

# LATE TESTIMONY

## Written Testimony

**Re: Hawaii Veterans Court HB2805 & HB2798**

**Date: January 31, 2011**

My name is Martin J. Coleman, I am currently employed with the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Certified Peer Specialist with the homeless program. I am writing this testimony in hopes of having a Veterans Court here in the State of Hawaii. As a Certified Peer Specialist I have had the opportunity to meet with many homeless veterans, of which have had legal problems and dealings with the court system for various reasons. I have found that a lot of the reasons stem from the individuals military service, whether it be related to post traumatic stress disorder, (PTSD) or simply the training and way of live they have received while serving their country. This being said, I feel that it only just and fair that the veterans that have sworn to defend this nation and were prepared to give their lives so that this land remain free and safe, be given some kind of preferential treatment. I honestly believe that this is the very least we can do for the sacrifice that these veterans have shown us. I'm not asking that justice turn its' head the other way or that a veteran that has committed a crime not be accountable for their actions. I am only asking that we treat our veterans fairly and use open minds, eyes and ears when it comes to the crimes that they may have allegedly committed. Has PTSD possibly played a role in their behavior? Would the veteran best be served behind bars or to have their affliction treated.

We must ask ourselves honestly, as a society, how can we take a veteran that has been trained and given the mindset to kill or be killed, and has seen and witnessed some of the ugliest scenes imaginable to mankind and treat them the same as a civilian that has had the privilege of living in a safe and free world? We are talking about two completely different types of lives and should be treated as such. What would our forefathers say and do? What should our present lawmakers say and do? I hope and pray the answer to the last question is, they will do the right thing.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely yours,

*Martin J. Coleman*

Martin J. Coleman

Concerned veteran and former homeless veteran

TRANSMITTAL COVER

LATE TESTIMONY

Feb. 14, 2012

Name: Rene Berthiaume, Post Commander Vietnam Veterans Post 10583

Committee: House Committee on Judiciary

Time of Hearing: Today, Feb. 14, 2012, 2:05 pm.

Measure Number: HB2798, HD1



# LATE TESTIMONY

## **Vietnam Veterans Post 10583 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars**

% 94-1020 Puana Street, Waipahu Hawaii 96797-4303

February 14, 2012

Testimony of Rene A. Berthiaume, USMC, Commander VFW Post 10583, Vietnam Veterans' Post

House Committee on Judiciary

Representative Gilbert S. Keith-Agaran, Chair and Representative Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chair & Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of HB2798, HD1 with suggested amendments.

We are very much support of the establishment of a veterans court in Hawaii. As mentioned in the bill text the first Vet Court was established in 2008 in Buffalo, NY, with as many as 100 currently in operation throughout the country. These courts have been very successful in turning around the lives of many of our veterans before they enter the criminal justice system. We should not have to reinvent the wheel here as there are many existing community programs in place that provide rehab, education, vocational, medical, mental health, substance abuse, job training and placement, counseling, etc. These programs can help the eligible veteran return to being a productive member of our community, as well as providing relief to our over-crowded prison system and would be an overall benefit to our community.

The Veterans Affairs has been very supportive in this effort by committing the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) and at least one other staff position to assist and support this effort as well as their on-going general staff support.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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