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LATE TESTIMONY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – REGULAR SESSION 2010
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

February 4, 2010
8:30 a. m., Conference Rm. 309

HB 2657 – RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Chair Rep. Faye P. Hanohano, V. C. Rep. Henry J. C. Aquino and Committee Members:

Aloha kakou. My name is Dante Keala Carpenter, Member-Advisor to ‘Ohana Ho’opakele. I speak in support of HB 2657, Relating to Public Safety, which seeks to work with the Dept. of Public Safety and other restorative justice groups to utilize the former Kulani Correctional Facility as a *pu’uhonua* or wellness center for substance abuse treatment and intervention programs that take a holistic and cultural approach to help redirect the lives of those affected, among other programs and activities.

Notwithstanding the budget crisis and its implications on state facilities and operations, Kulani Correctional Facility has in the past and should continue in the future to serve a critical need for re-integrating *pa’ahao* back into communities in Hawai’i. Except that this time around, its former *pa’ahao*, with appropriate cultural programs and training as advocated by ‘Ohana Ho’opakele, would return with a positive outlook and as contributing members of its society!

Mahalo to President Sam Kaleleiki (Kupuna Sam) and members, for a continued and unwavering commitment and dedication to the mission and purpose of ‘Ohana Ho’opakele: to advocate for alternatives to prisons in the form of *pu’uhonua* for *pa’ahao*. Literally *pu’uhonua* is defined in Pukui & Elbert’s Hawaiian Dictionary (1986) as a “sanctuary, refuge, asylum or place of peace & safety” for *pa’ahao* – prisoners, convicts and/or inmates. In modern vernacular it can best be defined or classified as a cultural wellness center with all that title entails.

Obviously, any correctional complex or *pu’uhonua* should pose no threat to the community! Therefore, security classification of *pa’ahao* should be minimal, at best. Among other goals, the facility should incorporate in its design and operations, a fitting “work-place atmosphere” with establishment of programs incorporating the best agricultural model available coupled with established Hawaiian cultural teachings in order to approach self-sufficiency in production of necessary foodstuffs and respect of humanity. The programs would minimize costs to the taxpayer, provide opportunities to earn “good time,” participate in vocation education training and prison industries, and support the facility’s manpower needs, as well.

One of ‘Ohana’s goals would incorporate the return of deserving *pa’ahao* from mainland incarceration facilities which provide no opportunities to reduce recidivism, but rather encourage hardening and contributing to family disorientation, disintegration, and dissolution.

I formerly held the position of a Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman, which committee exercised oversight over Hawaii's Justice System, including operations of prison facilities. Without doubt, prison facilities and present activities, no matter how well-intended, still leaves a great deal to be desired regarding the rehabilitation and re-integration of *pa'ahao* back into the community.

Finally, I'm particularly mindful of a recent and positive meeting with Lt. Governor Duke Aiona in which Kupuna Sam, Reverend Ron, Kini Burke and I had recently. Lt. Governor Aiona encouraged the organization in its efforts with the *Pu'uhonua* Cultural Concept and its application. I believe 'Ohana Ho'opakele is on the right track in its efforts to undertake a difficult but necessary task and wish them well in their endeavors.

We strongly recommend passage of HB 2657.

E laulima pu kakou! (Let's all work together.) Mahalo a nui loa.