

**Testimony to the House Committee on Veterans, Military and
International Affairs, and Culture and the Arts**

Wednesday, January 30, 2013

8:30 AM

Conference Room 312

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 196, RELATING TO VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Chair Takai, Vice Chair Ito, and members of the committee.

My name is Charles Ota and I am the Vice President for Military Affairs at The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (The Chamber). I am here to state The Chamber's *support* of House Bill No. 196, Relating to Veterans Treatment Court.

The measure requests that funds be appropriated for positions to support a veterans' treatment court in the first circuit.

The measure recognizes the benefits demonstrated by establishing a veterans' treatment court system to handle court cases involving veterans of the US Armed Forces. The VTC system has been established in Hawaii and is currently in operation. This measure will provide the funding identified by the First Circuit Court.

In light of the above, we recommend the measure be approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



The Judiciary, State of Hawaii

Testimony to the House Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts

Representative K. Mark Takai, Chair
Representative Ken Ito, Vice Chair

Wednesday, January 30, 2013, 8:30 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 312

by
Lori Ann Okita
Chief Court Administrator, First Circuit

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 196, Relating to Veterans Treatment Court.

Purpose: Appropriates funds for positions to support a veterans treatment court in the first circuit.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill 196, which appropriates funds for positions within the Judiciary, Office of the Public Defender and the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney.

With federal grant monies, the Judiciary along with its stakeholders (Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of the Attorney General, Office of the Public Defender and Department of the Prosecuting Attorney) have worked in collaboration with each other, which resulted in the VTC holding its first hearing on January 4, 2013, and admission of its first clients on January 11, 2013.

In addition to dedicated full-time positions for the Office of the Public Defender and the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, this bill requests funds for a dedicated VTC probation officer within the First Circuit. Federal grant monies awarded currently only provide for the funding of a VTC Coordinator (Coordinator), which is necessary to coordinate VTC program activities and treatment services for its clients. Currently, the Coordinator works with multiple probation officers to coordinate services and treatment for its clients. As caseload is expected to increase, a dedicated probation officer would allow the VTC to better serve its clients in such



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activities as attending court/team meetings, tracking client progress and providing the intensive supervision that is an important element of treatment courts. Without this position this role of oversight, court attendance and tracking as well as working with multiple probation officers to coordinate client supervision and activities will fall to the Coordinator, which will reduce the Coordinator's effectiveness in overall VTC program management and may affect the VTC's ability to meet its objectives in helping its clients achieve success in this court as well as possible growth and expansion of the VTC.

The Judiciary also recognizes that the VTC, with its weekly team meetings and hearings and more intensive client oversight, places additional need for resources from both the Office of the Public Defender and the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney. Therefore, this bill also requests funding to address their resource needs relative to their specific agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 196.

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

LATE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 196
RELATING TO VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

PRESENTED TO THE

COMMITTEES ON VETERANS, MILITARY, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS,
& CULTURE AND THE ARTS

BY

MR. RONALD P. HAN
DIRECTOR OF THE STATE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

January 30, 2013

Good morning Chairs Takai, Vice Chair Ito and Committee members:

I'm Ron Han, Director of the State Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to support the concepts in House Bill 196. This measure would provide for the establishment of a temporary Veterans Treatment Court in Hawaii to include treating veterans that have been determined by VA as eligible for benefits. As noted, there are over 100 Veterans Treatment Courts and growing nation-wide. States which have instituted these programs have very low recidivism rates, have garnered successes in dealing with veterans for various issues, have established viable monitoring links towards rehabilitation, and have reduced the number of incarcerated veterans, thereby reducing our overall prison population.

We defer to the agency with direct responsibility for implementation of the Veterans' Treatment Court program.

The OVS supports the concepts and intent expressed in this measure as long as its implementation does not use State funds to establish the temporary court and does not impact or replace, the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Biennium 2013-2015.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families.