



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair

Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 7, 2018 2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

By

Judge Greg K. Nakamura

Chief Judge, Third Circuit

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1 Relating to Veterans Treatment Court. (HB1965 HD1)

Purpose: Appropriates funds to continue the Third Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court by converting one (1) temporary Social Worker IV position and establishing one (1) additional full-time equivalent permanent Social Worker IV position.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1.

Veterans who are justice-involved typically face incarceration with very little help to address their underlying mental health problems, substance abuse problems, and or combat - related issues. In addition, they may have medical, health, housing, employment and financial issues. Veterans may be involved with the VA or may need extra assistance in pursuing eligibility for VA services. Lastly, they may have difficulty in sharing their problems with non-veterans.

Four years ago, the community, our Federal, State and County elected officials, came together to discuss with various community members, the development of a Veterans Treatment Court, on the Big Island. Community partners became the foundation for community and



House Bill No. 1965, H.D. 1 Relating to Veterans Treatment Court
House Committee on Judiciary
Wednesday, February 7, 2018 2:00 PM
Page 2

ultimately a team approach to not only the planning and development stages of a Veterans Court on the Big Island but the eventual formation of the Big Island Veterans Treatment Court (BIVTC).

In 2014, the Judiciary was awarded a three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance federal grant for a Veterans Treatment Court. The Veterans Treatment Court model, based on the Drug Court 10 Key Components, its many years of research showing its effectiveness, and its successful implementation in many communities across the nation, was selected as the model to implement.

The goal of the BIVTC is to help justice-involved veterans struggling with untreated mental health issues, including PTSD, substance abuse disorders, and/or Traumatic Brain Injury. These veterans are at a high risk for recidivism (criminal reoffending) and have high treatment needs. The program is open to eligible veterans whether or not they are eligible for VA services. Collaboration with the VA via a Veteran Justice Outreach worker is critical and in place.

By the second year of the program, the BIVTC surpassed its goal by serving a total of 26 veteran participants. Since 2014, the BIVTC has worked with 30 veteran participants and 12 active Volunteer Veteran Mentors. Ten (10) of the veteran participants have graduated so far. Many of these graduates have jobs, attend mental health treatment and substance abuse sober support groups on a regular basis, have not recommitted any felony crimes, have stable housing, and have gone on to contribute back to society. In addition, many are now connected and proud of their military heritage.

House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1 will allow for the hiring of two full time BIVTC probation officers, one on the Big Island's East Side with a caseload of 20 veterans and one on its West Side also with a caseload of 20 veterans, and allow us to continue to expand the BIVTC.

Many of us either are veterans, know of veterans, and/or have family or loved ones who are veterans. Veterans have served our country and many have given their lives and sacrificed much. We all share the common goal to support them in their time of need and provide them with the best possible chance to be a healthy and successful part of our community.

We appreciate the Legislature's many actions to support veterans and respectfully request your support of House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1965 HD1, RELATING TO VETERANS TREATMENT
COURT

PRESENTATION TO THE
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

BY

MR. RONALD P. HAN
DIRECTOR OF STATE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

February 07, 2018
2:00 p.m.

Good afternoon, Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and members of the Committee:

I'm Ron Han, Director of the State Office of Veterans Services. I appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony **in support** of House Bill 1965 HD1.

This measure appropriates funds to the veteran's treatment court on the island of Hawaii. The first Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) in Hawaii over the last several years, under the leadership of First Circuit Court Judge Ed Kubo, has successfully graduated over 20 eligible Veterans. Providing this opportunity to eligible Veterans in Hawaii County by funding full-time employment authorizations will enable Veterans who served their Nation to participate in rehabilitative treatment efforts that may not be offered if they are incarcerated.

This program on record has a very low recidivism rate, has garnered successes in dealing with veterans for various issues, and has established viable monitoring links towards rehabilitation. Over 100 VTC's across the nation have experienced a reduced number of repeat offenders, thereby reducing our overall prison population.

The OVS supports the concepts and intent expressed in this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families.

LATE

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1965 HD1, RELATING TO VETERANS TREATMENT
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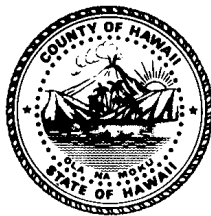
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Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families.

Karen Eoff
Council Vice Chair
Council District 8 - North Kona



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HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

County of Hawai'i
West Hawai'i Civic Center, Bldg. A
74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy.
Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740

February 6, 2018

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair
And Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

Re: Testimony **Supporting** HB1965, HD1; Bill Relating to Veterans Treatment Court
Hearing Date and Time: February 7, 2018 at 2:00 a.m., Conference Room 325

Dear Committee:

On behalf of myself and constituents of Council District 8, North Kona, support for the above referenced Bill is expressed, with brief testimony provided as follows:

Providing an appropriation of funds for social worker positions that the Third Circuit Courts requires to continue the Veterans Treatment Court program is necessary to address the unique needs of the veterans that enter the criminal justice system.

The Veterans Treatment Court provides a high level of supervision for our veterans with incentives, consequences and specific treatment plans in place to address individual needs.

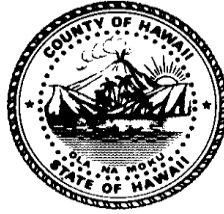
We strongly recommend the passing of this bill.

Sincerely,

KAREN EOFF, Council Vice Chair
Council District 8, North Kona

KE.wpb

Eileen O'Hara
Council Member
Council District 4



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Chair: Environmental
Management Committee

Vice Chair: Planning Committee and
Agriculture, Water & Energy
Sustainability Committee

County of Hawaii
Hawaii County Council

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 1402 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto
Chair, Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i State House of Representatives

February 6, 2018

Re: In Support of House Bill 1965, from Hawai'i County Council District 4
Scheduled to be heard by JUD on 02-07-18 2:00PM in House conference room 325

Aloha Chair Nishimoto and Committee Members:

I'm writing to express my support for House Bill 1965, which appropriates funds to the Veteran's Treatment Court on the Island of Hawai'i for social worker positions.

I do not hesitate to support any measure to support the Veterans of Hawai'i. Please consider the positive impact that passing this bill will have on our veterans, and contact me if you have any questions about my support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eileen O'Hara".

Eileen O'Hara
Council Member
Council District 4



HB1965 HD1 Veteran's Drug Court

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY:

- Rep. Scott Nishimoto, Chair; Rep. Joy San Buenaventura, Vice Chair
- Wednesday, February 7th, 2018: 2:00 pm
- Conference Room 325

HAWAII SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION (HSAC) supports HB1965 HD1:

GOOD MORNING CHAIR, VICE CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide hui of almost 40 alcohol and drug treatment and prevention agencies.

The Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition supports the Veterans Treatment Court and recommends expanding its diagnostic scope.

Returning veterans, and their families are subject the effects of combat exposure, and physical injuries, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Expand the Scope of Veterans Drug Court

Federal funds are being expended to research the epidemiology/etiology for the identification, prevention, and treatment of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and abuse as well as illicit and prescription drugs, and associated mental health problems among active-duty or recently separated military troops and their families:

- Improve screening and access to care for alcohol-related problems among service members returning from combat deployments.
- Expanding services will allow Veteran Drug Courts to provide more opportunities for veterans to access treatment services.
- Therapies for co-occurring disorders, such as PTSD, depression and substance abuse;
- Effectiveness of early interventions for recently returning soldiers;
- Practices to reduce the high rates of smoking among returning military personnel; and
- Impact of a youth substance abuse prevention intervention designed for parents returning from deployment.

Alcohol, substances misuses and prescription drugs are problems.

- Illicit drug use is still a major problem, especially methamphetamine. • Prescription drug abuse is increasing at alarming rates.
- Alcohol abuse is still the most prevalent problem.

- The Millennium Cohort Study—the largest prospective study in military history occurring from 2001 to 2012—suggests that deployed younger service members are at increased risk of heavy weekly drinking, binge drinking, and other alcohol-related problems.

Mental illness among military personnel is also a major concern.

- Studies indicate that 20% of active and 42% of reserve component soldiers require mental health treatment or co-occurring substance use disorders and mental health treatment.
- Drug or alcohol use frequently accompanies mental health problems and was involved in 30% of the Army's suicide deaths from 2003 to 2009 and in more than 45% of non-fatal suicide attempts from 2005 to 2009.

Drug courts have demonstrated effectiveness in addressing nonviolent crimes committed by drug abusers, ushering them into needed treatment instead of prison.

- Because the criminal justice system is a frequent treatment referral source for veterans, specialized drug courts for this population may give them the opportunity to access services and support they may not otherwise receive.

Veteran Drug Courts, if expanded effectively, can contribute to the design and implementation of effective prevention and treatment interventions that can help safeguard the health and well-being of those who protect and serve our Nation.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify.

HB-1965-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/5/2018 2:16:42 PM

Testimony for JUD on 2/7/2018 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Javier Mendez-Alvarez		Support	No

Comments:

HB-1965-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/6/2018 9:10:08 AM

Testimony for JUD on 2/7/2018 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Hannah Preston-Pita	Big Island Substance Abuse Council	Support	No

Comments:

HB-1965-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/6/2018 1:55:38 PM

Testimony for JUD on 2/7/2018 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	OCC Legislative Priorities	Support	No

Comments:

JUDtestimony

From: JUDtestimony
Sent: Tuesday, February 6, 2018 2:30 PM
To: JUDtestimony

Honorable Representatives Scott Y. Nishimura, and Joy A. San Buenaventura,

Chair and Vice Chairs of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Irene A. Nagao and as a long member of the Friends of the Big Island Drug Court, I would like to submit testimony in support of HB1965 HD1.

I lost my son, age 28, due to homicide. He was in treatment for his substance abuse problem and was doing well until he was killed by the mother of his son. She too had problems with substance abuse. My family knows very well how substance abuse can impact many people, young and old and many tragedies happen because of this abuse. I have seen how difficult it is for addicted persons to overcome this overwhelming social problem.

Last year, I attended the graduation of a veteran of the Vietnam War, who worked hard to overcome his addiction and return to his family. To my surprise I knew this person because I had hired him as an employee when he was attending college. However his war experience caused much trauma and challenges in his life and he spent much time trying to overcome his addiction.

With the help of the Big Island Veterans Treatment Court, he was able to return to community life and become a productive citizen. Other veterans and mentors were part of the treatment that helped him and today he is out there helping other veterans.

I also have a cousin who was in the Vietnam War as a two time paratrooper and the horrible experiences caused him to be so addicted to substance abuse that he turned to a life of crime. He had no help or support and spent many years incarcerated.

Today with the Veterans Treatment Court, volunteer veterans and mentors, other veterans can be helped to successful treatment. I ask the Judiciary

Committee to support HB1965 HD1 so that Big Island Veterans can receive the support and treatment they need for their many challenges. Many are homeless, jobless, have mental issues, and post-traumatic stress disorder, or a combination of any of these.

I am also the president of the board for a nonprofit group called "Going Home Hawaii" a community consortium of many organizations working toward helping men, women, and youth who were released from correctional institutions with reintegration into community life through employment, training, and appropriate support services. Many of these former perpetrators are veterans who have served time incarcerated and today are working hard to use a second chance to become good citizens and return to their families and communities.

I also take part in the Hawaii County Prosecutors program with the Victim Impact program that allows victims of crime to visit incarcerated men and women to tell them how crime has impacted their families. Many of these men and women are very affected hearing how families are torn and sometimes destroyed because of these crimes. Hopefully they will not return to criminal activities.

On the other hand as a co-founder of a program called STARS (Surviving to Thriving: Advocacy, Resources and Support, I support a program to help victims of homicide to face recovering and coping with their terrible losses.

Seeing both the perpetrators side and victims side, we need to help support programs that will help people to recover and go on with their lives.

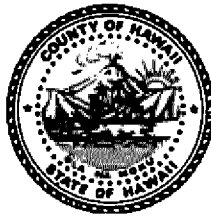
PLEASE SUPPORT HB 1965 HD1 TO HELP CONTINUE THE BIG ISLAND VETERANS TREATMENT COURT TO SUSTAIN THEIR PROGRAM AND ADD TWO PROBATION OFFICERS.

Thank you for your consideration and your full support.

Mahalo and Aloha

Irene A. Nagao

Harry Kim
Mayor



Wil Okabe
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i

Office of the Mayor

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KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
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February 6, 2018

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 429
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Nishimoto and Committee Members:

Re: HB 1965, HD1 Relating to Veterans Treatment Court
Hearing Date: 02/07/18 – 2:00 pm; Conference Room 325

I appreciate this opportunity to express my support for HB 1965, HD 1, which would provide funding to continue the Veterans Treatment Court on Hawai'i Island.

The unanimous testimony in favor of this bill in the VMI Committee made clear how valuable this court has been in improving the lives of the veterans it has touched. And when these veterans benefit, their families, and the entire community, are also beneficiaries.

I would add that my police commanders who have attended the court graduation ceremony have been extremely impressed.

The program requires great commitment on the part of the participants, and the veterans have earned the right to ask that the State do its part to keep the special court operating. The reward-- saved lives, saved families, a healthier and safer community-- will more than justify the investment.

Please pass HB1965, HD1, with an early effective date.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Kim
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

LATE

HB-1965-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 8:23:05 AM

Testimony for JUD on 2/7/2018 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Heather Lusk	The CHOW Project	Support	No

Comments:

The CHOW Project strongly supports this measure to continue to support the Veteran's Court. The peer-based approach used by the Court has been found to be very successful and participants of the court have had low to no recidivism. Please continue to fund this important program!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

Dear Legislators:

My name is William Flynn; I served two tours in Viet Nam from Jan 1969 to Nov of 1971 in the infantry. I am at 100% disability. I currently work with the Veteran's Court in Kona and serve as the Service Officer for the VFW Post 12122 in Kailua Kona.

I ask you to please put HB1965 on the agenda. It is very important to so many Veterans here in Hawaii. Thank you for your Time.

Sincerely William D. Flynn