

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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In reply, please refer to:
File:

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor

H.B. 1088, HD1 Relating to Corrections

Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
Director of Health

April 7, 2011, 9:30 a.m., Room 016

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health (DOH) strongly supports this bill.

2 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of the proposed legislation is to allow the Department of
3 Public Safety (DPS) to provide mental health treatment, including medication, to inmates or detainees
4 when those individuals refuse necessary treatment.

5 At this time, approximately 13 individuals per month are admitted to the Hawaii State Hospital
6 (HSH) who were in the custody of the DPS before the court ordered them to the Department of Health.
7 Many of those individuals have severe and persistent mental illness. Many are psychotic, which causes
8 severe impairment in thinking and behavior and can result in dangerous behavior. They are often
9 incarcerated for many weeks or months before being ordered to the HSH. Only a minority come to the
10 HSH already taking medication. The HSH then initiates medication, when the person is willing. When
11 the person is unwilling and clearly in need, HSH staff petitions the court to obtain an order for
12 involuntary treatment (OTT) to be administered at the hospital.

13 The longer a person with severe mental illness goes without proper medication for his or her
14 condition, the worse the condition becomes, and less likely to respond to medication when it finally is

1 administered. This bill would allow the DPS to petition a court for permission to administer medication
2 treatment to those individuals who meet the criteria while still incarcerated, saving many weeks or
3 months as they go through the legal system before referral to the HSH. This time savings would allow
4 the individual to gain the benefit of appropriate treatment sooner, stabilize their illness sooner, and begin
5 their recovery to stable mental health sooner.

6 In addition to the substantial benefits for the individual who is suffering from mental illness,
7 there would be significant benefit for the health and public safety systems through the more efficient
8 utilization of available human and financial resources. As treatment would begin earlier than at present,
9 those most in need would get better faster, have a better response to the treatments, spend a shorter time
10 in the inpatient setting, and be safely discharged back into the community sooner. As the cost of an
11 inpatient stay at the HSH is approximately \$750/day, there would be significant savings on inpatient
12 services expense. Those savings would be available for the community programs and services to
13 support these individuals in maintaining their individual recovery and living safely in the community.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

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