

SB 546



the
**Drug Policy
Forum**
o f h a w a i ' i

February 26, 2009

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

From: Jeanne Ohta, Executive Director

RE: SB 546 SD1 RELATING TO CORRECTIONS
Hearing: February 26, 2009, 9:00 a.m., Room 211

Position: Support

I am Jeanne Ohta, Executive Director of the Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 546 SD1 which establishes a pilot program on Oahu that electronically monitors committed persons who are permitted to live and work in the community in lieu of continued incarceration.

This proposal is an alternative to our expensive and failed policy of incarceration. Since a majority of the prison population is non-violent and classified as minimum or community custody, this is a way to place sanctions, restrict movement, but allow participation in the community and the workplace.

As our state faces difficult financial times, it is an opportunity for us to examine and implement programs other than medium and maximum security prisons. Incarceration is extremely expensive, costs are growing, and the rates of incarceration are also growing. Since a large part of those costs are for prison security, methods such as electronic monitoring would place restrictions non-violent offenders, while not increasing the threat to public safety.

Please pass SB 546 SD1. This pilot program deserves the chance to be implemented.

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February 26, 2009

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice-chair

Friday, February 26, 2009

9:00 am

Conference room 211

SB 546,SD1

RELATING TO CORRECTIONS

SUPPORT

My name is Andy Botts, Director of The Hepatitis Network's Prisoner Reintegration Program, and author of Nightmare In Bangkok. I strongly support this long overdue alternative to incarceration. The Federal government and many states in America have used electric monitoring successfully for many years. It's a cost effective approach to incarceration, and an instrumental source of monitoring. Considering the fact that most offenders have a history of drug and/or alcohol dependence, which there is no permanent cure, our best approach to prevent relapse and reduce recidivism is to use different approaches.

Thanks for the opportunity to testify in this matter, please consider it seriously.

Andy Botts, Director
Prisoner reintegration program
Author, Nightmare In Bangkok

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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Sen. Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Sen. Shan Tsutsui, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 26, 2009

9:00 AM

Room 211

SUPPORT

SB 546 SD1 - Electronic Monitoring Program

Sent to: WAMTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Tsutsui and Members of the Committee!

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

SB 546 SD1 requires the Department of Public Safety to establish a pilot program on O'ahu that electronically monitors committed persons who are permitted to live and work in the community in lieu of continued incarceration and appropriates funds for this purpose. The SD1 reduced the number of participants in the electronic monitoring program from 50 to 30.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in support of SB 546 SD1. The data confirms that long prison sentences, especially for non-violent lawbreakers, are counter-productive. These austere economic times present us with a great opportunity to re-think what we are doing and analyze what is working and what isn't. The majority of Hawai'i's lawbreakers are non-violent and incarcerated for drugs or drug-related crimes. The data show that what works for drug offenders are incentives, not sanctions. Knowing this, electronic monitoring presents an incentive for non-violent individuals to stay on track.

This bill also can help our ailing economy because it would save more hundreds of thousands of dollars a year if we released nonviolent felons and put them into the electronic monitoring program. This would give them a chance to reenter the community, rebuild their lives and reinstate themselves back to their communities.

Let's try every available option to help individuals safely and successfully reenter the community.

Please pass SB 546 SD1 in the interest of reducing recidivism, protecting public safety, and assisting individuals who are working to rebuild their lives.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.