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**Subject:** Testimony for SB3054 on 2/28/2012 9:00:00 AM  
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Testimony for WAM 2/28/2012 9:00:00 AM SB3054

Conference room: 211  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: dlaine funakoshi  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [maukalani78@hotmail.com](mailto:maukalani78@hotmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/23/2012

Comments:

Dear Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and Committee Members:

I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB 3054 - the financial and management audit of public safety commissary operations and out-of-state commissaries where Hawaii inmates are confined.

Thank you for hearing this bill. The items on the commissary list are overpriced, often unhealthy and of poor quality. Prices seem to increase frequently without rhyme or reason. Just this month, they raised the price of a small bottle of peanut butter from \$2.85 to over \$4. Prices of other items were also increased.

During Christmas, they cannot receive packages from families, so they purchase the commissary's \$50 special Christmas package which has small bags of kaki mochi, lup chong, etc. Why can't families in Hawaii purchase the packages from an approved retailer here and have them send the package directly to the facility the way publications are handled. This will truly be a Christmas package because it will contain items of their choice.

A small TV which used to cost over \$200 now sells at a reduced price of \$200. However, it's not in demand so its very cheap here, and often can pick one up free. They also pay a 10.7% tax on commissary purchases, and if SB2581 is passed, a 4% surcharge will be added on to that. It's pathetic how people are proposing ways to make money off the inmates. At present, there's a \$500 fee for the crime victim compensation fund in addition to the defendant's bill paid at the Circuit Court.

They make 25 cents an HOUR, if they are able to have a job, but pay 25 cents a MINUTE for phone calls.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concern and ask for your support of SB3054.

Mahalao and Aloha,  
elaine funakoshi

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## COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Sen. David Ige, Chair

Sen. Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 28, 2012

9:00 a.m.

Room 211

### **STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 3054 – Audit of Commissaries**

Aloha Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies for more than a decade. This testimony is respectfully offered, always being mindful that 6,000 Hawai'i individuals are living behind bars, including 1,800 men who are serving their sentences abroad, thousands of miles from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Native Hawaiians, far from their ancestral lands.

SB3054 requires a financial and management audit of department of public safety commissary operations and out-of-state commissaries where Hawai'i inmates are confined.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in STRONG SUPPORT of this bill, which is long overdue! The price gouging at these commissaries is unconscionable. Individuals who may have allergies to certain shampoo or soap are forced to purchase these items at the commissary and the prices there are much higher than those at Long's. Why? And how could that be when things are purchased in bulk by the department or facilities? I remember a woman at WCCC telling me that an item that was \$2 at Long's was around \$5 or \$6 in the commissary. The problem is even worse for those individuals serving their sentences outside of Hawai'i, where winter clothes are needed.

Another problem we have been appraised of is the confiscation of property that is a fairly regular practice in Arizona. An individual gets written up for a violation (a common one is 'failure to follow'), is put in administrative segregation and his property is confiscated, and is ultimately found 'not guilty'. This individual rarely gets his property back because the facility has either 'lost' it or refuses to return it.

One case involves a family from the Leeward side who sent \$275 for their son to purchase a television. He did and shortly after it arrived, he was placed in segregation and the TV was never returned. Why is Hawai'i letting this happen to our people? The majority of the families that Community Alliance on Prisons works with are struggling to make ends meet.

Please support this bill so an audit of these commissaries can be done. This is not a new problem, but rather an on-going issue that is having an effect on struggling families in Hawai'i nei.

Mahalo for this opportunity to share our mana`o.