

LATE TESTIMONY



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs
Thursday, March 31, 2011 at 2:50 pm

By

Virginia Hinshaw, Chancellor

And

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University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SCR 72/SR 45 - Requesting the Department of Public Safety to Return Hawai'i Prisoners held in Mainland Facilities and to Construct a New Correctional Facility at Pana'ewa Near Hilo

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 72/SR 45, Requesting the Department of Public Safety to return Hawai'i prisoners held in mainland facilities and to construct a new correctional facility at Pana'ewa near Hilo. I am Sylvia Yuen, Interim Dean and Director of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR). The Center on the Family, mentioned in the resolution, is a unit within CTAHR, and I served as its former Director.

SCR 72/SR 45 calls for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and University of Hawai'i Center on the Family to collaborate with and assist, as appropriate, the Department of Public Safety in making plans to return Hawai'i inmates from the Mainland and in planning for the construction of a new correctional facility at Pana'ewa.

According to Bureau of Justice statistics, there has been tremendous growth in the number of children with parents in state and federal prison between 1991 and 2007: 77% growth in the number of children with a father in prison and 131% with a mother in prison. This is concerning, as parental incarceration frequently creates instability in family structure and relationships, and affected families and children often experience financial difficulties and economic strain. Moreover, children with parents in prison tend to experience more behavioral and school problems. Intervening in the lives of these parents and children to preserve and strengthen positive family connections can yield positive social benefits, such as promoting healthy child development and academic achievement, and reducing the odds of intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system.

SCR 72/SR 45 calls for the involvement of family specialists in planning for a new correctional facility. This will ensure that there is thought to the requirements of family

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
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No. _____

COMMENTS ON SENATE RESOLUTION 45 & SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 72

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO RETURN HAWAII PRISONERS
HELD IN MAINLAND FACILITIES AND TO CONSTRUCT A NEW CORRECTIONAL
FACILITY AT PANAWEA NEAR HILO

HAWAII PAROLING AUTHORITY
Tommy Johnson, Administrator

Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations and Military Affairs
Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 31, 2011, 2:50p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee Members:

The Hawaii Paroling Authority (HPA) appreciates the legislature's interest in returning Hawaii prisoners held on the mainland and in constructing a new correctional facility. The HPA supports the intent of Senate Resolution 45 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 72, and offer comments in support of both the legislative intent of these measures, and the Governor's vision of returning Hawaii prisoners.

The HPA has developed a preliminary draft plan that if implemented could possibly allow for the return and release of inmates on parole without jeopardizing public safety or increasing the current budget allocation of the Department of Public Safety. The plan would require the reallocation of existing funding used to house Hawaii prisoners on the mainland to increase the staff of the HPA, provide additional community-based resources for the parole population, strengthen partnerships, expand educational, vocational, reentry,

Senate Resolution 45 & Senate Concurrent Resolution 72
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and work furlough program opportunities for the inmate population. A large portion of the reallocated funding could also be utilized to address other areas where the Department lacks adequate funds.

The HPA stand ready to work with the Office of the Governor, the legislature, the Department of Public Safety, our community partners, and other interested parties on this matter.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on SR 45 and SCR 72.