

**HB 519**



the  
**Drug Policy  
Forum**  
of hawai'i

April 3, 2009

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

From: Jeanne Y. Ohta, Executive Director

RE: HB 519 HD1 SD1 Relating to Inmates  
Hearing: April 3, 2009, 9:45 a.m., Room 211

POSITION: SUPPORT

HB 519 HD1 SD1 requires the return of women inmates in private prison by a specified date; limits the number of inmates housed in mainland facilities and requires the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to plan, design, and construct sufficient facilities and pursue alternative forms of incarceration for returning inmates.

DPFH supports the return of all inmates to Hawai'i, as housing prisoners on the mainland makes maintaining relationships with family members and children extremely difficult and makes successful reentry into the community more difficult.

During difficult times, we need to rethink our current policies; do they work for Hawai'i? Clearly, medium security incarceration is not the best policy. It is expensive and has not reduced recidivism rates. Many inmates are non-violent offenders; DPS should be required to find alternative programs for them.

We think this is the opportune time to focus on establishing community-based programs both for reentry and for drug treatment. We should be establishing a variety of programs that are gender-appropriate and culturally appropriate. These programs actually address the underlying cause of criminal behavior, are more effective than incarceration, and reduce recidivism rates, thus reducing the need for more prison space. In addition to being more effective, community-based programs are also less expensive than incarceration.

For these reasons, we ask the committee to pass HB 519 HD1 SD1. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

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