

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS

Rep. Cindy Evans, Chair

Rep. Sharon Har, Vice Chair

Thursday, January 31, 2008

8:30 AM

Room 309

STRONG SUPPORT - HB 2609 - INMATE CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAM

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 2609 Establishes an inmate conservation corps program within the department of land and natural resources and authorizes the department to enter into agreements with other state or federal agencies to implement the program. Appropriates funds.

Community Alliance on Prisons strongly supports any programs that rehabilitate and prepare individuals to reenter the community.

People exiting prison make wonderful employees, the building industry reports. "They are eager to work, they work hard, and go the extra mile," they say.

Bearing in mind the over-representation of individuals of Hawaiian ancestry in our correctional system, this program is especially meaningful. Connecting people to the land is powerful. We have spoken with several men who were involved in a reforestation project while incarcerated at Kulani. Each gentleman told me how good it felt for him to give something back to the community. They learned the basic principles of forestry, renewed their spirits, and helped to heal the land. What an excellent win-win situation.

It is obvious that DLNR and other agencies cannot do everything that needs to be done. Engaging a willing workforce who can be trained in restoration, reforestation, and other community project will pay enormous dividends to all...people healing the land and the land healing the people. What a deal!

Mahalo for introducing this bill and for allowing Community Alliance on Prisons to testify in strong support.

LINDA LINGLE
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**TESTIMONY OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

on House Bill 2609 - RELATING TO CONSERVATION

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS**

January 31, 2008

House Bill 2609 directs the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to plan, establish, develop, and administer a program to provide inmates with training and work experience in natural resource conservation. The program would be modeled after the existing Youth Conservation Corps program, which is administered by the Department. While the Department supports the intent of this measure, it does not support the provisions to assign the overall development and administration of an inmate conservation corps program to the Department.

The Department agrees that inmates could potentially benefit from programs that build life skills and a sense of responsibility and stewardship of the land. However, the Department has neither the expertise nor mandate to provide specialized training and supervision that is called for in this bill.

The Department is not opposed to partnering in support of a work program as suggested by this bill, and sees an appropriate role as being able to provide access to the lands that the Department manage, work with inmate supervisors to coordinate field work, and provide specialized training in natural resource management for the inmates.

In fact, the Department is already partnering in this way. The Department has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Three Mountain Alliance, a Watershed Partnership on the Island of Hawai'i which also includes the Department of Public Safety (Kulani Correctional Facility - KCF). Under this Partnership, Kulani inmates, under the supervision of KCF and with funding support from the Department, have been involved with conservation related projects such as building fences to protect native forests from feral ungulates, restoring native habitat through outplanting endangered silversword seedlings, and establishing a native plant horticulture program at the facility. The Department provides technical and funding support. Inmate oversight and providing supplemental inmate education, counseling and job search and training are provided by the Kulani Correctional Facility.