

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB1416
RELATING TO HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN M. MIZUNO, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 12, 2019

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Request appropriation of approximately \$12,000 for research, facilitation,
2 and Neighbor Island commission member travel.

3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports the intent of HB1416.

4 The purpose of HB1416 is to establish a suicide prevention commission to examine, evaluate,
5 and determine methods to improve education, awareness, support services, and inmate outreach
6 to best prevent suicides in Hawaii's correctional facilities. The commission will submit a report
7 and strategic plan 20 days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2020.

8 In response to HCR66, passed by the 2016 Legislature, the plan to reduce suicides in Hawaii by
9 25% by 2025 was completed by the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force (PSHTF) in
10 collaboration with the Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch
11 (EMSIPSB). One of the plan's key goal is to increase knowledge of discrimination and stigma
12 in the context of mental health and suicide prevention with marginalized and/or vulnerable
13 communities such as prison inmates.

14 According to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Hawaii's inmate suicide rate was the
15 seventh highest in the nation with 390 suicide deaths per 100,000 in the period 2001 – 2014.
16 Establishing a time-limited subcommittee with representative membership tasked with a strategic
17 plan, will give greater visibility and weight to addressing the problem of suicide in Hawaii's
18 correctional facilities.

1 **Offered Amendments:**

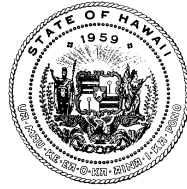
2 The DOH respectfully recommends the following amendments to HB1416:

3 Page 3, line 4, DELETE (7), which reads “one member from the department of health’s injury
4 prevention and control section who is also a member of the prevent suicide Hawaii task force to
5 be appointed by the director of health”.

6 Page 3, line 11 (9), REPLACE “One member to be appointed by the Substance Abuse and
7 Mental Health Services Administration of the United States department of Health” to be replaced
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9 Page 4, line 21: which reads “twenty days prior to convening of the regular session of 2020” to
10 be replaced with “twenty days prior to convening of the regular session of 2021.”

11 Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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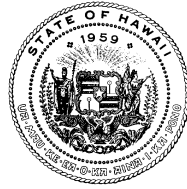
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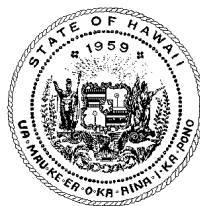
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DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
919 Ala Moana Boulevard, 4th Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

NOLAN P. ESPINDA
DIRECTOR

Maria C. Cook
Deputy Director
Administration

Jodie F. Maesaka-Hirata
Deputy Director
Corrections

Renee R. Sonobe Hong
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1416
RELATING TO HEALTH.

by
Nolan P. Espinda, Director
Department of Public Safety

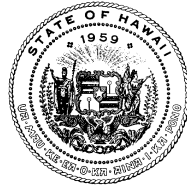
House Committee on Health
Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Public Safety (PSD) hereby submits testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 1416, which would establish a suicide prevention commission to research and recommend methods for preventing suicides in Hawaii's correctional facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.



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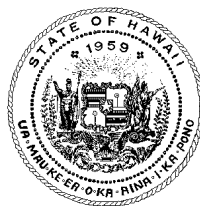
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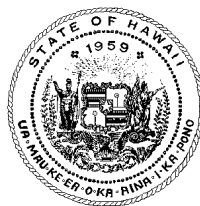
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COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

Phone/E-Mail: (808) 927-1214 / kat.caphi@gmail.com



COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Rep. John Mizuno, Chair

Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

10:05 am

Room 016

STRONG SUPPORT for HB 1416 - SUICIDE PREVENTION COMMISSION FOR CORRECTIONS

Aloha Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the families of **ASHLEY GREY, DAISY KASITATI, JOEY O'MALLEY, JESSICA FORTSON AND ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED UNDER THE "CARE AND CUSTODY" OF THE STATE** as well as the approximately 5,500 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars or under the "care and custody" of the Department of Public Safety on any given day. We are always mindful that more than 1,600 of Hawai'i's imprisoned people are serving their sentences abroad thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support and thanks the committee for hearing this important bill. HB 1416 establishes a Suicide Prevention Commission to develop a strategic plan to reduce suicides within Hawaii's correctional system. This has become a very pressing situation. We have been working on justice issues for more than two decades and we have never seen the number of suicides or attempted suicides that we have witnessed over the last several years.

As the bill states, the Department of Justice ranked Hawai'i 7th in the nation for suicides among incarcerated individuals. This report was issued before the rash of suicides and attempted suicides since 2017.

In 2017 CNN reported¹ that Suicide rates in prisons are rising

- After holding steady for years, suicide rates started rising sharply in 2013.
- In state prisons, it went up 30% from 2013 to 2014.
- In 2014, there were 3,927 inmate deaths in state (3,483) and federal (444) prisons, the largest number of inmate deaths reported since tracking began in 2001. Although illness remained the most common cause of death, suicides represented 7%. That's the largest percentage of deaths due to suicide since tracking began.

An [international study](#),² conducted with Professors Seena Fazel and Keith Hawton at the University of Oxford, shows the increased risk of suicide for men and women in prison, compared to the general population, in 24 high-income countries between 2011–2014. The study found that the **risk of suicide increased at least three-fold for male prisoners** compared to the general male population. For females, this risk was amplified, **with female prisoners being at least nine times more likely to die from suicide** compared to the general female population.

In 2007, the World Health Organization released a report entitled, PREVENTING SUICIDE IN JAILS AND PRISONS³ including a summary of best practices:

First of all, staff culture and cooperation seem to be critical to the successful implementation of prison suicide prevention programmes. Best practices for preventing suicides in jail and prison settings are based on the development and documentation of a comprehensive suicide prevention plan with the following elements:

- *A training programme (including refreshers) for correctional staff and care givers to help them recognize suicidal inmates and appropriately respond to inmates in suicidal crises.*
- *Attention needs to be paid to the general prison environment (levels of activity, safety, culture and staff-prisoner relationships). In particular, the quality of the social climate of prisons is critical in minimizing suicidal behaviours. While prisons can never be stress-free environments, prison administrators must enact effective strategies for minimizing bullying and other violence in their institutions, and for maximizing supportive relationships among prisoners and staff. The quality of staff-prisoner relationships is critical in reducing prisoners' stress levels and maximizing the likelihood that prisoners will trust staff sufficiently to disclose to them when their coping resources are becoming overwhelmed, feelings of hopelessness, and suicidal ideation.*

¹ **Prison suicides are on the rise nationally and it's pretty bad in Massachusetts**, By Emanuella Grinberg, CNN, Wed April 19, 2017. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/19/health/prison-suicides-massachusetts-trnd/index.html>

² 'Suicide in prisons: an international study of prevalence and contributory factors. [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(17\)30430-3/supplemental](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(17)30430-3/supplemental)

³ Preventing Suicide in Jails and Prisons, World Health Organization and the International Association for Suicide Prevention. https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/resource_jails_prisons.pdf

- *Procedures to systematically screen inmates upon their arrival at the facility and throughout their stay in order to identify those who may be at high risk.*
- *A mechanism to maintain communication between staff members regarding high-risk inmates.*
- *Written procedures which outline minimum requirements for housing high-risk inmates; provision of social support; routine visual checks and constant observation for acutely suicidal inmates; and appropriate use of restraints as a last resort for controlling self-injurious inmates.*
- *Inmates with mental disorders in need of treatment should receive it (pharmacological or psychosocial interventions) and be kept under strict observation.*
- *Development of sufficient internal resources or links to external community-based mental health services to ensure access to mental health personnel when required for further evaluation and treatment.*
- *A strategy for debriefing when a suicide occurs towards identifying ways of improving suicide detection, monitoring, and management in correctional settings.*

In conclusion, although we sometimes lack the ability to accurately predict if and when an inmate will attempt or commit suicide, prison officials and correctional, health care, and mental health personnel are in the best position to identify, assess, and treat potentially suicidal behaviour. Even though not all inmate suicides are preventable, many are, and a systematic reduction of these deaths can occur if comprehensive suicide prevention programmes are implemented in correctional facilities throughout the world.

Community Alliance on Prisons implores the committee to pass this important legislation to establish a Suicide Prevention Commission to develop a strategic plan to address this important issue.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and support this bill!

Helping Hawai'i Live Well

To: Representative John Mizuno, Chair, Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair, Members, House Committee on Health

From: Trisha Kajimura, Executive Director

Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1416 RELATING TO HEALTH

Hearing: February 12, 2019, 9:00 am, CR 329

Thank you for hearing **HB 1416, which establishes a suicide prevention commission to examine, evaluate, and determine methods to improve education, awareness, support services, and inmate outreach to best prevent suicide in Hawai'i's correctional facilities.** Mental Health America of Hawaii supports HB 1416 as a way to address the concern of the high rate of suicide within the state's incarcerated population. This measure will enhance the strategies the Department of Public Safety is currently using.

Mental Health America of Hawaii is a 501(c)3 organization founded in Hawai'i 77 years ago, that serves the community by promoting mental health through advocacy, education and service. One of our signature services is a training for middle and high school age youth on Youth Suicide and Bullying Prevention that we developed here in Hawaii called "Ho'olohe Pono." This training has been evaluated to show that over 80% of participants increase their knowledge of bullying, suicide, helpful resources, and how they can assist someone in need.

In Hawai'i, we unfortunately have very high rates of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation amongst various age groups. Shockingly, our state's most recent Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (part of a national survey) results show that 23.2% of middle age youth in Hawaii self-report suicidal ideation, 16.3% has made a suicide plan, and 12.4% have made a suicide attempt.¹ Suicide-related behavior has a serious and profound impact on communities that can be reduced with education, awareness, and appropriate mental health treatment services. It is critically important that our community members currently incarcerated also receive these services.

Thank you for considering my **testimony in support of HB 1416.** Please contact me at trisha.kajimura@mentalhealthhawaii.org or (808)521-1846 if you have any questions.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System, Hawaii, 2017



ONLINE SUBMITTAL: February 9, 2019

HEARING February 12, 2018 9:00 a.m. in room 329

TO: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Rep. John Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

FROM: Eva Andrade, President

RE: **Strong Support for HB 1416 Relating to Health**

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening life, family and religious freedom in Hawaii. We are committed to defending the sanctity of human life from conception until natural death, and everything that comes between. We are very concerned about suicide, because it affects the vulnerable people in our community, especially our youth, elderly and infirm.

A report to the 2018 Hawaii Legislature indicated that between 2012-2016, suicide was the most common cause of fatal injuries among Hawaii residents, accounting for one-quarter of all fatal injuries. The most striking statistic was that one person dies by suicide in Hawaii every two days.ⁱ

Some media outlets reported that Hawaii's inmate suicide rate is the seventh highest in the country, according to Bureau of Justice statistics. Although the suicide rate for Hawai'i prisons varies from year to year, in the eight-month period between June 15, 2017, and January 20, 2018, there were five suicides at correctional facilities in Hawai'i.ⁱⁱ

Experts rightly point out that suicidal behaviors, for people of any age, are usually rooted in many different factors, with mental health issues playing an important role in the overall mix. It is a "perfect storm" of emotional issues and the only way to begin making a difference, is by identifying and treating each person. And the good news, is that it is fixable by awareness and treatment.

Establishing a Suicide Prevention Commission to develop a strategic plan to reduce suicides within Hawaii's correctional system and to provide accurate information to the wider community is an effort we applaud. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support!

ⁱ Hawaii Suicide Task Force Report, 2018

ⁱⁱ Letter from Nolan Espinda (Hawaii Department of Public Safety Director) to HCR 85 Task Force Chair Michael D. Wilson, March 6, 2018

HB-1416

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 12:15:08 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kim Coco Iwamoto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in STRONG SUPPORT of HB1416. It is so important to gather experts on suicide to address the responsibility the state has to human beings in its custody or care; however, I hope this does not become another legislative smoke and mirror trick to pretend the problem is being addressed but infact it will become another plan that never gets implemented.

We do not need to wait until 2026 to begin addressing the known precursors to these suicides and attempted suicides - namely over-utilization of "lockdowns" and segregation.

Thank you,

Kim Coco Iwamoto

HB-1416

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 10:15:04 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Brent Oto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

LATE

HB-1416

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 9:38:03 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	O`ahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i	Support	No

Comments:



HAWAII HEALTH
& HARM REDUCTION CENTER

LATE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1416

TO: House Committee on Health

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, Grants, Development & Policy Manager

DATE: February 12, 2019 (9 AM)

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Committee Members:

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) supports SB 1416, which would establish a suicide prevention commission to examine, evaluate, and determine methods to improve education, awareness, support services, and inmate outreach to best prevent suicides in Hawaii's correctional facilities.

The state has an obligation to ensure the life, health, and well being of those in correctional custody. Of particular concern is the overuse of segregation, which exacerbates pre-existing mental health conditions. Segregation has negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral impacts for those without pre-existing mental health conditions, and these impacts can impact functioning after release from segregation and from incarceration.

The Department of Public Safety disclosed to the HCR 85 Corrections Reform Task Force that three-quarters of those in jail or prison are incarcerated for Class C felonies or lower. The continued incarceration of individuals who pose low safety risks to the community is costly, ineffective, and injurious to individual and public health.

HHRC works with many individuals who are impacted by social determinants of health. Many face challenges related to substance use and mental health. Protracted involvement in the criminal justice system for those who are more suited for care within a therapeutic model is neither wise nor compassionate public policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

LATE

HB-1416

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 9:48:23 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Pua Kaninau Santos	Oahu Prevent Suicide Hawaii Taskforce	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Pua Kaninau-Santos, Chair of the O`ahu Prevent Suicide Hawai`i Task Force.

As a survivor of a teen's son's suicide I know the heartbreak and impact on families and the community from suicides. Suicides are Preventable!

Please vote yes to support the passage of this bill.

Mahalo,

Pua Kaninau-Santos

LATE

HB-1416

Submitted on: 2/12/2019 7:12:07 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/12/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
William N. Arakaki	Individual	Support	No

Comments: