

LATE

HCR 19

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Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 9:55 AM
To: HMS Testimony
Subject: HCR 19
Attachments: Testimony Submitted to Human Services Committee and Finance Committees.docx

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Testimony Submitted to Human Services Committee and Finance Committees

April 19, 2010

By: Tia L. Roberts

HCR 19 – Requesting the Department of Human Services to create a database resource website to house real-time availability of all juvenile services from the lowest level of care to the highest level of care for the appropriate placement of juveniles in Hawai'i.

The purpose of HCR19 is to establish a database to assist in the appropriate placement of youth for services in Hawai'i. In our juvenile justice system, we have an overabundance of youth detained at the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility who do not necessarily require such a high level of care. Due to numerous issues, such as placement criteria restrictions, lack of known available beds, time restrictions needed to call every provider, etc., having a centralized database for judges, probation officers, families, and service providers looking to place youth in the program best suited for their immediate needs could be quite helpful.

Providing real-time information on availability of program beds and services, appropriate placement for need and determining eligibility requirements immediately could have a great impact on the system of care. I respectfully urge the committees to provide the State the opportunity to improve the process of placing youth appropriately to avoid overspending, overcrowding, and provide our youth the services needed to return successfully to their families and communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Sen. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Monday, April 19, 2010

8:30 a.m.

Room 229

STRONG SUPPORT for HCR 19 - Juvenile Services

HMSTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

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Aloha Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a diverse community initiative working to improve conditions of confinement for Hawai'i's incarcerated individuals, enhance the quality of justice, and promote public safety by supporting smart justice policies. We come today to speak for the 6,000+ individuals whose voices have been silenced by incarceration, always mindful that almost 2,000 of those individuals are serving their sentences abroad, thousands of miles from their homes and loved ones.

HCR 19 requests the Department of Human Services to create a database resource website showing real-time availability of all juvenile services from the lowest level of care to the highest level of care for the appropriate placement of juveniles in Hawai'i.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support of this measure.

Too many of our youth who go astray find themselves in the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF); most of them do not belong there. For too long, HYCF is where we send our runaways and status offenders. The fact that HYCF is under the watchful eye of the federal government is a clarion call to develop other strategies for dealing with youthful offenses.

Several years ago, I asked a few family court judges what would be the most useful tool for them when a youthful lawbreaker is brought before the bench. They were unanimous in their answer to me - a resource listing of youth programs throughout Hawai'i nei with real-time availability. They all said that HYCF is sometimes the only option.

Let's answer the call of our youth and create a juvenile justice system that appropriately addresses their needs. This economic crisis is forcing us to re-think what we are doing. Please see this as an opportunity for Hawai'i to re-consider the unsuccessful strategies we have been using and replace them with data-driven and scientifically proven policies that will help our youth develop to their fullest potential.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support of HCR 19.