

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

Testimony of
Michael K. Champion, MD
Senior Advisor for Mental Health and the Justice System

Before the
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

In consideration of
HCR32/HR32

Requesting the Governor's Senior Advisor for Mental Health and the Justice System to Formulate a Plan to Increase Access to the Hawaii State Hospital for Certain Mentally Ill-Criminal Defendants

COMMENTS

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee:

We are actively working with the Legislature, departments, and stakeholders on several related mental health measures and implementation efforts that bear directly on the objective of this resolution, including implementation of **Act 219, SLH 2025**.

As this work moves forward, it is important to continue strengthening a more organized continuum of care for individuals with mental illness who intersect with the criminal legal system, as well as for individuals on the civil pathway who need appropriate access to treatment and placement. Historically, Hawai'i State Hospital admissions have largely come through the criminal justice pathway, including fitness-to-proceed matters, while the civil pathway remains an area where additional development is needed.

This resolution is also timely considering broader legislative discussions this session, including **SB3142SD2**. These issues are connected, and the administration remains committed to working with the Legislature as we move forward.

Testimony of Michael K. Champion, MD

HCR32/HR32

April 1, 2026

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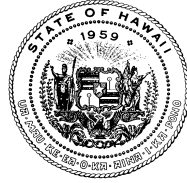
This work will require continued coordination and planning across the appropriate state agencies and system partners. Our approach is to conduct that work in a practical and collaborative way, including through the Sequential Intercept Model framework, to strengthen pathways to care across the continuum.

Meaningful progress toward these objectives will require continued work across the sequential intercepts to support access to health and mental health care, deflection from arrest where appropriate, diversion from jail where possible, and clinically appropriate pathways to care across the continuum. That work will help improve outcomes, reduce pressure on Hawai'i State Hospital, and create appropriate access for persons who need care through the civil pathway.

We remain committed to working with the Legislature, departments, and stakeholders as this work continues, and we will keep the respective chairs updated as appropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, providing comments on this resolution.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII



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**Testimony COMMENTING on HCR 32/HR 32
REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR'S SENIOR ADVISOR FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE JUSTICE
SYSTEM TO FORMULATE A PLAN TO INCREASE ACCESS TO THE HAWAII STATE HOSPITAL FOR
CERTAIN MENTALLY ILL-CRIMINAL DEFENDANTS.**

REPRESENTATIVE LISA MARTEN, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE IKAIKA OLDS, VICE CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date and Time: April 1, 2026, Time 10:00 a.m. Location: Room 329 & Video

1 The Department of Health (Department) provides comments on this resolution and
2 appreciates the Legislature's efforts to ensure the Hawaii State Hospital (HSH) is accessible to
3 those individuals who need its services.

4 The Department notes that Hawai'i State Hospital admissions have largely come
5 through the criminal justice pathway while the civil pathway remains an area where additional
6 development is needed. While the title of the resolution is specific to access to HSH for certain
7 mentally ill criminal defendants, the Department believes that the identification, development,
8 and implementation of additional placement and services for those individuals committed to
9 the custody of the Director of Health and in the civil pathway would increase access for non-
10 forensic individuals as well. By focusing on the needs of these populations, there is potential
11 for positive impact on the HSH census and would be extremely meaningful for the operations of
12 HSH.

13 We are committed to working with the Senior Advisor for Mental Health and the Justice
14 System, departments, and stakeholders on coordination and planning efforts as we move
15 forward.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to testify, providing comments on this resolution.

HR-32

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 7:55:15 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/1/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

We think this a good idea. There is no doubt that the Hawaii State Hospital, out of necessity, has strayed from its original purpose which was to actually be a hospital. It was never intended to be a forensic facility. The sad reality today is that the only way to be admitted is to be ordered by a Court. At the same time, our prison system has become the “dumping ground” for a failed mental health system. While we are often critical of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the truth is that prisons were never intended to be a de facto mental hospital. Yet that is what they have become.

We believe that the Governor’s Senior Advisor for Mental Health is in the best position to lead this effort as it requires inter agency collaboration and coordination. We are well aware of the fact these line agencies do not communicate with each other as well as they should. We also have faith that the Senior Advisor has the experience and knowledge and administrative support to bring the appropriate parties together and help develop the necessary changes.

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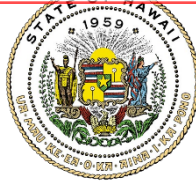
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LATE

March 31, 2026

HCR 32: REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR'S SENIOR ADVISOR FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO FORMULATE A PLAN TO INCREASE ACCESS TO THE HAWAII STATE HOSPITAL FOR CERTAIN MENTALLY ILL CRIMINAL DEFENDANTS

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and Members of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) supports HCR 32 which requests that the Governor's Senior Advisor on Mental Health and the Justice System formulate a plan to create places of shelter for persons under civil commitment and for persons who have been recently released from the Hawai'i State Hospital and are at risk for recidivism.

At numerous points in recent years, the Hawai'i State Hospital (HSH) has reached or exceeded its planned capacity. With the renewed interest in programs that divert mentally ill individuals from unsuitable placements such as prisons where they cannot receive the services they need to deal with their illnesses, alternatives to HSH are desperately needed. If HSH is required to exceed capacity by virtue of being ordered to take persons by orders of the courts, neither HSH nor patients benefit.

Additional alternatives are also needed for persons who are recently released from HSH and who are at risk of recidivism. Other states have graduated placements ranging from hospitals, to intermediate care facilities, to community placements. By contrast, Hawai'i patients have either hospitalization or community placements which may not provide the level of support needed for recently released persons who are at risk of recidivism.

In order to effectuate the intention behind programs which seek to divert individuals from jails and prisons, provide meaningful treatment to those who are civilly committed or in civil custody and provide support for persons recently released from HSH who are at risk of recidivism, the Governor's Senior Advisor on Mental Health and the Justice System must formulate a plan to create places of shelter for persons under civil commitment and for persons who have been recently released from HSH and are at risk of recidivism.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this resolution.