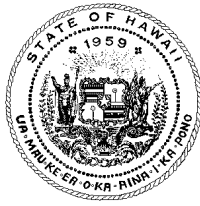


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Vacant
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 60, SENATE DRAFT 1
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION TO
PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE FINDINGS OF THE PROOF OF CONCEPT STUDY
BREAKING CYCLES: ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF REHABILITATION AND
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ON O'AHU

by

Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 22, 2026; 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 430 & via Videoconference

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports the intent** of Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 60, Senate Draft (SD) 1, requesting an update on the *Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models of Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O'ahu*, proof-of-concept study (Breaking Cycles Study). DCR appreciates the Legislature's commitment to ensuring that the replacement for the O'ahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC) reflects Hawai'i's values and advances a rehabilitative, health-centered approach to corrections.

Over the past year, DCR has carefully reviewed University of Hawai'i, Community Design Center's (UHCDC) Breaking Cycles Study, along with extensive community feedback collected through talk stories, workshops, site visits, and symposiums. This work emphasized the importance of designing spaces that promote healing, dignity, and cultural grounding for those in our care.

SCR 60, SD 1 Requesting the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to Provide an Update on the Findings of the Proof of Concept Study Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models of Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O'ahu.

April 22, 2026

Page 2

As we proceed with the planning and design of the new OCCC, DCR is incorporating the attached core design principles highlighted in the study and community input. These include greater access to natural light, views of nature, and green open spaces, which research participants consistently identified as essential to emotional well-being, trauma reduction, and normalized daily living. Housing modules and sleeping units in the design recommendations call for sunlight, outdoor recreation yards, accessible green areas, and windows with views of the surrounding environment.

These elements will guide our planning and will be emphasized in the facility design Request for Proposals. The Breaking Cycles Study also provided detailed guidance on integrating Native Hawaiian culture and 'āina-based practices directly into the facility environment. These include restoring connections to land through gardens, lo'i, medicinal plant areas, and other culturally grounded outdoor spaces; incorporating ahu, wahi pana-connected wayfinding, and spiritual markers; and supporting cultural practices such as hula, mele, and ho'oponopono.

In every stage of planning, DCR's goal is to align the new OCCC with a rehabilitative, community-connected, culturally grounded model as envisioned by the Breaking Cycles Study. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Legislature, the Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission, and community partners.

However, DCR respectfully requests the Legislature amend the request for quarterly update briefings to be semi-annual briefings. Quarterly updates would be burdensome and given the complexity of the new OCCC project, there would be little to report on a quarterly basis.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **supporting the intent** on SCR 60, SD 1.

Attachment.

Design Principles

Ensure safety, both physical and emotional.

Adopt a **trauma-informed, health-centered** approach.

Nurture relationships to self, family, community, land and the spiritual world.

Connect to 'aina, provide spaces to interact with the land.

Take a **strengthes-based approach** that focuses on assets.

Create opportunities for **improvement and empowerment**.

Honor diverse **cultures and identities**.

Support learning through educational programs and spaces.

Demonstrate respect for each individual, through comfortable and dignified environments.

Design Considerations

Program adjacency:

- Program-centered: a facility where program spaces, such as education or health spaces are at the center.
- Separate pre-trial sentenced populations: ensure that people are separated according to their need and risk. Misdemeanants should not be next to murderers. Separate gang members.
- Design for decommissioning: organize programs to allow for maximum flexibility, to be partially built, or to be partially decommissioned and adaptively reused.

Site design:

- Orient to central green space to provide views and access to nature.
- Progression/graduated housing to incentivize behavior.
- Enclosed courtyards for secured open space within each module.
- Access to smaller landscape areas that offer refuge or retreat.

Staff spaces:

- Establish a dedicated staff lounge to promote relaxation.
- Designate a dining room for staff meals and social interactions.
- Create a wellness courtyard for relaxation and privacy.
- Develop a walking path to encourage physical activity.
- Set up training rooms/classrooms for staff development and skill-building sessions.
- Equip a staff gym to support fitness and overall well-being.

Housing module:

- Provide treatment rooms to support rehabilitative services for mental health, substance abuse, etc.
- Incorporate glazing for natural sunlight to enter the space.
- Develop accessible green spaces to foster a connection with nature.
- Provide an outdoor recreation yard to promote physical activity.
- Integrate wall murals to create a visually uplifting and calming environment.
- Establish multi-purpose rooms for educational programs.
- Implement dynamic security with ACO stations to balance safety and positive interaction.
- Introduce varied furniture configurations to support different needs and activities.
- Design with views to the outside to reduce feelings of confinement.

Sleeping unit:

- Include windows with views of nature or the surrounding environment.
- Incorporate functional furniture to meet daily needs effectively.
- Provide personal storage to secure belongings.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MARK PATTERSON
CHAIR

CHRISTIN M. JOHNSON
OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

COMMISSIONERS
HON. R. MARK BROWNING (ret.)

HON. RONALD IBARRA (ret.)

MARTHA TORNEY

HON. MICHAEL A. TOWN (ret.)

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
E HUIKALA A MA'EMA'E NO
235 S. Beretania Street, 16th Floor
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
(808) 587-4160

TO: The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

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

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Resolution 60, Senate Draft 1, Requesting the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to Provide an Update on the Findings of the Proof of Concept Study Titled *Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models of Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O'ahu*.

Hearing: Wednesday, April 22, 2026; 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 430

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) submits testimony in **support** of Senate Concurrent Resolution 60, Senate Draft 1, requesting the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to provide an update on the findings of the proof of concept study titled *Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models of Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O'ahu*.

This resolution is both timely and necessary. As recognized in the measure, Hawai'i is actively working to transform its correctional system into one that is rehabilitative, restorative, and reentry-focused, with an emphasis on reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for individuals and communities. The *Breaking Cycles* study centers on approaches that are culturally grounded, trauma-informed, and focused on healing. These principles are particularly critical in Hawai'i, where Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately represented in the correctional system and where connection to culture has been identified as essential to successful reintegration.

The Commission has consistently emphasized that meaningful correctional reform must be guided by a system-wide, coordinated strategy, rather than isolated or incremental changes. In its January 3, 2025, letter to the Governor, the Commission stressed that proceeding with the development of a new jail facility without first establishing a clear, rehabilitative framework risks reinforcing the very cycles of incarceration the State seeks to break. S.C.R. No. 60, S.D. 1, plays a critical role in ensuring accountability and progress. By requesting a formal update from the Department of

Corrections and Rehabilitation, Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission, Aiea-Halawa community members, and other stakeholders, the Legislature is reinforcing the importance of transparency, coordination, and follow-through in the implementation of the *Breaking Cycles* framework. This is particularly important at a time when the State is making significant decisions regarding the future of its correctional system.

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.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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

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

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Representative David Tarnas, Chair

Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

3:00 PM

Room 430 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

SUPPORT for SCR60 SD1 -

Aloha Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Members of Committee!

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 3,602 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department Corrections and Rehabilitation on April 13, 2026.

We are always mindful that 816 (44%) 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 the opportunity to express our SUPPORT for **SCR 60 SD1** that requests DCR to provide an update on the findings of the Proof of Concept study titled **BREAKING CYCLES: ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF REHABILITATION and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE on O`ahu**.

The UH **BREAKING CYCLES** study is the result of the work of students, community advocates, the Try Think program at Halawa Prison, and students. The report was truly a collaborative process and we hope that the recommendations made from the amazing work of many people are implemented and that this document doesn't sit on a shelf gathering dust.

SCR 60 SD1 is asking for transparency and accountability; NOT what DCR *hopes to do*. The presentation DCR made before PSM last week was a stock developer package. It is again disappointing to hear DCR talk about humane facilities as buildings instead of how

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, April 13, 2026
[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-04-13.pdf](#)

the people serving sentences are treated by a well-trained staff that centers their work on rehabilitation instead of punishment. DCR needs leadership that actually *cares* about the people in their care and custody.

Every person must be treated with aloha and compassion if we expect them to return to the community as whole human beings – not broken people.

This is almost impossible with a DCR that talks about corrections as a para-military organization and believes a shiny new building will solve their problems.

I have been doing with work for 30 years and I finally see the Legislature demanding answers instead of the soft-shoe shuffle that the current DCR leadership presents.

Also, please bear in mind what a public-private partnership actually means. DCR can put out a Request for Proposals to developers and after a developer is chosen and the contract is let – a common developer tactic is to say “It just doesn’t pencil out.” Core Civic’s Saguaro is a good example of building on the cheap. Developers will build what they really want to do and that is to increase their profits – as in Saguaro where 816 of our male prison population are serving their sentences.

Demand answers – not spin! SCR 60 SD1 asks questions and we have suggestions **in bold** for the committee about each of them...

(1) Ways in which DCR administrators and planning and design consultants have incorporated the recommendations of the Breaking Cycles Study into plans and designs for the new OCCC;

Demand to see written plans from the DCR leadership directing the developer to build a safe, healing, and rehabilitative facility that is in line with the BREAKING CYCLES study

(2) Observations and findings from discussions with incarcerated individuals, corrections staff, families, state agencies, and community stakeholders regarding recommendations in the Breaking Cycles Study, in collaboration with the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight;

Please list all discussions dates, when, and where DCR leadership has had with the communities of concern

(3) Specific and detailed explanations of how each major recommendation from the Breaking Cycles Study has been incorporated into the current design, planning, and operational model of the new facility;

List each major recommendation and how DCR is incorporating that recommendation into the design, planning and operational model with written requests to the developer

(4) Identification of any recommendations that have **NOT** been adopted and a clear justification for not adopting the recommendations;

Please make clear that the Breaking Cycles specific recommendations that DCR's leadership have NOT ADOPTED need to be presented to the Legislature in writing with the reasons for not adopting them

(5) Clarification on whether the current plan reflects a rehabilitative, treatment-centered model or a traditional custodial expansion;

Again, the Legislature needs this clarification in writing, sans excuses

(6) Meaningful discussion of how DCR is incorporating cultural practices and community-based reentry supports, particularly for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who are disproportionately represented in the correctional system; and

Not a stock developer presentation

(7) Ongoing opportunities for stakeholder and community input, including input from those directly affected by incarceration.

What and how are DCR's leadership planning to engage communities, families, staff, and formerly incarcerated individuals in ongoing open and recorded meetings? The community wants to hear directly from the DCR decisionmakers.

It is time to hold DCR leadership accountable. Transparency and taking responsibility are the models we demand of incarcerated persons; DCR should model this behavior.

SCR 60 SD1 strengthened the demands that are being made of DCR. If the leadership cannot answer these demands - that will be your answer.

Mahalo for hearing this resolution. We hope JHA passes SCR 60 SD1.

We appreciate the chance to tell it like it is.



TO: Committee on Judiciary
RE: SCR 60, SD 1
HEARING: Wednesday, April 22, 2026
TIME: 3:00 p.m.
ROOM: 430
POSITION: **Strongly support**

Aloha Chair Tarnas Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Bob Merce. I am a retired lawyer and chair of the Correctional Reform Working Group (CRWG). In 2022 the CRWG published “Getting it Right: Recommendations and Action Plan for a Better Jail” which was endorsed by the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) and others. We also shared our ideas with the University of Hawaii Community Design Center (UHCDC) and supported their ground breaking work in the development of “Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models for Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O’ahu” (Breaking Cycles).

The CRWG **strongly supports SCR 60, SD 1** which requests the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) to provide an update on the findings of the Breaking Cycles proof of concept study and how DCR is incorporating the findings, concepts, principles, and recommendations of the study into the plans for the new jail to replace OCCC.

The Breaking Cycles study is based on an extraordinary and unprecedented outreach effort that included more than 120 “talk story” sessions with community leaders and stakeholder organizations, multiple interviews, 18 site visits/listening workshops, 8 co-design workshops, 5 community practice meetings, and 3 knowledge sharing symposiums, one of which took place over a two-day period and was attended by members of more than 80 organizations. It is, a groundbreaking work that builds on the best ideas from previous reports and studies, takes into account the best design ideas from the U.S. and around the world, reflects the values and vision of the community, incorporates a Native Hawaiian well-being framework, and most importantly, show us what is possible if we are committed to designing and building a jail that will address the physical, mental, social, and economic problems faced by those caught up in our criminal legal system.

If the core elements of the Breaking Cycles study are incorporated into the plans for the new jail to replace OCCC, Hawaii will be on the pathway toward creating truly rehabilitative and

therapeutic correctional system, and a vastly improved criminal legal system. It is therefore a responsible, wise, and prudent idea to request a report on how DCR is incorporating the findings concepts, and community-based recommendations of the Breaking Cycles study into the planning and design process for the new jail.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this important resolution.