

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Rep. Cindy Evans, Chair
Rep. Sharon Har, Vice Chair
Thursday, January 31, 2008
Room 309 at 8:30am

LATE TESTIMONY

SUPPORT: HB 2609 RELATING TO CONSERVATION

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

My name is Carrie Ann Shirota, and I am writing in support of HB 2609. My experiences as a former Public Defender and Civil Rights Enforcement Attorney, current staff member of a reentry program on Maui and member of Community Alliance on Prisons have shaped my advocacy efforts to improve how incarcerated people are prepared for release as law-abiding, contributing members of their `ohana and community.

I strongly support programs such the proposed Conservation Corps program that provide opportunities for incarcerated men and women to work outdoors and "malama na `aina." Breathing in the fresh air, digging your hands in the soil and planting seeds is therapeutic and healing – for it reinforces the message that just as plants grow with the proper nutrients and care, we too must nurture the positive seeds and influences within ourselves.

In addition to personal emotional and spiritual growth, participants would acquire valuable skills through hands on training that may lead to future employment opportunities. Finally, this program would provide a valuable service to our community. "Giving back" to the community is a part of successful reintegration, and a great way of doing what is pono.

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2609.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ann Shirota, Esq.
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