

TESTIMONY BY KALBERT K. YOUNG
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2581, S.D. 1

February 23, 2012

RELATING TO AN AUTOMATED VICTIM NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Senate Bill No. 2581, S.D. 1, requires the Department of Public Safety to establish a statewide automated victim information and notification system. The system will automatically notify a registered victim or concerned member of the community when there are certain changes in the status of an offender in the Department of Public Safety's custody. Senate Bill No. 2581, S.D. 1, creates the Automated Victim Notification System special fund to defray costs associated with operating the system. The fund would be exempt from central service assessments and generate revenues through a 4% surcharge on items purchased by inmates at a correctional facility commissary, revenue from the provision of inmate telephone services, and interest/investment earnings. The bill appropriates an unspecified sum from the special fund for FY 13 to develop the new system.

The Department of Budget and Finance takes no position on the rational validity of developing an automated victim information and notification system. However, as a matter of general policy, the department does not support the creation of any special fund which does not meet the requirements of Section 37-52.3 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes. Special or revolving funds should: 1) reflect a clear nexus

between the benefits sought and charges made upon the users or beneficiaries of the program; 2) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity; and 3) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining. In regards to Senate Bill No. 2581, S.D. 1, it is difficult to determine if the new fund will be self-sustaining. The department also further recommends against any exemption from the central services assessment as a matter of financial consistency to administrate and cover the cost of managing the financial accounting required of such an undertaking.

I encourage the Legislature to scrutinize the fiscal and operational plan for this program to ensure that it does conform to the requirements of Section 37-52.3, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

HAWAII
STATE
COMMISSION
ON THE
STATUS
OF
WOMEN



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February 22, 2012

Testimony in Support of SB 2581, HD 1, Relating to an Automated Victim Notification System

To: Senator David Y. Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice-Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Catherine Betts, Esq., Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 2581, HD 1

On behalf of the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women, I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to provide testimony on such an important issue. I would like to express my strong support for SB 2581, HD 1, which would establish a permanent statewide victim notification system in the Department of Public Safety.

Since the statewide automated victim notification system (“SAVIN”) was established in 2008, victims, witnesses, advocates, and service providers have been able to receive timely information about offenders’ custody status via telephone or computer. This system has given victims a sense of empowerment that they do not often obtain from the criminal justice system. The system allows victims of horrendous crimes to know where their perpetrators are within the criminal justice system, or if their perpetrators are about to be released. Additionally, this system allows for current and up to date information about offenders that victims would otherwise not find readily accessible.

This program is especially important to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, who fear that their perpetrators will seek to hurt them. Access to this program allows victims of intimate partner violence to create safety plans for themselves and their children. Notifications by other means, whether it be from probation officers or direct contact with prisons, is not nearly as accessible or timely. Without continued funding, this vital program is in danger of ending when federal funding runs out in 2012. However, through the establishment of a special fund in this bill, the SAVIN program would be able to continue assisting countless individuals and organizations in Hawaii. This is a vitally important program to our community and it should remain operational.

The Commission respectfully urges this Committee to pass SB 2581, HD 1.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Catherine Betts, Esq.
Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women



HAWAII STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

To: The Honorable David Ige, Chair
The Honorable Michelle Kidani, Vice-Chair
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

From: Veronika Geronimo, Executive Director
Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

RE: SB2581 - SUPPORT

Hearing Date and Time: Thursday, February 23 @ 9AM

Good morning Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, the Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) submits the following testimony in support of SB2581. As a statewide coalition of domestic violence service providers, our mission is to engage communities and organizations to end domestic violence through education, advocacy, and action for social justice.

This bill amends Chapter 353, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by creating a new part establishing a permanent statewide victim notification system in the Department of Public Safety (PSD), a governance committee to advise PSD on the implementation of the statewide victim notification system, and a special fund to underwrite the cost of the statewide victim notification system.

Domestic violence survivors are terribly frightened when their perpetrator is released from custody. Perpetrators often see the survivor as being directly responsible for their incarceration and may seek retaliation when released. SAVIN is a valuable tool which survivors of domestic violence, their family members and advocates can use to receive timely information about changes in an offender's custody status. Knowing when offenders are to be released gives survivors and service providers a life-saving mechanism that keeps them informed and gives them time to plan for their safety.

HSCADV's membership, which is made up of domestic violence programs and shelters, report that SAVIN is a user-friendly tool that they use often; some advocates use it one to three times a week. According to one service provider, "Sometimes it is the only thing that allows a victim to sleep at night, knowing that she/I will be alerted if he is released/escaped."

As stated, without a continuing funding source the SAVIN Program in Hawaii is in danger of ending when federal funding runs out in 2012. If the program was eliminated, it would compromise the safety of survivors and their families. Prior to SAVIN, survivors and service

providers had to call the probation officers, the prison or both to find out when an offender would be released. That was a time consuming process that jeopardized victim safety.

Finally, the need for this program is even more critical in light of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative's (JRI) proposals to increase supervised release of felons. The SAVIN Program will work hand-in-hand with other JRI proposals to increase victim and public safety. We respectfully request that the committee passes SB2581. Thank you for your consideration.