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Briefing on: March 25, 2010 @ 10:00 a.m.  
Farrington High School Auditorium

**DATE:** March 25, 2010

**TO:** Senate Committee on Human Services  
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services  
Representative John Mizuno, Chair

**FROM:** Dennis Arakaki, Executive Director

**RE:** INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING YOUTH GANGS

**LATE**  
**Testimony**

Honorable Chairs and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, and House Committee on Human Services, I am Dennis Arakaki, representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and the Hawaii Catholic Conference.

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii, representing a network of over 250 Christian churches. The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, which under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii. I appreciate your committees scheduling this briefing and bringing attention to the growing problem of youth gangs and gang related violence in our community of Kalihi and in other communities across the state.

For those of us who were here in the late eighties and early nineties, we recognize the signs and symptoms from the re-emergence of gangs just as we did back then. Back then, however, until Desert Storm in January 1991, the state was enjoying consecutive years of surpluses, primarily from the growing real estate and tourism markets. While the roots of these gangs are similar in nature, we know that social and economic conditions are worse now and could deteriorate even further. The legislature in its wisdom, adopted SCR 148, HD 1, in 1988 which asked for an interagency group meet to assess the youth gang problem, to look at what other states were doing and to provide recommendation for legislation.

The result of this interagency effort was a report from a study done by the Juvenile Justice Interagency Board of the Dept. of Atty. General, the University of Hawaii Center for Youth Research, and the Hawaii Youth Services Network. Dr. Meda Chesney Lind, as I recall, did an excellent work in her analysis and recommendations for the committee. There were several recommendations for legislation that were provided by the study, many of which were bundled into an omnibus bill, HB 2308, Relating to Youth Gangs, shepherded by Rep. Annelle Amaral, Senator Ron Menor and yours truly, which passed and became ACT 189, Session Laws of 1990.

Listen to the findings and keep in mind this was twenty years ago:

“Gang delinquency tends to appear in communities where the factors of poverty, adolescence, and social disorganization are present. Social disorganization is activated in communities that have a high rate of in-migration, in families that lack the skills or time to provide adolescents with the support and guidance they need, and in schools and communities which fail to offer the types of activities which foster in adolescents, a sense of challenge, purpose and belonging, and which fail to recognize and effectively assist youths who are at-risk. When youths turn to gangs for support and recognition, their destructive behavior is an expression of their desperate need for help from the social disorganization which they are facing.

Clearly, the existence of gangs is but a symptom of a larger set of problems which our communities are experiencing. Although it was twenty years ago, the bill expressed the essence of a coordinated response system that is essential to maintaining control of the gang situation. While this response system must be community – based, it must also be systemwide and linked to the schools, courts, parents, government, agencies, community organizations and community leaders.

One of the biggest challenges you will face is to determine how you will develop a comprehensive system with few resources to dedicate to this effort. Twenty years ago, \$1.86 million dollars was allocated to this effort to provide a youth gangs response system coordinated by the department of Attorney General that would incorporate the critical elements of law enforcement, and intelligence, training, and community awareness and intervention and prevention.

Funding aside, probably the most significant result of the study and legislation was 1) The interagency cooperation and collaboration that occurred regardless of whether the organizations were federal, state, county, public or private; and 2) The community awareness and action in response to the problem. These are actions that can still happen without funding but it will take leadership and initiative on the part of agencies and communities. I would recommend, also that the faith community be involved and take a greater role in providing programs and facilities. I point to a recent meeting of Kalihi Churches that could set the tone for this type of collaboration as they look to areas of concern to address as a united body.

Finally, what we should all keep in mind that the study points out is that youth gangs are symptomatic of larger issues that need to be dealt with. Otherwise they will continue to rear its ugly head to remind us of the costs of poverty, abuse and neglect. We need to keep that in mind as the Governor and Legislature continue to make cuts to program and services that affect families.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share my mana’o with you.

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STATE OF HAWAII  
JUVENILE JUSTICE INTERAGENCY BOARD  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
CENTER FOR YOUTH RESEARCH

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK  
DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF STATUS OFFENDERS  
(DSO) PROJECT

RESPONSE TO  
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 148  
HOUSE DRAFT 1  
REQUESTING A STUDY OF YOUTH GANGS



SUBMITTED TO  
THE FIFTEENTH STATE LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

JANUARY 1989

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## Youth Gang Committee

### Members of Committee:

David Del Rosario  
Sergeant, Honolulu Police Department

Meda Chesney-Lind, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Keith Y. Kameoka  
Educational Specialist, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Barbara Yamashita  
Project Director, Hawaii Youth Services Network  
Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders Project

Earline Yokoi  
Representing Juvenile Justice Interagency Board  
Criminal Justice Planning Specialist, Department of the Attorney General

### Also providing assistance to the committee:

Dennis Arakaki  
Member, House of Representatives

David Benson  
Major, Honolulu Police Department

Daniel Heely  
Senior Judge, Family Court, First Circuit  
Chairperson, Juvenile Justice Interagency Board

Clifford R. O'Donnell, Ph.D.  
Director, Center for Youth Research, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Kengo Takata  
Deputy Superintendent, Department of Education

Ken Tano  
Lieutenant, Honolulu Police Department

Ronald Yap  
Superintendent, Detention Services, The Judiciary

Darin Kawazoe \*  
Graduate Student

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\* Darin Kawazoe drafted a preliminary version of the "Review of the Youth Gang Literature" section of this report.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

FEB 10 1989

STATE OF HAWAII

## Executive Summary

At the request of the 1988 Legislature the Juvenile Justice Interagency Board and the University of Hawaii, Center for Youth Research, with the assistance of the Hawaii Youth Services Network-Deinstitutionalization for Status Offenders Project conducted an analysis of the youth gang situation in Hawaii. This report bases its findings on intelligence gathered by the Honolulu Police Department and a review of the research literature on juvenile and youth gangs.

This report concentrates primarily on Oahu, where the majority of gangs exist. However, gang activity on the Neighbor Islands is noted.

### FINDINGS: Review of the Research Literature and Other Publications

1. High crime areas appear to be a product of economic, social, and political forces; therefore attempts to address the problem of youth gangs solely by modifying the behavior of youths on an individual basis while leaving the broader social problems in these areas intact are eventually doomed to failure.
2. The growth in the number of poor individuals who have grown up in single-parent families may have contributed to the increase in gang membership.
3. Many contemporary gangs appear to be organized along racial and ethnic lines and the increase in the accessibility of guns among youths is a cause for concern.

### FINDINGS: The Honolulu Police Department

The Honolulu Police Department reports that:

1. approximately 22 gangs, consisting of approximately 450 members, exist on Oahu,
2. of the 22 gangs, 8 are predominantly Filipino, 7 are predominantly Samoan and 6 are a mixture of ethnicities,
3. the median age of a gang member in Hawaii is 18.2 years. The age range for Oahu gang members is 14 to 24 years, therefore youth gang activity is not limited to juveniles but includes young adults as well,
4. since 1985 at least 6 murders on Oahu have been related to gang activity,
5. gang members in Hawaii are involved in the sale and distribution of drugs, specifically cocaine and crystal methamphetamine, and in a majority of drug-related cases in which search warrants were issued, weapons were also found at the scene,

### Law Enforcement

1. Design and develop within the Honolulu Police Department a statewide gang information system and clearinghouse. Estimated cost is \$110,000.
2. Establish within the county police departments centralized units for collecting intelligence information, monitoring gangs and establishing gang prevention programs. Estimated cost for the gang prevention programs is \$100,000.

### Prevention and Intervention

1. Provide funding to the Juvenile Justice Interagency Board to develop criteria for intervention programs, review requests for proposals and make recommendations for programs to be funded. Estimated cost is \$10,000.
2. Provide funding to the Department of Education to implement a school based gang/narcotic prevention program in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies. Estimated cost is \$100,000.
3. Provide funding to the Department of Education to develop innovative prevention programs for juveniles who are marginally linked or vulnerable to joining gangs. Estimated cost is \$100,000.
4. Provide funding for research and evaluation of existing and proposed programs both locally and on the Mainland, with particular emphasis upon application to Hawaii.

### ADDENDUM

The staff members of the Center for Youth Research, University of Hawaii also recommend the following:

1. Sixty thousand dollars be appropriated to the State Department of Education, Evaluation Section, for the purpose of contracting with an agency to conduct a study of the research and evaluation of programs both locally and on the Mainland with particular emphasis upon application to youth gangs in Hawaii.
2. Thirty-five thousand dollars be appropriated to conduct a study to obtain information about the possible approaches to the control of gang-related guns, such as handguns and automatic weapons. The study include information about the efforts of other cities and states, and about the procedures and costs to implement the possible alternatives.

## Recommendations

Youth gangs are the concern of many agencies. Since research has shown that well-intended programs may increase participation in gang activity and delinquency, it is essential that programs be well-designed and evaluated. This will require the cooperation of many agencies through the sharing of information and the development of plans for action. Therefore the interagency task force and the Juvenile Justice Interagency Board groups mentioned below should invite participation from appropriate groups and organizations.

### Public Awareness and Coordination

1. Establish an interagency task force with law enforcement taking the lead to encourage interagency collaboration to further study the youth gang situation in Hawaii and to promote coordination among the public and private agencies. Estimated cost is \$9,000 for interisland travel and per diem for meetings.
2. Provide funding to the Juvenile Justice Interagency Board to obtain information on how other states are coping with their gang situation and to obtain technical assistance in developing comprehensive strategies. Estimated cost is \$30,000.
3. Provide funding to the Honolulu Police Department to educate the public about Hawaii's youth gang situation and to elicit community support. Estimated cost is \$50,000.
4. Provide funding to the Department of the Attorney General, Resource Coordination Division to coordinate training for police, prosecutors, the Judiciary (judges and probation officers), corrections, community-based organizations and schools. Estimated \$75,000.

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