

LATE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY ON SB 566 RELATING TO CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

February 3, 2015

1:15 pm

Conference Rm. 229

Aloha Chair Espero, Vice-Chair Baker, and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs, **my name is Stephen Morse. I am the Executive Director of Blueprint for Change (BFC) and am here today to support SB 566 Relating to Correctional Facilities.**

Members, for the record, BFC is the fiscal, technical, and administrative support entity for seven Neighborhood Place centers statewide that provide support and strengthening services to families at risk of child abuse and neglect under a POS contract with the Department of Human Services. The several varied risk factors in the families, including homelessness or unstable housing, unemployment and low incomes, substance abuse, chronic health problems, and physical disabilities. Two years ago, after much research and analysis, BFC determined that one of the increasing risk factors for child neglect in the families we serve is that there is at least one parent who is incarcerated.

An estimated 2.7 million children nationwide have at least one parent that is incarcerated, and studies conducted by the National Fatherhood Initiative show that in terms of negative impacts on children, incarceration may be worse than the death of a parent or the divorce of parents. Even more disheartening is the evidence that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to become incarcerated themselves as teenagers or adults, thus continuing the “cycle of incarceration” that sadly becomes generational in some families.

Three other statistics from the 2008 Bureau of Judicial Statistics Report also reveal the alarming extent of this problem. First, parents of minor children held in the nation’s prisons increased by 79% between 1991 and mid-2007. Second, more than a third of minor children will reach the age of 18 while their parents are incarcerated. And, third, incarcerated parents of minor children are most likely to be between the ages of 24 to 35.

In January 2014, the Legislative Keiki Caucus, at the request of BFC and the Hawaii Prisoners Resource Center, dba Holomua Center, established a working group to explore the issues surrounding children and families impacted by incarceration. Called the Family Reunification Working Group (FRWG), the group is comprised of representatives from several organizations and service providers, including Blueprint for Change, Hawaii Prisoners Resource Center, dba Holomua Center, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, ALU LIKE, Inc., Queen Lili’uokalani Children’s Center, Keiki O Ka Aina Learning Centers, Family Programs Hawaii, Adult Friends for Youth, Community Alliance on Prisons, TJ Mahoney, Chaminade University’s Native Hawaiian Program, and Makana O Ke Akua Clean and Sober Living. It also included parents of children who have been affected by incarceration. Among the issues discussed by the group was the families’ inability to maintain consistent communication and visitation once their significant others became incarcerated. One parent in the group, a woman with a young four-year old child, shared her harrowing story about how her son was traumatized and went mute for two years after being cut off from seeing his incarcerated father.

We support the pilot visitation project which is the purpose of SB 566, because we believe it is one step in the process of trying to maintain that consistent communication and visitation between families and incarcerated individuals which is so important to the health and well-being of both family members and the offender.

Mahalo for allowing us to share this testimony with the Committee.

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Aloha Chair Espero, Vice-Chair Baker, and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs, **my name is Julie Ann Sojot. I am the Interim Executive Director of Hawaii Prisoners Resource Center, dba Holomua Center and am here today to support SB 566 Relating to Correctional Facilities.**

A major part of the reintegration process begins while incarcerated, and maintaining family bonds is one of the most important factors because it is family support that they will need to rely on upon release. Without that support it is highly likely that recidivism will occur.

Family is a significant part of the reintegration process and focuses specifically on the social support that can be gained from strong family bonds. Family bonds have a good deal of history prior to and during incarceration and may be disorganized upon release. It is in the family where those who are released from prison can find a significant amount of support, not only emotionally, but many times financially as well. Therefore, promoting family bonds during incarceration is prudent

Irwin's classic work, *The Felon* (1970) examined the family as a "buffering agent." He noted that the family provides the parolee with a place to live, it can be a source of employment for those returning and can also provide just some of the bare necessities like clothes, transportation, and toiletries upon release. However, in his study Irwin found that a few of the parolees had difficulty adjusting to the family situation. According to Irwin (1970:129),

The absence or presence of conflict within the family, conflict between the parolee and his family, the compatibility of the parolee's and the family's commitments, the total character of the family's and parolee's past history together will have an important bearing on the solution of problems.

We support the pilot visitation project which is the purpose of SB 566, because we believe it is one step in the process of trying to maintain that consistent communication and visitation between families and incarcerated individuals which is so important to the health and well-being of both family members and the offender.

Mahalo for allowing us to share this testimony with the Committee.

LATE TESTIMONY

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2015 9:12 AM
To: PSMTestimony
Cc: ezlchirpz@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB566 on Feb 3, 2015 13:15PM*

SB566

Submitted on: 2/3/2015

Testimony for PSM on Feb 3, 2015 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lezlie Kiaha	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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LATE TESTIMONY

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov [mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2015 11:25 AM

To: PSMTestimony

Cc: kamaile.maldonado@gmail.com

Subject: Submitted testimony for SB566 on Feb 3, 2015 13:15PM

SB566

Submitted on: 2/3/2015

Testimony for PSM on Feb 3, 2015 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kamaile Maldonado	Individual	Support	No

Comments: As a member of the community of family and friends of pa'ahao, I SUPPORT this pilot visitation project because it would be a positive first step in the process of trying to maintain more consistent communication and visitation between families and incarcerated individuals. The ability to maintain relationships with family and friends on the outside has been lacking but is so important to the health and well-being of family members and the offender while inside as well as to the foundation of family reunification upon reentry. Mahalo for the opportunity to present these comments in SUPPORT of SB566.