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**THE HONORABLE DAVID Y. IGE, CHAIR
THE HONORABLE MICHELLE N. KIDANI, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**Twenty-Sixth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2012
State of Hawai`i**

Thursday, February 23, 2012

RE: SENATE BILL 2581, S.D. 1; RELATING TO AN AUTOMATED VICTIM NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Good morning Chair Ige and members of the Ways and Means Committee, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney provides the following testimony **in support of S.B. 2581, S.D. 1**, which proposes to establish a statewide automated victim notification system.

As provided for in *H.R.S CHAPTER 801D* our Department currently participates through a series of cooperative agreements with the Department of Public Safety in the process of notifying victims of changes in the custody status of inmates whose victims have submitted a written request for notification. The process, at times inefficient and complex, does function to fulfill the basic purposes of *H.R.S. 801D*. However, this bill represents a commitment to an automated victim notification system, which although we already have an operational system in place, provides hope that this system can now become the foundation upon which we can build.

Initially the Department of the Attorney General committed federal VOCA funds to help underwrite the start up costs for a notification system. And in a fashion all too uncommon in government today, the Department of Public Safety bravely volunteered their resources and commitment to making this system a reality in February of 2009. They have sought and successfully received U.S. Department of Justice grants, which have underwritten the costs of the system since its inception. Unfortunately federal funding for Automated Victim Notification Systems was designed to serve as start up funding to get the program of the ground. While this funding has been effective in the development of a very effective system, the time has come for a State funding commitment.

Although the anticipated implementation of our statewide notification system is an incredibly important accomplishment, the continuing availability of funding to cover the ongoing operational cost of this system is, however, uncertain, and remains one of the major obstacles to providing Hawaii's crime victims with the commitment to victims' rights and services that is sorely needed. The passage of this measure can lay the foundation for a sustainable program that

will insure that the future notification needs of crime victims can be met. S.B. 2581, S.D. 1 provides both an appropriate funding mechanism (an inmate commissary surcharge) and a formal statutory framework that offers to victims a current and future reliable source of information that can contribute significantly to victim safety and piece of mind.

One critical piece of this bill is the provision in Section 1 (on pages 5-7) that establishes an Automated Victim Notification System Governance Committee. This committee, made up of a cross section of representatives from victim services agencies, victim witness assistance programs, and a victim or surviving family member will insure that the Notification System is accessible and user friendly for victims. It should also insure that the Department of Public Safety will receive ongoing victim centered guidance in the operation of the system. Properly implemented this program will become a cornerstone for victims' rights and services in Hawaii and a model for other states to emulate.

The appropriation for future funding in Section 4 of the bill as Federal funding dwindles is a critical piece to making certain that this resource becomes a permanent fixture in our expanding gallery of crime victim services. A failure to establish a sustainable fiscal foundation may result in the hopes of victims who have received the benefits of this program being dashed and will leave a legacy of cruel disappointment rather than of a great accomplishment.

In conclusion, we urge your strong support for S.B. 2581, S.D. 1. Thank you for your time and consideration