

SB 576

RELATING TO CORRECTIONS.

Requires a financial and management audit of the department of public safety commissary operations and out-of-state commissaries where Hawaii inmates are confined.

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
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**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 576
RELATING TO CORRECTIONS**

By

Ted Sakai, Interim Director
Department of Public Safety

Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
Senator Will Espero, Chair
Representative Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Tuesday, January 29, 2013; 2:50 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

Chair Espero, Vice Chair Baker, and Members of the Committees:

The Department supports the intent of Senate Bill 576, relating to Corrections, requiring an audit of the operations of the Department of Public Safety's (PSD) commissaries, including those of out-of-state contracted correctional facilities.

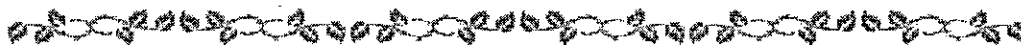
We will assist the Office of the Audit in collecting information required to conduct the audit and facilitate access to correctional facilities as requested.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Sen. Will Espero, Chair

Sen. Rosalyn Baker, Vice Chair

Tuesday, January 29, 2013

2:50 p.m.

Room 224

STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 576 - AUDIT OF COMMISSARIES

Aloha Chair Espero, Vice Chair Baker and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies for more than a decade. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 5,800 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars, always mindful that approximately 1,500 Hawai'i individuals are serving their sentences abroad, thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Native Hawaiians, far from their ancestral lands.

SB 576 requires a financial and management audit of the department of public safety commissary operations and out-of-state commissaries where Hawaii inmates are confined.

Community Alliance is in strong support of this measure while time has come! The price gouging at these commissaries is unconscionable and adds stress to already over-stressed incarcerated persons and their families.

A few years ago we were asked by women to address this issue because the price of needed items in the commissary far exceeded the cost of the same items at community stores. 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 drug stores in the community. We understand that there is a cost for running these commissaries, however, the pricing does appear to be excessive.

In Arizona, our incarcerated men pay 10.7% in sales tax and some have an added 4% for restitution - almost 15% extra for every item purchased. This price gouging only encourages an underground economy in our facilities and those hold our people on the continent. This must be taken into account when auditing the commissaries in Hawai'i and contract facilities.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.