



**LATE**

# GM602

Measure Title: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Reentry Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee, TONI BISSEN, for a term to expire 12-01-2019.

Report Title: Reentry Commission

Description:

Companion:

Package:

Current Referral: PSM

Introducer(s):



**GM602**

**SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE REENTRY COMMISSION,  
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, TONI BISSEN, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 12-01-2019**  
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs

March 24, 2016

1:15 p.m.

Room 229

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment Committee will recommend that the Board of Trustees **SUPPORT** GM602, which would confirm Toni Bissen as a Governor-appointed Commissioner on the Reentry Commission.

Ms. Bissen has dedicated a significant portion of her life to helping criminal offenders, especially Native Hawaiian women, heal the societal, communal, and intrapersonal trauma that causes, and is caused by, offense and incarceration. Much of Ms. Bissen's career has involved examining and helping others understand the correlation between deviant behavior and previous historical, communal, and individual trauma. She has also pioneered efforts to implement methodologies of "trauma-informed care" in Hawai'i's criminal justice system. This philosophy is central to the vision of the Pū'ā Foundation—where Ms. Bissen currently serves as Executive Director—which promotes healing and reconciliation to rehabilitate pa'ahao and break the intergenerational and intracommunal cycle of incarceration.

Ms. Bissen would bring great experience and expertise to the Reentry Commission, having implemented several very successful rehabilitation and reentry programs. For example, she and the Pū'ā Foundation played a key role in helping the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) operationalize a trauma-informed framework. Through the Pū'ā Foundation's Huliau program, WCCC staff and administration have been taught to consider inmates' potential sources of trauma, and develop techniques to execute their duties sensitively and with the goal of healing pa'ahao, their families, and their communities. Ms. Bissen has also developed the renowned "Prison Monologues" creative writing program at WCCC, which allows prisoners and community members alike to contemplate the trauma-based sources and consequences of offender behavior.

Ms. Bissen also offers a cultural perspective, conscious of Native Hawaiian communal trauma, as well as the potential for traditional knowledge and values to contribute to the healing process and disrupt the cycle of incarceration. With this perspective, she has consistently promoted cultural identity education and rehabilitation in her programming. For example, her programs commissioned *Ua Mau Ke Ea*, a textbook and DVD used to educate pa'ahao on Hawaiian political history. She has also convened cultural experts to teach pa'ahao traditional interpersonal skills, and host experiential activities in agricultural cultivation and hula. Ms. Bissen's insight and experience in traditional

methods of healing and strengthening cultural identity would help the Department of Public Safety initiate the long-awaited integration of restorative and transformative pu‘uhonua concepts into its programmatic structure.

For these reasons, OHA urges the committee to **PASS** GM602. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.