

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



LATE

KATHRYN S. MATAYOSHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/21/2013

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 0643,HD1(hscr313) RELATING TO YOUTH GANGS

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds for the Youth Gang Response System. Effective July 1, 2050. (HB643 HD1)

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports HB 643,HD1. A coordinated and comprehensive youth gang response system is critical to control youth gang behavior. Youth gangs are members of our school communities and the Department is committed to partnering with other state agencies, county police departments, businesses, and community based organizations to address youth gang behavior.

The Department also supports the implementation of school-based gang and drug prevention and intervention efforts. Furthermore, in partnership with police departments statewide, the Department will continue to implement school emergency plans and conduct practice drills at every school.

The Department supports the passage of this bill provided it does not replace or adversely impact the Department's priorities included in the Executive Budget.

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Testimony on HB 643 HD 1
Relating to Youth Gangs

Presented to the House Committee on Finance
Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Thursday, February 21, 2013

By Deborah L.K. Spencer-Chun, President and CEO
and McKay Schwenke, Vice President
Adult Friends for Youth

Chairman Luke and Members of the House Committee on Finance, we are here to testify in support of HB 643 HD 1, which will re-invest funding for a new gang response system.

Before taking on our roles as administrators of Adult Friends for Youth, we spent over 20 years in the field working directly with these youth whom many have labeled "lost causes". We can tell you that this is not true for many of the youth I have worked with in Ewa, Kalihi, Kapolei and Waipahu. We have seen the successes when they are given an opportunity, guidance, an ear, trust, and respect, someone to believe in them until they believe in themselves again. With help many of these youth and young adults often begin to pull themselves out of their destructive behaviors. Unfortunately, at a young age, many of these youth fall prey to what their impoverished communities have to offer, which are often gangs, crime, drugs and violence. In this sense, they become victims of their community. The key here is admitting that we have gangs in Hawaii and then applying a multi-prong approach which includes mental health services to these gangs. The therapeutic process takes time, patience and hard work.

For many years, AFY has been told that gangs do not exist in Hawaii and that we are scaring the community. We can tell you first hand that gangs do exist and we have worked directly with many of the youth involved in gangs. But we can also tell you that it doesn't have to be a "scary thing" if we meet the problem head on and deal with issue appropriately and efficiently. Gangs can be successfully rehabilitated as we have witnessed over the past 26 years. A gang response system will allow work like Adult Friends for Youth's counseling program to continue servicing many of these youth involved in gangs. It will also allow the community, our state departments, the public at large and other entities to be educated about gangs and the effective ways of dealing with this issue. It will also provide better communications between the appropriate entities that deal with issue on a daily basis. The more we are educated the better

equipped we will be to deal with this. We believe a new and educated gang response system will be effective to helping our youth gangs now and in the future.

We ask that you support HB 643 HD1, which will re-invest funding for a new gang response system to help many our young people involved in gangs become productive and contributing members of society. We can invest now in our youth or pay a higher price later through our prison system.

FINTestimony

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2013 1:07 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: foxhawaii2010@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB643 on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM

HB643

Submitted on: 2/21/2013
Testimony for FIN on Feb 21, 2013 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lisa Sims	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support HB643 to establish a youth gang response system. This measure will provide support services to reduce youth gang violence. Lisa Sims Hawaii Resident

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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