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Date & Time

Jan 31, 2018, 11:15 am

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1965, RELATING TO VETERANS TREATMENT
COURT

PRESENTATION TO THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, & CULTURE
AND THE ARTS

BY

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

February 01, 2018
10:00 a.m.

Good morning, Chair LoPresti, Vice Chair Fukumoto, and members of the Committee:

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

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 testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

**Testimony to the House Committee on Veterans, Military & International Affairs
and Culture & the Arts**

Representative Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair
Representative Beth Fukumoto, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 1, 2018 10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 429

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

by
Judge Greg K. Nakamura
Chief Judge, Third Circuit

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 1965, Relating to Veterans Treatment Court.

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.

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 ultimately a team approach to not only the planning and development stages of a Veterans Court



House Bill No. 1965, Relating to Veterans Treatment Court
House Committee on Veterans, Military & International Affairs
and Culture & the Arts
Thursday, February 1, 2018 10:00 AM
Page 2

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 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.

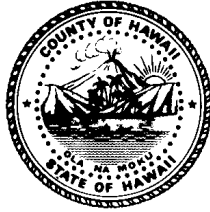
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

LATE

Harry Kim
Mayor

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Date & Time

Feb 01, 2018, 10:09 am



Wil Okabe
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i
Office of the Mayor

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 2603 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • (808) 961-8211 • Fax (808) 961-6553
KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
(808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

February 1, 2018

Representative Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair
Committee on Veterans, Military, and International Affairs, and Culture and the Arts
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 429
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair LoPresti, and Committee Members:

Re: HB 1965 Relating to Veterans Treatment Court
Hearing Date: 02/01/18 – 10:00 am; Conference Room 429

I apologize for the lateness of this testimony, but I wanted to express my support for HB 1965.

Although I have not been able to obtain success rates for the court, my police commanders who have attended the graduation ceremony have all been impressed!

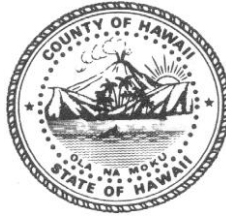
The program requires great commitment on the part of the participants, and the veterans have earned the right to ask that the State do its part to keep the special court operating. The reward -- saved lives, saved families, a healthier and safer community—will more than justify the investment.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Kim
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

MITCHELL D. ROTH
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

DALE A. ROSS
FIRST DEPUTY
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



655 KĪLAUEA AVENUE
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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1965

A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO MAKING
APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VETERANS TREATMENT
COURT

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY, &
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, & ACULTURE AND THE
ARTS

Rep. Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair

Rep. Beth Fukumoto, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 1, 2018, 2:00 P.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 429

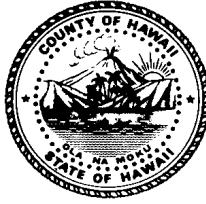
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Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 9:28 am

Honorable Chair LoPresti, Vice-Chair Fukumoto, and Members of the Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i submits the following testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of House Bill No. 1965.

This measure appropriates funds to continue the Third Circuit's Veteran's Treatment Court.

The Veterans Treatment Court is a program with a strong record of success and much promise for the future. Since the Judiciary first implemented Veterans Court in the County of Hawai'i, our office has done its best to actively participate in this specialty court, in a concerted effort to provide veterans with the care they need, while also addressing their offenses and minimizing recidivism. In order to sustain our office's participation in Veterans Court, and for all of the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** the passage of House Bill No. 1965. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

From the office of -
Council Member
District 3



Office: (808) 961-8396
Fax: (808) 961-8912
Email: sue.leeloy@hawaiicounty.gov

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 9:30 am

SUSAN L.K. LEE LOY
25 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

The Honorable Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair
And members of the Committee on Veterans, Military &
International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts

January 30, 2018

Dear Chair LoPresti and Committee Members,

I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of House Bill 1965, to appropriate funds to continue the Third Circuit Veterans Treatment Court.

We ask and expect much of our service members in the armed forces. They put their lives on the line for our country, and sometimes they return home from service with invisible scars. These wounds manifest themselves over decades in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or substance abuse disorder, or some combination of the three, ultimately resulting in a loss of quality of life.

Veteran-specific substance issues require veteran-specific remedies. The veterans treatment court program on Hawai'i Island fills this need by providing focused, directed support for those who have fallen on hard times as a way to get their lives back on track.

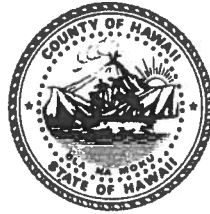
Again, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1965, and I ask for your approval.

Aloha Piha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Lee Loy".

Sue Lee Loy
Council Member, District 3

Maile Medeiros David
Council District 6
Portion N. S. Kona/Ka'ū /Volcano



Phone: (808) 323-4277
Fax: (808) 329-4786
Email: maile.david@hawaiiicounty.gov

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

January 30, 2018

Honorable Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair
Honorable Beth Fukumoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs,
& Culture and the Arts
Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 429
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: H.B. No. 1965 – Relating to Veterans Treatment Court.

Honorable Chair LoPresti and Vice Chair Fukumoto:

Aloha and mahalo a nui loa for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. No. 1965. My name is Maile David, Councilmember representing Council District 6 (rural districts of South Kona, Ka'ū and Volcano Village). I am a strong supporter of our veterans and the intent of H.B. 1965 relating to the Veterans Treatment Court program.

Many veterans live in rural communities on Hawai'i Island and are faced with unique and unusual challenges as it relates to access to programs and quality of service. The Veterans Treatment Court program is critical to the meaningful rehabilitation of our veterans and improving their quality of life. I strongly support the intent of H.B. 1965 to keep the positive life changing benefits of this important program for veterans who live on Hawai'i Island.

Mahalo a nui loa for your favorable consideration.

Very truly yours,

Maile David

Maile David, Council Member
Council District 6, S. Kona, Ka'ū, and Volcano Village

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 10:18 am

Testimony

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, &
CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Hearing: Thursday, February 1, 2018 at 10:00 am

To: The Honorable Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair
The Honorable Beth Fukumoto, Vice Chair

From: Sherilyn K. Tavares, Esq.
President, Hawai'i County Bar Association

Re: HB1965 – Relating to Veterans Treatment Court

Chair LoPresti, Vice Chair Fukumoto, and Members of the Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs, & Culture and The Arts, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 1965. The Hawai'i County Bar Association (HCBA) submits this testimony in support of this bill and respectfully asks the Committee to fund the Third Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court.

The Big Island Veterans Treatment Court has had a positive impact on the lives of those Veterans that have had the opportunity to participate in this very critical program. Federal funding has ended, and the program is at risk if funds are not appropriated. Funding two permanent full-time probation officer positions would mean that the Courts will be better able to serve those who have served our country and now find themselves involved in the criminal justice system. This very critical program ensures those who are affected have a greater opportunity for success on probation due to the special needs that one who has served in the military has. The individuals that Veterans Treatment Court services have mental illness and substance abuse issues arising from the service of our country. Veterans Court has had great success graduating 10 clients since its inception and we are eager to see its further success. These two positions are necessary to continue this critical program and we humbly request your support.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

Sherilyn K. Tavares



HAWAII SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION

HB1965 Funding for Veteran's Court

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS & CULTURE AND THE ARTS

- Rep. Matthew LoPresti, Chair; Rep Beth Fukumoto, Vice Chair
- Thursday, February 1, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.
- Conference Room 429

HSAC Supports HB1965

Good Morning Chair, Vice Chair And Distinguished Committee Members. My name is Alan Johnson, Chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition, an organization of more than 40 treatment and prevention agencies across the State.

The Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition supports the Veterans Treatment Court and recommendations 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 and are available for questions.

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Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 9:29 am

HB-1965

Submitted on: 1/30/2018 4:20:50 PM
Testimony for VMI on 2/1/2018 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Maurice Messina		Support	No

Comments:

As a current Mentor in the Big Island Veterans Treatment Court (BIVTC), I have seen firsthand the positive impact this treatment court has had on our Veterans. These courts greatly facilitate the return of Veterans to contributing citizens of the community. I have had the privilege to mentoring 2 Veterans from beginning to graduation.

Many Veterans present symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI), and there is growing evidence that these behavioral health disorders, if left untreated, may lead to involvement in the criminal justice system. Veterans are not exempt from this. In fact, Veterans who suffer with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) or substance abuse have a higher chance of ending up in the court system. In 2006, 60 percent of Veterans in prison had substance abuse problems.*

Veteran Treatment Courts leverage the court system to keep Veterans with a diagnosis of substance abuse or a behavioral health disorder in treatment long enough to permanently change their behavior. They involve cooperation and collaboration with traditional partners found in Drug Courts, such as prosecutors, defense counsel, treatment providers, probation officers, and law enforcement personnel. Representatives from the Department of Veterans of Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA), and other Veteran-affiliated groups are also generally involved.

I strongly urge you to please help us to continue helping our Veteran brothers and sisters by ensuring the additional positions and funding be authorized. We cannot, and must not, forget those who volunteered to go into harms way in order to protect the freedoms we enjoy today.

Maurice Messina, Veteran Treatment Court Mentor, U.S. Navy Veteran

*National Associate of Drug Court Professionals. (2011). Veterans treatment court studies and statistics. Retrieved August 4, 2011, from National Association of Drug Court Professionals <http://www.nadcp.org/node/442>

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Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 9:35 am

HB-1965

Submitted on: 1/31/2018 8:50:18 AM

Testimony for VMI on 2/1/2018 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
PAVEL HAVLICEK	BIVTC	Support	No

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Pavel Havlicek and I am writing in support of HB 1965. I am a Hawaii resident living in the district of Puna, a UHH graduate, and a combat veteran that has served honorably in both the US Marines, as well as the US Air Force.

For the past two years I have been a volunteer mentor for the Big Island Veteran's Treatment Court (BIVTC). I have worked with several veteran participants during that time, and have been fortunate enough to witness truly positive developments for some of the veterans. I make an effort to be there with my assigned veterans during their appearances in court, I make myself available to them for personal meetings and phone conversations, as well as BIVTC group barbecues and other events such as parades and volunteer opportunities. I feel that the BIVTC group provides the veteran participants an alternative social network to the one that may have led them into the legal and personal difficulties they may be facing.

As veterans our shared vocabulary and similar experiences may lead to an easier connection, and that in turn can lead to a feeling of support and empathy. The conferences and training have helped me better understand PTSD, TBIs, and the often concomitant substance abuse issues. In my experience this is a beneficial program and I encourage you to please offer it your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Be well,

Pavel Havlicek

vmitestimony

From: Gaylene Hopson <Ghop57@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2018 9:16 AM
To: vmitestimony
Subject: Fwd: HB1965

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Gaylene Hopson <Ghop57@aol.com>
Date: January 31, 2018 at 9:11:57 AM HST
To: "vmitestimony@capital.hawaii.gov" <vmitestimony@capital.hawaii.gov>
Subject: **HB1965**

I would like to submit my testimony in Support of
HB 1965

My name is Gaylene Hopson
BIVTC Mentor

For almost 4 years I have been working with a marvelous team to help/assist our Big Island
Veterans and their families.

This program has a proven/positive track record, our Veterans obtain stable housing, stable
employment but most important is their VA Benefits which includes medical and mental health
evaluations and constant care that has been lacking for numerous reasons.

With this funding we can help over 48 Veterans, which includes their families per year.
Our Veterans that have graduated now lead healthy stable lives. Our Veterans range in age from
20's-66+ years and are from Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan wars/era, all
branches of service Army, Marines, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force and Army National Guard.
As well as our Mentors.

Most of our Veterans have been through Drug Court, some numerous times. Our Graduates state
"the difference is the support, the mentors and the military style court." I feel that it also comes
from the counseling from the VA and the Veteran Center Counselors!

Please help us fund this BIVTC, we have approximately 17,000 Veterans plus families on our
Big Island.

I can testify that I have seen this program change lives of Veterans and their Families!

One Vet was able to unite with his son and meet his grandson for the first time, clean and sober!
Unfortunately Bobby did pass away with liver cancer (service connected) however his last year
was spent with his family to make positive memorable memories that his grandson can
remember fondly!

Another Veteran was able to marry his longtime girlfriend and reunite with his daughters and
granddaughters, it was a beautiful wedding!

We work hard to give them back their dignity, and walk with them along the long bumpy road to
recovery.

I am asking for you to help us continue helping Our Veterans, most gave up their young years to
protect and fight for our country...they have experienced and seen situations that most people

could never imagine..... I am asking for the funding to help fight for their future as they battle with their demons and try to learn the tools/skills they need to stay clean/sober So they may pickup the pieces of their lives and know that We Support Them!

Respectfully
Gaylene Hopson
BIVTC Mentor

Sent from my iPhone

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Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 9:31 am

HB-1965

Submitted on: 1/30/2018 6:57:43 PM

Testimony for VMI on 2/1/2018 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Douglass Adams	Shipman Law	Support	No

Comments:

Chair LoPresti, Vice-Chair Fukumoto, and members of the House Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts,

I support wholeheartedly this bill to provide an appropriations amount to enable the continuation of the veterans treatment court in the Third Circuit. The veterans treatment court has provided tremendous support in the third circuit for those veterans who qualify for its coverage. This amount provides for the type of support that helps with recidivism rates and also honors those who have served our country and yet find themselves in trouble, needing help. This program works here as it works throughout the country. Please recommend passage of this bill by the entire House.

respectfully,

Doug Adams, LTC, USA, Ret.

Hilo, Hawaii

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Jan 30, 2018, 10:46 am

HB-1965

Submitted on: 1/30/2018 9:42:41 AM

Testimony for VMI on 2/1/2018 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Golojuch	Rainbow Family 808	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support the Veterans Treatment Court and HB1965. It works and saves lives and money.

Michael Golojuch, Lt Col, USAF(Ret)

HB-1965

Submitted on: 1/30/2018 7:31:00 PM

Testimony for VMI on 2/1/2018 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Aaron SP Farias		Support	No

Comments:

STUDENT of the MYRON B. THOMPSON SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK Supports HB1965

GOOD EVENIING DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Aaron SP Farias. I am a Student at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work. I am an intern at Action with Aloha where we specialize in drug treatment and an employee of the Institute of Human Services where we shelter victims of drug abuse.

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Jan 31, 2018, 11:31 am

vmitestimony

From: Tom - Bev Titus <tbtitus@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2018 10:04 AM
To: vmitestimony
Subject: HB 1965

As a health care professional, I would like to give some input into why the state needs more assistance for our vets. As professions you should understand the consequences of not addressing a problem upfront. If your not aware. Please understand if not addressed correctly, the backend cost will be a far greater issue.

Sincerely Beverly Titus FNP BC

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

vmitestimony

From: Tharry Trusdell <tbr166@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2018 9:04 AM
To: vmitestimony
Subject: RE: HB 1965 - I support Big Island Veterans Court (BIVTC)

I, Tharrington Trusdell believe that this is a great vehicle for assisting veterans that have run in with the law. I believe the community needs to give back and support those that have given their lives to guard, protect, and serve our country. My father, who made a career of serving in the military served our country for 20 years. I also have two brothers that have served in the Hawai'i National Guard. I have also attended meetings where veterans, involved in BIVTC, have stated that the court has helped them immensely to help get their lives back on track. Please support this bill.

LATE

January 31, 2018 From Irene A. Nagao, 33 Palani St., Hilo, Hi. 96720 [Tel:808-987-8262](tel:808-987-8262)

Committee on Veterans, Military, & Int. Affairs, & Culture & The Arts Re: HB 1965
To Honorable Rep. Matthew S. LoPresti, Chair and Rep. Beth Fukumoto, Vice Chair

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Feb 01, 2018, 8:31 am

I am a long time member of the "Friends of the Big Island Drug Court" (Judge Gregg Nakamura) and would like to submit testimony to support HB NO. 1965 that proposes to have Two permanent probation officers for the BIG ISLAND VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, one for Hilo and one for Kona.

I lost a son (age 28) over twenty years ago who was killed by his ex-girlfriend. He was addicted to drugs and was in treatment when she premeditated his murder and shot him seven times. She also was addicted to drugs and they both were not suitable parents for their seven year old son.

My family and I raised their son who is now an adult. His mother never reconciled with him and till today he is still affected by this tragedy. I have seen and experienced the tragedies of those who try to overcome their drug addiction and find it so difficult.

Earlier last year, I attended a graduation ceremony for a veteran who worked very hard and successfully completed the program. To my surprise, that graduate was someone I hired to work at the gas station of a retail store in Hilo. He at that time was a young man who did well in his job but after serving in Vietnam he became addicted to substance abuse for many years. With the help of the BIVTC, he was able to overcome the many challenges and was able to go back to his family after successful treatment.

Another personal story is of my cousin who served in Vietnam also and was a paratrooper who had many horrible experiences. He became so addicted to substance abuse that he became involved in crime in order to support his habit. He ended up in prison for many years and his young life was ruined. The Vietnam War was so long ago and yet till today there are many from that era who are still suffering the effects of that time.

Now in my days of retirement, I am involved in several programs to help not only perpetrators but also victims of crime. I am the president of the board for a nonprofit group called Going Home Hawaii. This consortium of many organizations is working toward helping men, women, and youth who were released from correctional institutions with reintegration into community life through employment, training and appropriate supportive services. Many of these former perpetrators are veterans who have served their 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 am co-founder of a program called STARS (Surviving to Thriving: Advocacy, Resources and Support) who formed a support group for families of victims lost to homicide. The Hawaii Island Prosecutor's Office has supported us in forming this program. Some of us also participate in the Prosecutor's Victim Impact program where we go to speak to the incarcerated men and women about how crime has affected us. This program has been successful in showing perpetrators how their crimes have affected people's lives and in some cases destroyed families.

PLEASE SUPPORT HB 1965 THAT WILL GIVE THE BIG ISLAND VETERANS TREATMENT COURT THE STAFFING OF TWO PERMANENT PROBATION OFFICERS. MAHALO!

