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April 11, 2012

To: Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

From: Jeanne Y. Ohta, Executive Director

RE: SCR 170 SD1

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO ENTER INTO A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR THE PLANNING, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, TURNKEY, AND FINANCING OF A NEW MAUI REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX AT PUUNENE, MAUI, WITH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON RE-ENTRY, TRANSITION, AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILY PROGRAMS

Hearing: April 11, 2012, 9:35 a.m., Room 211

Position: COMMENTS

The Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i cautions against the use of private for-profit organizations to operate prisons or build prisons for the state of Hawai'i. The primary purpose of these organizations is profit and to keep prison beds full. Prisons should be operated by governments, not by for-profit organizations. To increase profits, such businesses reduce services, such as the provision of health, and have less experienced or poorly trained employees working in their facilities.

Other options should be explored before deciding on a 600-800 bed prison on Maui. If the prison has 800 beds, efforts will be made to fill all 800 beds, especially if a private entity has a stake in the profits from operations of the prison.

While DPFH agrees that MCCC is in disrepair and needs upgrading, we support the increased availability of community-based treatment programs, which are more effective in preventing recidivism and are less costly than prison-based programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.