



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**Testimony SUPPORTING HB1929
Relating to Forensic Mental Health Professionals**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 5, 2016, 10:15 a.m. Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined at this time.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports this measure. We thank
3 the Legislature for its continued support and, in particular, the intent of the initiatives in the bills
4 on today's committee agenda. Only through a combination of support in building a new facility,
5 support in rebuilding community programs, and fundamental policy changes will Hawaii be able
6 to effectively address the needs of its citizens, the operation of the Hawaii State Hospital (HSH),
7 and be able to provide an effective continuum of mental health supports. Clearly, all three
8 branches of government play a critical role in making this system function effectively.

9 This measure proposes to give the director of health increased tools to recruit board-
10 certified forensic health care professionals. The department plays a critical role in the State's
11 justice system with regard to evaluation, care, and coordination of mental health services of those
12 individuals with mental illness and criminal justice involvement including providing
13 examinations of a criminal defendant's fitness to stand trial and penal responsibility.

14 Recruiting forensic psychiatrists and psychologists from out of state is one option to help
15 address our needs for increased professional resources in this critical area. Recruitment and

1 retention incentives may help accomplish this, although how these would operate is not made
2 explicit in the proposed legislation.

3 The DOH has experienced long standing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified
4 candidates for its forensic psychologist and psychiatrist positions. The Governor has submitted
5 bills (HB2353 and SB2888) proposing statutory exemption for certain positions in the DOH
6 which is intended to support successful recruitment and retention of qualified professionals.

7 The addition of enhanced recruiting incentives proposed in this bill may help support our
8 efforts in the recruitment of board-certified forensic health care professionals. Consistent with
9 this, we support the measure.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 **Offered Amendments:** None.



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting HB 1929 Relating to Forensic Healthcare Professionals
House Committee on Health
Scheduled for Hearing Friday, February 5, 2016, 10:15 AM, Room 326

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice Hawai'i Appleseed is committed to a more socially just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, advocacy, and coalition building.

Dear Chairs Au Belatti, Vice Chair Creagan, and Members, Committee on Health,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1929, which will empower the state's director of health to recruit much needed healthcare personnel in the areas of forensic psychiatry and psychology. We recommend that the legislature appropriate sufficient funds to implement necessary incentive structures for recruiting and retaining qualified health professionals to fill these vacancies.

Our criminal justice system must be able to conduct initial evaluation of criminal defendants, as well as provide ongoing mental health services to inmates in state prisons or involuntary patients in state hospitals. This is a mandatory function which all states must fulfill in order to meet threshold requirements under the United States Constitution.

In Hawaii, we are woefully deficient in medical personnel qualified to provide these required services. We have only thirteen forensic psychiatrists and three forensic psychologists in the entire state, and most of them are on Oahu.¹ The Hawaii State Hospital (HSH) struggles with inadequate space and facilities to handle the increase in forensic mental health cases, admitting 304 inpatients in 2015.² The Department of Public Safety struggles to find adequate resources for forensic mental health evaluations with comparable surges in need, facing court orders for mental health evaluations and HSH admission, including 406 Unfit to Proceed assessments last year.³

The need for more forensic mental health professionals is clear, but there currently exists no graduate program of study for forensic mental health in Hawaii. As contemplated by HB 1929, we need to offer incentives for forensic mental health professionals to transfer to Hawaii or remain in Hawaii. Giving the Director of Health the ability to offer tuition reimbursement, relocation costs, and other incentives to recruit forensic mental health professionals provides a germane and cost effective way to meet the need.

Thank you very much for hearing and considering this important bill to address the need for forensic health professionals in Hawaii's criminal justice system.

¹ <http://www.healthgrades.com/provider-search-directory/>

² Report to the Legislature: Yearly Data on Forensic Patients at Hawaii State Hospital, Department of Health, Adult Mental Health Division, 2016, p.10.

³ *Ibid.* p.1



Hawai'i Psychological Association

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TO: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Richard P. Creagan, Vice Chair
Committee on Health

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF HB 1929
Relating to Forensic Health Care Professionals
Friday, February 05, 2016, 10:15 a.m., Room 329

The Hawai'i Psychological Association (HPA) would like to submit testimony in support of HB 1929 which seeks to authorize the department of health to recruit board certified forensic health care professionals in order to fill long standing vacancies.

HPA's mission is to promote the health and wellbeing of Hawai'i and its people through the science and practice of psychology. Our leadership and members are keenly aware of the mental health provider shortage problem across various sectors of mental health service delivery and seek to improve this problem through various means and collective efforts.

We offer our full support of HB 1929.

Sincerely,

Ray Folen, PH.D.
Executive Director

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 03, 2016 10:58 PM
To: HLTtestimony
Cc: louis@hawaiidisabilityrights.org
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1929 on Feb 5, 2016 10:15AM

HB1929

Submitted on: 2/3/2016

Testimony for HLT on Feb 5, 2016 10:15AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Comments Only	No

Comments: This approach to addressing the shortage of examiners is preferable to the proposals to reduce the panels from three examiners to one examiner.

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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TO: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Richard P. Creagan, Vice Chair
Committee on Health

FROM: Jill Oliveira Gray, PH.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1929
Relating to Forensic Health Care Professionals
Friday, February 05, 2016, 10:15 a.m., Room 329

Honorable Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Creagan and members of the committee, my name is Dr. Jill Oliveira Gray. I am a Licensed Hawai'i Clinical Psychologist and work in several roles to provide and promote psychological services, training, and workforce development. I am currently the Director of Training and one of the Clinical Supervisors at I Ola Lāhui, a rural behavioral health psychology training program.

I have worked in various rural areas across our State for 15 years and can attest to the significant problems that result when individuals with mental health needs are unable to access timely services. Most mental health issues can be adequately treated if individuals are able to receive the help they need when they need it.

Diligent, collective and systemic attempts to reduce Hawai'i's health care provider shortage are of paramount importance particularly for mental health providers. Behavioral health needs continue to grow in our State. Suicide rates are too high and our communities are suffering needlessly. We need everyone to work together on multiple levels in order to achieve better health care outcomes across our State.

HB 1929 is one example of an attempt to address a specific provider shortage and increase recruitment and retention of board certified forensic psychiatrists and psychologists and has my full support.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB1929.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Oliveira Gray, Ph.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist