insolvency for SAVIN and the loss of a critical informational lifeline and safety planning tool for crime victims.**

Thousands of victims rely daily on SAVIN notifications to prepare for their safety when an offender is released, and victim advocates depend on these alerts to provide immediate safety planning assistance, crisis counseling, and emotional support. This includes **survivors of domestic violence who rely on this notification system to stay informed about the status of their former abusive partners.**

Eliminating funding for this essential service would have devastating consequences, undermining both victim safety and the support systems that depend on timely notification. Although HB 676 contains a blank appropriation for the SAVIN Notification System, there is no guarantee the funding will be sufficient, approved, or consistently maintained in the future.

Please do not eliminate or weaken this important statutory provision. SAVIN must have a dedicated funding source, or its existence will not be assured for the many individuals who depend upon it. **Crime victims and their families are counting on you.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

HB-676

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 4:20:07 AM

Testimony for PBS on 2/6/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

HB-676

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 11:54:17 AM

Testimony for PBS on 2/6/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samuel Eaddy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB 676: Relating to Youth and Adult Correctional Facilities

As a Masters of Social Work intern working with men in Intensive Outpatient Groups (IOP) who were all recently incarcerated I believe that this bill is extremely important for youth and children in correctional facilities. Allowing for free communication services for this population allows for these individuals to stay in contact with their family, friends, and legal services without the high costs of calls. By eliminating the financial burden and stress for these populations the connection between incarcerated populations and their needed services. For successful re-entry into society and everyday work it is imperative these populations have resources to reconnect with including case management, peer support, and familial support. These populations will have higher rates of mental health, lower rates of recidivism, and emotional regulation.

HB-676

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:32:33 PM

Testimony for PBS on 2/6/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dajon Lee Francisco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I was incarcerated for the majority of my adult life. It began when I was 18 years old, and only recently am I no longer part of the system.

During my time incarcerated, I watched mothers come in and out of prison, often struggling with addiction. I saw them cry—not at first, but later—when moments of clarity came after the drugs left their bodies and they realized they were separated from their children. I told myself I would never, ever find myself in that position.

But in my early 30s, I violated my parole and was sent back to prison. This time, I was pregnant.

I gave birth to my daughter while incarcerated. It was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. One of the few things that helped me survive that time was being able to stay in contact with my family. I watched my daughter grow up behind bars, but through regular phone calls, I was able to tell her I loved her, ask her about her day, and begin building a relationship with her—even from inside a prison.

I know how rare that kind of support is. I was one of the few who was blessed to have it.

I also understand this issue deeply because I was once a child with an incarcerated parent. I know firsthand how important it is for children to be able to speak with their parents. While incarcerated, I watched many others lose contact with their families simply because they could not afford the cost of phone calls. Those costs are placed on families—often the same families who are already caring for the incarcerated person’s children.

This bill would ensure that incarcerated individuals can maintain family ties without placing an added financial burden on their loved ones. It would allow parents to stay connected to their children and allow those without children to remain in contact with aging or ailing parents.

For me, phone calls and visits were something to look forward to. They gave me hope. They made me think twice about my actions while incarcerated. I didn’t want to lose the limited time I had to speak with my daughter—it was too important to me, and I didn’t want to let her down.

Maintaining family connections is not a privilege; it is a critical part of rehabilitation, accountability, and healing. I strongly urge support for this bill.

Mahalo,

Dajon Francisco

HB-676

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:51:22 PM

Testimony for PBS on 2/6/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Polk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Belatti and Marten; Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds, and members of the committees.

I am in strong support of HB676 to provide free and available phone calls for people held in the State's jails and prisons. Over the years, several steps have been taken to reduce contact between those in State custody and their families, including closing the visiting yard at OCCC, ending in-person visits, providing only video visits that are often not readily available, or charging ridiculous amounts for phone calls.. Cutting people off from their families and friends greatly interferes with rehabilitation and increases the probability of reoffending once released. Many other states provide free phone service. There is no reason why this cannot be done for prisoners in Hawaii.

Please pass HB676/

HB-676

Submitted on: 2/5/2026 9:05:55 PM

Testimony for PBS on 2/6/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Ann Shirota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Belatti and Marten, Vice Chairs Iwamoto and Olds and Committee Members,

I strongly support **HB 676 RELATING TO YOUTH AND ADULT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.**

The State of Hawai'i should provide free telecommunication to adults in our jails and prisons, similar to free telecommunication for youths in our juvenile system. Why? Because strengthening ties with family and loved ones during incarceration supports rehabilitation and preparing for successful reintegration home into the community.

While I fully support the SAVIN Notification system, the SAVIN system should not be funded by kickbacks from telecommunication corporations making money off the backs of the poorest of the poor in our community, disparately burdening single mothers, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families.

As a matter of public policy, Hawai'i should separately fund the SAVIN system awhile also bearing the costs associated with free telecommunincations for families impacted by incarceration.

Please stop pitting families impacted by incarceration and the victim/survivor advocacy community against oneanother. Many people in our jails and prisons are victims and survivors too.

Instead of spending MILLIONS of dollars on consultants to build a new jail, we should reinvest that funding into diversion, alternatives to incarceration, paying for telecommunications to maintain family connections AND fund the SAVIN system for victim notification.

Mahalo nui,

Carrie Ann Shirota, Esq.

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

