

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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## COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS

Rep. Cindy Evans, Chair

Rep. Sharon Har, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 14, 2008

9:15 AM

Room 309

### STRONG SUPPORT with AMENDMENT - HB 2539 – WORKPLACE TRAINING

Aloha Chair Evans, Vice Chair Har and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative working on prison reform and criminal justice issues in Hawai'i for a decade. I respectfully offer our testimony, always being mindful that Hawai'i has more than 6,000 people behind bars with more than 2,000 individuals serving their sentences abroad, thousands of miles away from their homes and their loved ones.

HB 2539 requires the department of public safety to develop a curriculum on ethnic and cultural diversity in the workplace and its implications on working with offenders and their families.

Community Alliance on Prisons stands in strong support of workplace training that promotes understanding and the importance of respecting someone's cultural beliefs. We respectfully offer this amendment:

**Amendment:** CAP suggests the following language change: SECTION 2. *The department of public safety shall issue a Request For Proposals to contract for services that* develop a training curriculum for its correctional employees to gain a general understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity and its implications for working with offenders of various ethnic backgrounds and their families.

CAP believes that it would be better for the department to contract for these training services and incorporate them into the Adult Correctional Officer training program and to have these services offered on a regular basis by experienced trainers to all department staff to further understanding about today's incarcerated population. Contracting for these services, also keeps the program fresh and incorporating the latest research to help these employees who are working daily in a very stressful and sometimes violent situation.

We urge the committee to consider the amendment we respectfully offer. Contracting for services is what Sen. Baker, Chair of Ways and Means, suggested to the Department of Public Safety in an information briefing last month.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR



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**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2539  
RELATING TO WORKPLACE TRAINING**

by

Clayton A. Frank, Director  
Department of Public Safety

Committee on Public Safety  
Representative Cindy Evans, Chair  
Representative Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 14, 2008, 9:15 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

Representative Evans, Representative Har, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Public Safety appreciates the over-all concept of House Bill 2539 relating to workplace training. This measure is to ensure that annual training on cultural sensitivity and awareness is provided to Correctional employees statewide including those employed at our contracted facilities out-of-state. The Department also understands that this proposal is to enable Correctional employees to gain sufficient knowledge and understanding of related ethnic and cultural issues including the impact diversity brings to the workplace and in their dealings with adult offenders of various ethnic backgrounds including their families.

The Department of Public Safety currently provides Civil Rights training to the Correctional employees statewide, to prevent discrimination based on a

person's race, sex, religion, age, previous condition of servitude, physical limitation, and national origin. Each correctional officer is also held to a standard of conduct which they give their loyal and faithful attention to execution of their duties, and that they perform the function of their office without fear, favor or prejudice. In addition, the general responsibilities of a Correctional employee shall at all times take appropriate action to observe constitutional guarantees.

Therefore, although the Department of Public Safety appreciates the overall concept of House Bill 2539, passage of this measure may be unnecessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**HB 2539 RELATING TO WORKPLACE TRAINING**  
House Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs

Date: February 14, 2008                      Time: 9:15 am  
Room: 309

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs strongly supports HB 2539. Our interest in this legislation is primarily based on our concern that approximately 45% of men, women, and juvenile offenders incarcerated in both in-state and out-of-state correctional facilities are Native Hawaiian.

OHA believes it is critical that we address the core problems rampant in our prison system with regards to the disproportionately large number of Native Hawaiians in prison. It is incumbent on OHA and other Hawaiians to help them cope with their situation and prepare themselves for release.

OHA has been particularly supportive of programs that incorporate Native Hawaiian cultural components as a way to help Native Hawaiian offenders heal and build self esteem, factors that contribute significantly to their successful reintegration into the community. For years, research has established that indigenous people fare better and are more successful when presented with culturally appropriate interventions.

However, within correctional facilities that hold Hawaiian pa`ahao, prison staff can play a large part in helping with the rehabilitation process of pa`ahao by simply respecting and being sensitive to their cultural beliefs and practices. Prison staff cannot be expected to exhibit this sensitivity natural. They must be trained to understand the essence of what makes a Hawaiian a Hawaiian. As such, OHA supports HB 2539 because it will require the Department of Public Safety to provide cultural sensitivity training to its prison workforce.

We urge your support for its passage.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present testimony.