



## Legislative Testimony

**SB 284 SD2**  
**RELATING TO CORRECTIONS**  
House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
House Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs

March 16, 2011

11:00 a.m.

Room 329

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers the following comments on SB 284 SD2. This bill establishes a pilot program within the Department of Public Safety (DPS) that assigns select, non-violent inmates on a work detail that restores historical sites selected by OHA. The bill also appropriates funds for this program.

OHA has very strong reservations about the means utilized to fund this program since general fund resources for this program offset or reduce general fund resources allocated to OHA for its programs. This bill inappropriately seeks to reduce OHA's general funds in the amount of the DPS appropriation while at the same time asking OHA to play a major role in the project. This reduction in general funds will be detrimental to critical services OHA provides to its beneficiaries, thereby hindering OHA's efforts to fulfill its constitutional and statutory mandates.

OHA recognizes the value of culturally appropriate programs that assist incarcerated individuals with rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. In the past, OHA has supported cultural programming for incarcerated individuals (or pa'ahao) and reintegration efforts. Important service providers such as MEOBest, T.J. Mahoneys, and Hina Mauka have all received OHA grant resources previously to support Native Hawaiian pa'ahao.

OHA's recent report, "The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System," further confirms that culturally appropriate programs, like the one suggested in this bill, help pa'ahao rehabilitate and re-enter the community. This bill's focus on restoration of culturally historic sites, however, may add unintended complications to the implementation of this program given that this kind of restoration activity must be appropriately executed and carefully monitored.

This bill does not expand resources for pa'ahao, it simply reallocates existing resources away from OHA to DPS. Since more services are needed, we strongly encourage the Committee to fund this program without incorporating the offset to OHA general revenue resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this legislation.