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STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
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TO: The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair
The Honorable Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

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

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Resolution 60, 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: Monday, March 30, 2026; 3:01 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 016

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) submits testimony in **support** of Senate Concurrent Resolution 60, 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 plays a critical role in ensuring accountability and progress. By requesting a formal update from DCR, 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.

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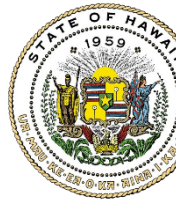
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STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

March 29, 2026

SCR 60: 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.

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs:

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **supports** SCR 60, which requests that the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) provide an update on how it has incorporated the findings of the *Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models of Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O'ahu* study into planning for a new O'ahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC).

As the Resolution recognizes, the current OCCC is outdated, lacks sufficient space for rehabilitative programming, and no longer provides appropriate conditions of confinement. The State's stated goal of transitioning to a rehabilitative, restorative, and reentry-focused system is both necessary and long overdue. The OPD strongly supports efforts to align correctional infrastructure with these goals.

The OPD also supports the Legislature's request that DCR provide transparency regarding how it has incorporated stakeholder input and the extensive community-driven recommendations developed through the *Breaking Cycles* study process. As reflected in the Resolution, that study was the result of significant engagement, including over one hundred talk-story sessions, community workshops, and collaboration with impacted individuals and families. Ensuring that those recommendations meaningfully inform the design and operation of any new facility is critical.

However, the OPD has grave concerns that DCR may not be fully implementing, or may be departing from, the core recommendations of the *Breaking Cycles* study in its current planning for the new jail.

The *Breaking Cycles* study emphasized a fundamental shift away from a traditional carceral model toward a continuum of care that prioritizes rehabilitation, community integration, cultural connection, and reduced reliance on incarceration. This includes smaller, decentralized facilities, increased access to treatment and services, and stronger connections to community-based supports.

From the OPD's perspective representing indigent clients navigating the system every day, these recommendations are not aspirational - they are essential. Many of our clients enter the criminal legal system due to untreated mental health conditions, substance use disorders, housing instability, and systemic poverty. A facility that simply replaces OCCC with a larger or more modern version of the same model without embedding these reforms will not reduce recidivism or improve public safety.

Accordingly, the OPD respectfully urges that DCR's report to the Legislature include:

1. Specific, 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;
2. Identification of any recommendations that have not been adopted, along with clear justification;
3. Clarification of whether the current plan reflects a rehabilitative, treatment-centered model or a traditional custodial expansion;
4. 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 system; and
5. Ongoing opportunities for stakeholder and community input, including those directly impacted by incarceration.

This Resolution is an important step in ensuring accountability. Without transparency and adherence to the *Breaking Cycles* framework, there is a significant risk that the State will invest substantial public resources into a facility that fails to achieve its stated goals.

The OPD supports this measure because it promotes oversight, transparency, and alignment with evidence-based and community-informed reform efforts. At the same time, we urge the Legislature to closely scrutinize DCR's response to ensure that Hawai'i does not miss this critical opportunity to meaningfully transform its correctional system.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

SCR-60

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 1:03:25 PM

Testimony for PSM on 3/30/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehaulani Lum	Testifying for Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In **Strong Support** of SCR 60, 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 Restoration Justice on O'ahu.

DATE: Monday, March 30, 2026

TIME: 3:01 PM

Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

PLACE:

State Capitol

Aloha Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee and the esteemed Members of the of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs.

My name is Kehaulani Lum, and I serve as the Pelekikena of the Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club (APHCC), a Native Hawaiian organization chartered by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in 1973. Our mission is to educate, research, protect and preserve the Hawaiian culture, among other things.

We are headquartered in 'Aiea, near the Hālawā Prison and the State Animal Quarantine Station, which is the State's proposed site for a new OCCC community. With the help of lead cultural practitioners, we participated in several opening ceremonies for the Makahiki Season at Hālawā and Waiāu and were honored and inspired to be included. In partnership with others, we have also successfully supported residential life skills programming for individuals released from prison.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to offer our **Strong Support** of SCR 60, 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 Restoration Justice on O'ahu.

This measure is needed to ensure that the most inspiring and forward-seeing vision that has ever been put forth for healing our inmate community is manifested.

For the past decade and more, the State has invested significant time, energy and funds to address O'ahu's ailing jail and the specific needs of its population. As SCR 60 articulates, in 2022, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) contracted with the University of Hawai'i Community Design Center (UHCDC) to develop a proof of concept study, titled, Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models for Rehabilitative and Restorative Justice on O'ahu (Breaking Cycles Study).

Over a two-year period, from 2022 - 2024, APHCC attended numerous in-person and virtual community talk story session and events that helped the UHCDC create a 268-page in-depth report that includes key concepts on system reform, facility planning and design elements for the new jail. We are grateful and honored to have shared our mana'o and healing practices with the team, and we know that the work is rich with the mana of hundreds of community hearts and minds who seek to create a legacy of peace, compassion, forgiveness and aloha for all.

The Breaking Cycles Study "outlines aspirations and visions that are crucial for inspiring and enabling transformation," while presenting its seminal work as a contribution to change, "with gratitude, hope, and a firm belief that such transformation is not only possible but essential to our collective well-being."

To achieve this noble purpose requires more than just key concepts on justice system reform and facility planning and design elements. It also requires a completed design, required funding, or an implementation plan.

We commend the Committee for advancing this important measure and respectfully urge your support to ensure that we honor the work and aloha of all involved.

'A'ohe hana nui ke alu 'ia. No task is too big when done together. Let us be visionary, compassionate and purposeful in addressing one of the most challenging problems affecting our people and our State.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kehaulani Lum, Pelekikena

Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club

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Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair

Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair

Monday, March 30, 2026

3:01 PM

Room 016 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

SUPPORT for SCR 60 - Requesting DCR to Provide an Update on the Findings of the Proof of Concept Study Titled BREAKING CYCLES: Alternative Models for Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O`ahu

Aloha Chairs Fukunaga and Richards, Vice Chairs Lee and Lamosao 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 3,626 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on March 23, 2026. We are always mindful that 795 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 89** requesting DCR to provide and 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 led by Professor Cathy Schar. 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.

We appreciate SCR 60 because it holds DCR accountable for providing an update on the findings of the Proof of Concept study titled **BREAKING CYCLES** instead of just nodding in acknowledgement of it.

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, March 23, 2026

[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-03-23.pdf](#)

DCR needs to clearly show how this Proof of Concept study is being used by the well-paid consultants since the jail houses our friends, neighbors, and most importantly the loved ones of many people on O`ahu.

We appreciate Cathy Schar for her leadership, which is a great example of a collaborative process from which DCR can learn. That in itself would improve this troubled department that the Director has described as a para-military organization. It should be clear to all who care about corrections and our family, friends, and neighbors in the care and custody of DCR that our current practices are not the pathway to rehabilitation and reentry.

The BREAKING CYCLES study is about more than a building – it is about rehabilitation built into the design with a focus on the people who will live and work there.

DCR needs to listen to their uniform staff who are asking for more training to address the needs of the people in OCCC. A shiny new building is not going to change the culture of DCR.

The Hawai`i Correctional Oversight surveyed the staff and issued a report². Here is the Executive Summary:

Executive Summary

The Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) conducted a comprehensive survey to evaluate job satisfaction, workplace culture, staff health, and facility conditions across Hawaii's correctional facilities. This survey, which gathered responses from over 800 correctional staff, provides a critical assessment of systemic issues impacting staff well-being and facility operations.

Key findings revealed significant concerns around leadership support, communication, inadequate resources, and high levels of staff stress and health challenges.

Key Findings:

- **Leadership and Communication:** Staff expressed dissatisfaction with leadership's engagement and transparency. A lack of inclusion in decision-making and perceived disconnect between central leadership ("Downtown") and facility operations contributed to low morale and trust issues.
- **Workplace Conditions:** Many staff cited unsustainable work conditions marked by mandatory overtime, insufficient staff, and inadequate wellness resources. The report noted that such conditions contribute to physical and mental health struggles, including high rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression.
- **Health and Wellness:** Approximately 60% of staff reported developing serious health conditions due to job stress, with notable impacts on family life and mental well-being. Over 60% of staff cited inadequate wellness support, and 75% felt emotionally drained.
- **Interactions with Incarcerated Individuals:** Despite challenging conditions, most staff expressed a commitment to respectful and supportive interactions with those in custody. However, limited resources hindered efforts to foster rehabilitation and prepare individuals for reintegration.

² **Correctional Staff Survey, Findings & Recommendations**
[Correctional-Staff-Survey-Findings-and-Recomendations-FINAL-1.pdf](#)

- **Differentiation Between Jail and Prison Staff:** Jail staff reported more severe work and health challenges than their prison counterparts, with higher incidences of turnover, mandatory overtime, and mental health issues.

Additionally, the HCSOC conducted talk story sessions at each facility by meeting with various groups of staff members to share the survey results and request feedback for recommendations. All recommendations in this report came directly from staff as a result of the talk story sessions. Below are key recommendations.

Key Recommendations: The HCSOC proposed systemic reforms to improve staff recruitment, retention, and overall workplace conditions. Recommendations included:

- 1. Enhanced Training and Support:** Providing standardized, consistent training, especially in crisis intervention and mental health care, for both new hires and leadership.
- 2. Improved Communication and Inclusion:** Establishing regular briefings and direct engagement from central leadership to build trust and transparency.
- 3. Increased Compensation and Benefits:** Adjusting pay scales, adding bonuses, and increasing uniform allowances to reflect job demands and encourage retention.
- 4. Focused Staff Wellness Initiatives:** Expanding mental health resources, reducing mandatory overtime, and promoting work-life balance to support long-term staff health and morale.

This report underscores the urgent need for reform within Hawaii's correctional facilities. The Commission urges stakeholders to prioritize these recommendations to build a more sustainable, safe, and supportive environment for correctional staff and the incarcerated population.

Mahalo for introducing this SCR 60, Chair Fukunaga.

This is an important step forward that addresses Hawaii's correctional crisis and provides a way to ensure that the work of Cathy Schar's collaborative is not just acknowledged, but incorporated into the plans so DCR always keeps the goals of rehabilitation and reentry front and center as we move away from Hawaii's current punitive policies.

This is a positive step towards ensuring safe, healthy, and just communities for all.

We urge the committee to pass SCR 60.

Robert K. Merce
2467 Aha Aina Place
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TO: Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
RE: SCR 60
HEARING: March 30
TIME: 3:00
ROOM: 016
POSITION: **Support**

Aloha Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Bob Merce. I am a retired lawyer and chair of the Correctional Reform Working Group which spent a year researching best practices in jail planning and design, and studying correctional facilities around the world. In 2022 we published “Getting it Right: Recommendations and Action Plan for a Better Jail”ⁱ which was endorsed by the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission” 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).

I support SCR 60.

The Breaking Cycles study was prompted by the planning of a new jail to replace the Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC), and aligns with the passage of Act 179 in 2019 which created the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission with a mandate to facilitate the correctional system’s transition to a “therapeutic and rehabilitative model,” and Act 278 in 2022 which changed the name of the Department of Public Safety to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR).

The UHCDC findings are based on an 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.ⁱⁱ **The Breaking Cycles study is the only document that can fairly be said to represent the views, vision, values, aspirations, and desires of the community** with respect to the new jail. Key elements of the study should be incorporated into the jail planning process, and be a foundational document for planning the new jail.

The new jail that is being planned **does not align with the rehabilitative and restorative model that the law requires, and the community wants.** The HRC 85 Task Force on Prison Reform recognized this misalignment in its 2019 Report to the Legislature and said that the State was on the wrong path, and that if it didn’t change course, the new jail would be a monumental failure because it is based on outmoded ideas, and a failed planning process.

Similar concerns were raised by the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission in its 2020 and 2021 Annual Reports, and in papers by me and the Correctional Reform Working Group that were endorsed by the Commission. Community criticism of the jail planning process was also voiced by the public at Commission meetings.

SCR 60 is an essential oversight and accountability resolution that will help the Legislature and the public determine whether DCR and its planning team and consultants are incorporating key design elements of the Breaking Cycles study into the planning and design of the new jail, and whether best practices in jail design are being followed in the development of one of the costliest public works projects ever undertaken by the State of Hawaii.

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

ENDNOTES

ⁱ The Correctional Reform Working Group, “Getting It Right: Recommendations and Action Plan for a Better Jail” (2023). <https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Getting-It-Right-Recommendations-and-Action-Plan-for-a-Better-Jail-with-Appendix.pdf>

ⁱⁱ University of Hawaii Community Design Center, Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models for Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on Oahu, Proof of Concept Study, prepared for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, February, 2025, p.10. <https://www.breaking-cycles-symposium.org>.