

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



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TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2302
RELATING TO EDUCATION

by
Clayton A. Frank, Director
Department of Public Safety

Senate Committee on Public Safety
Senator Will Espero, Chair

AND

Senate Committee on Education
Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair

Thursday, January 31, 2008, 2:45 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

Senator Espero, Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Public Safety (PSD) supports the intent of Senate Bill 2302 to assist offenders and detainees with successful reintegration into the community through the implementation of education programs as long as it does not affect our priorities as stated in the Executive Budget.

The Department currently provides educational opportunities in Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED), and College courses. These services normally compete with other reintegration services for appropriate classroom space on a daily basis within Hawaii's correctional institution. In order to ensure the proper delivery of the services, consideration must be given towards available resources in discussions involving the development, or expansion, of correctional programs.

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Therefore, while the Department of Public Safety supports the overall intent of Senate Bill 2302, we are concerned that it will adversely impact the Department's priorities as indicated in Governor's Executive Biennium Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Date of Hearing: January 31, 2008

Committee: Public Safety/Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S. B. 2302, Education; Prison Inmates

Purpose: To appropriate funds to the department of education adult education program to assist prison inmates in successful reintegration into the community, so as to reduce recidivism and increase productivity in the community.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) does not support S.B. No. 2302 and has concerns about the Bill as currently drafted. The Department currently provides classes and educational opportunities for post-incarcerated individuals to obtain a General Educational Development or GED diploma through the 11 statewide Community Schools for Adults in partnership with the prison system. High school diploma programs already exist for incarcerated adults. In section 2, item number (4), the Department may be able to provide support to develop a personalized educational and job preparation plan for individuals on parole or those released into the community. However, a plan alone is not sufficient to support inmate re-entry into the workforce community. Full transitional assistance requires skilled and professional counselors or social workers to guide the formerly incarcerated individual to acquire the kinds of transitional skills

necessary in preparation for successful reintegration into the community. It would benefit the exiting individual if there was a coordinated plan with personnel from other supportive agencies to work together to craft the “a permanent, personalized educational and job preparation plan for parolees and other releases” as they work to complete their high school diploma. An example of collaboration could be a working partnership of the Department of Labor with the County OneStops involved in assisting the individual in gainful employment. In the same section, item number (5) may be discriminatory and not in accordance with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provisions.

Additionally there is a need for trained personnel to implement the six components of this bill.

Although the merits of this bill are positive, the need for departments and agencies to collaborate to develop a comprehensive approach to assist prison inmates to reintegrate into the community and obtain gainful employment should be addressed. Furthermore, funding priority must be given to the Board of Education’s supplemental operating budget requests before this measure is funded.