

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Sen. David Ige, Chair

Sen. Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 21, 2013

9:00 a.m.

Room 211

STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 71 SD1 - PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAMS

Aloha Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani 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 71 SD1 appropriates funds to the department of public safety to contract with community-based non-profit organizations to provide mentoring, restorative circles, farming, artisan skills, cognitive restructuring, and cultural healing services to inmates and former inmates. The SD1 amends the bill to clarify 'cognitive *behavioral* therapy', adds education as an important program, and includes certain inmates and some former inmates to assist in their successful transition to the community.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support of this measure.

The Urban Institute released a study in 2002 entitled, **The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming**¹

"Highlights

- In general, correctional programs can increase post release employment and reduce recidivism, provided the programs are well designed and implemented.
- A range of methodological limitations preclude any assessment of direct and unequivocal beneficial effects of prison programming.
- Promising programs in terms of post-release outcomes include general characteristics, what also might be called principles of effective intervention:
 - focusing on skills applicable to the job market
 - matching offenders' needs with program offerings
 - ensuring that participation is timed to be close to an offender's release date

¹ *The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming*, The Urban Institute, May 2002.

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410493_PrisonProgramming.pdf

- providing programming for at least several months
- targeting offenders' needs that are changeable and may contribute to crime, such as attitudes and pro-social activities
- providing programs that cover each individual's needs and are well integrated with other prison programs to avoid potential redundancy or conflict across programs
- ensuring that prison programming is followed by treatment and services upon release from prison
- relying on effective program design, implementation, and monitoring
- involving researchers in programs as evaluators

It is well documented that the education level, work experience, and skills of prisoners are well below the averages for the general population (Andrews and Bonata 1994). The 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) established that only 51 percent of all state and federal prisoners had their high school diploma (LoBuglio 2001). The national average for the general population is 76 percent. In this same study, 11 percent of inmates, compared with three percent of general population respondents, self-reported having a learning disability.

(...)

The work experience and skills of prisoners also typically are well below that of the general population (Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001). The lack of work experience and skills, when combined with low education levels and difficulties in obtaining employment upon release, can contribute to a cycle of unemployment that increases the likelihood of further criminal behavior (Austin and Irwin 2001). Despite a long-standing historical emphasis in American corrections on education and employment training (Piel 1998; Gaes et al. 1999), and despite the importance of prison programming for improving a range of outcomes upon release, levels of program participation have declined. In 1991, 42 percent of soon-to-be-released prisoners (less than 12 months remaining) reported participating in education programs, compared with 35 percent in 1997 (figure 1). Participation in vocational programs declined from 31 percent to 27 percent during this same period (Lynch and Sabol 2001).

One reason for these declines is the rapid and enormous growth in prisons."

MENTORING

Mentoring is a unique and valuable volunteer service in prisons. It can often be the foundation for fundamental, positive change. Mentoring is provided so that each inmate will have a positive influence in life and have a positive contact to assist the inmate upon release. Mentoring is intended to enhance personal growth through the sharing of experiences and wisdom and to offer a framework for teaching and modeling values and life skills. Mentoring topics will be geared towards personal growth in ethical behavior and interpersonal relationships.

Mentoring ideally will be a one-on-one relationship, with mentor and inmate of the same gender. It is a new challenge to extend a mentoring program opportunity to an entire prison population and we will work hard to build a sustained base of volunteer mentors and provide a one-on-one mentoring experience for every interested resident.²

² Wakulla CI Faith- and Character-Based Prison Mentoring <http://www.wakullacivolunteers.org/mentoring.htm>

The Department of Labor found that carefully structured mentoring programs, which allow for the development of trusting relationships with adult peers, can improve an ex-prisoner's academic record and behavior. Ex-prisoners paired with mentors are more likely than those without mentors to find work, remained employed longer and recidivate less.³

The U.S. Department of Labor⁴ published a Guide for mentoring which stated:

For more than ten years, research has demonstrated that carefully structured, well-run mentoring programs can positively affect social, behavioral and academic outcomes for at-risk young people. Research has also shown how mentoring works – through the development of a trusting relationship between the young person and an adult mentor who provides consistent, nonjudgmental support and guidance. Among the questions that Ready4Work was designed to explore was whether mentoring could similarly lead to positive outcomes for adult ex-prisoners.

Early findings from the evaluation of Ready4Work suggest that mentoring can have real benefits in strengthening outcomes in the context of a multifaceted reentry program. Across the 11 sites, about half of the participants in the reentry program became involved in mentoring. Those participants fared better, in terms of program retention and employment, than those who did not participate in the mentoring program.⁵

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Research clearly shows that restorative justice interventions are more effective at reducing repeat crime and reducing recidivism than our current mainstream justice systems (Sherman & Strang 2007) ⁶
http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/pdfs/RJ_full_report.pdf.

Prison without rehabilitation only creates more crime. Hawai'i's prison recidivism rates are consistent with the U.S. national average with about 50% of all the people being released from prison coming back within only two years of their release.

Aotearoa (New Zealand), which provides more rehabilitation in its prisons than Hawai'i, has almost a 15% lower rate with 37% of their incarcerated people back into prison within two years, but that is bad news for the Kiwis who would like to see even less recidivism.⁷

³ *Want a more educated workforce? Connect mentors to ex-inmates for new read on life*, Bangor Daily News, Editorial, Nov. 23, 2012. <https://bangordailynews.com/2012/11/23/opinion/editorials/want-a-more-educated-workforce-connect-mentors-to-ex-inmates-for-new-read-on-life/>

⁴ See McClanahan, Wendy. P/PV Preview: Mentoring Ex-Prisoners in the Ready4Work Reentry Initiative. March 2007. Philadelphia: Public/ Private Ventures. Available at www.ppv.org

⁵ Mentoring Ex-Prisoners: A Guide for Prisoner Reentry Programs, U.S. Department of Labor, November 2007. http://www.doleta.gov/pri/pdf/mentoring_ex_prisoners_a_guide.pdf

⁶ http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/pdfs/RJ_full_report.pdf

⁷ <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0807/S00086.htm>

FARMING

With Hawai'i's state commitment to food security, training incarcerated persons to farm is a good way to meet that need while assisting incarcerated individuals to develop marketable job skills. There are already farms at the Women's Community Correctional Center and at Waiawa Correctional Facility. These program can and should be expanded and open to more individuals interested in farming. At WCCC, the facility is working with a community program to teach the women not only to grow vegetables, but techniques such as irrigation and other related skills. The goal is to provide more vegetables for the facility and to give the rest to senior programs in Waimanalo. What a fabulous idea!

Community Alliance on Prisons has spoken to farmers who are ready and willing to help.

ARTISAN SKILLS

Community Alliance on Prison is very supportive of arts programs as discussed in SB 74, the sale of crafts made by incarcerated persons. It's a great way to keep people busy and exercising some right-brain activities!

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

The success of cultural programming was clearly demonstrated by the MEO B.E.S.T. Reintegration Program on Maui that was de-funded during the Lingle administration. The BEST program was culturally-based and served not just Hawaiians, but all people. The program was originally funded by a SVORI (Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative) grant. The BEST clientele, therefore, were high-risk individuals.

A 2006 report stated: "...we find that the BEST Program is cost beneficial, realizing savings of \$13,643 per client in terms of costs related to differential incarceration, criminal justice system processing costs, and costs related to criminal victimization. In other words, since BEST clients were arrested and convicted less often in comparison to controls, costs expended for services result in decreased projected costs associated with incarceration, criminal justice processing, and costs to victims.

(...)

BEST clients are enthusiastic about the services they are receiving from the program. This is critical because, while clients in the community may be encouraged by probation or parole officers to obtain services from BEST, participation is essentially voluntary. Therefore, it really matters how attractive and effective services are perceived to be by the clients on community status. And there are a number of areas where BEST clients appear to be doing very well. For instance, this population's health concerns are minimal and most have access to health insurance and medical care when needed. And, although patterns of employment tend to show some instability, this appears to be offset by changes they make that lead to increased incomes."⁸

A 2008 study of BEST stated: "The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative targets a population that is comprised of individuals at high-risk for reoffending. These individuals have served lengthy sentences and, in many cases, have extensive criminal histories. They may or may not have ever had

⁸ THE B.E.S.T. PROGRAM - A Report on Program Implementation and Preliminary Outcomes, AUGUST 30, 2006, Marilyn Brown, Ph.D.

fully-functioning ties to employment, school, or family. This group of former inmates is at high risk for recidivating, posing a serious threat to public safety.

Yet, the BEST Program demonstrates particular success with this group as illustrated by significantly lower post-release arrest rates. Although we cannot know precisely which component of these comprehensive services is most responsible for this success, clearly a focus on the serious offender has benefits in terms of improving public safety at reduced costs to the public. Therefore, Hawai'i reintegration policy might make great gains in these areas by specially targeting this group of higher-risk individuals. Although this group poses great challenges, the potential returns are also great."⁹

Hawai'i needs to support more programs that speak to our population, such as the BEST program. Programs that involve culture, families and community work best.

More than 98% of our incarcerated population will return to the community. Programs like BEST, that start working with individuals while they are incarcerated, create a seamless approach to reintegration with wrap-around services that continue when an individual is released. The evidence is clear that this is what works.

Mahalo for this opportunity to share our research and thoughts on correctional programming.

⁹ Impact and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Hawaii's Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative: The B.E.S.T. Program, Brown, Davidson, Allen, Tavares, 2008.

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To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: tabraham08@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB71 on Feb 21, 2013 09:00AM*
Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2013 9:49:58 AM

SB71

Submitted on: 2/19/2013

Testimony for WAM on Feb 21, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Troy Abraham	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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