



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 18, 2019

TO: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 7 SD1 – RELATING TO INCARCERATED PARENTS**
SR 7 SD1 – RELATING TO INCARCERATED PARENTS

Hearing: March 19, 2019, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of these resolutions to support appropriate child-parent relationships of children of incarcerated parents, and provides comments. DHS defers to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) with the authority over correctional facilities and programs, including any planning and resource needs necessary to implement.

PURPOSE: The purpose of SCR7 and SR7 is to require the development of a plan for visitation centers for children of incarcerated parents at all state operated correctional facilities.

DHS is open to further discussions and collaboration with the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Family Reunification Working Group, and other stakeholders to develop a plan to develop visitation centers at the state's correction facilities.

DPS has already established programs to promote parenting skills and other child-bonding activities such as Keiki O Ka Aina's Play and Learn, Read Aloud, Read-to-me, Keala Hou, Family Days, etc. Assessment, planning, collaboration and recommendation for the development of this effort will require new staff resources and funding. New ongoing

funding will also be required to implement and sustain a statewide DPS visitation program at all facilities, based on the recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Tuesday March 19, 2019, 9:00 Conference Room 016

SR7 SD1-RELATING TO INCARCERATED PARENTS

TESTIMONY

Laurie Tomchak, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Wakai and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports SR7 SD1, which requests the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety, to work with the Family Reunification Working Group and other community stakeholders to develop a plan to establish visitation centers and all state correctional facilities and jails.

We are committed to alleviating prison overcrowding and helping incarcerated people prepare for reintegration into society. Children of incarcerated people are more at risk for entering the juvenile or adult correction system themselves. Encouraging regular visitation strengthens their bonds with their parents and improves their emotional health. Prisoners also benefit from regular contact with their children. If they maintain contacts with their family, they will be more motivated to follow prison rules and take advantage of educational programs inside the prison.

Visitation centers can make prison visits less traumatizing for children by creating a more welcoming atmosphere in a frightening and unfamiliar place. This can prepare both parent and child for their reunion outside prison. Both prison authorities and social service organizations have indicated their support of this program, and we would like to add our voice to theirs. Thank you for your attention to this testimony.

LATE

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: SCR 7, SD 1 and SR 7, SD 1 – Requesting the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety, to work with the Family Reunification Working Group and other community stakeholders to develop a plan to establish visitation centers at all state operated correctional centers and jails.

POSITION: **STRONG SUPPORT**

March 19, 2019

Conference Room 016

9:00 AM

Aloha, Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Wakai, and members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. **My name is Stephen Morse. I am the Executive Director of Blueprint for Change (BFC) and am here today to support SCR 7, SD 1 and SR 7, SD 1.**

Blueprint for Change is a non-profit organization with a strong track record for innovating and implementing effective support services that address the unique challenges facing Hawai'i's 'ohana. The organization's roots date back to 1994 when in response to a growingly overburdened Child Welfare System, the Hawai'i State Legislature created the Child Welfare Services Reform Task Force for the purpose of developing a "Blueprint for reform in child protective services."

SCR 7, SD 1 and SR 7, SD 1 very much align with these values and principles we are built upon. Since 2014, we have been a member of the Family Reunification Working Group, an ad hoc committee of the Legislative Keiki Caucus that has been identifying and developing solutions to problems that affect children and families affected by parental incarceration.

Parental incarceration is a strong risk factor for many adverse outcomes for children, including antisocial and violent behavior, mental health problems, failure to graduate from school, and unemployment. Parental incarceration is now recognized as an "adverse childhood experience"; it is important to note that it is distinguished from other adverse childhood experiences by the unique combination of trauma, shame, and stigma; and the prison environment can be frightening and traumatizing for children, both in the attitudes and behaviors of prison staff as well as the physical setting of approved visitation sites.

Visits can include long waits, body frisks, what may be considered as rude treatment by correction officers, and exposure to crowded visiting rooms with no activities for children. These conditions do not encourage frequent visits between incarcerated parents and their children, and yet frequent visits are exactly what all parties need. Findings from national studies suggest that the maintenance of family ties and parent-child relationships is linked to post-release success,

lower rates of recidivism, and fewer parole violations; and studies suggest that the alarming rates of intergenerational incarceration may be attributed to the lack of communication and maintenance of child-incarcerated parent relationships.

We believe that family friendly Visitation Centers can help reduce these adverse childhood experiences and keep families together. These resolutions are important for helping keep families together by creating a safe place where healing can begin. They look at visitation centers through a social services lens, a place where children and significant other family members can remain unified with the offender and where professional social workers can begin to identify and focus strengthening services on children at risk of being part of the cycle of incarceration. This is why it is important that the working group created by these resolutions include representation from the Department of Human Services and community-based social service providers, in addition to the Department of Public Safety.

We strongly urge the committee to pass these resolutions. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: SR7 SD1

POSITION: **STRONG SUPPORT**

March 18, 2019

LATE

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the committee:

Blueprint for Change is a non-profit organization with a strong track record for innovating and implementing effective support services that address the unique challenges facing Hawai'i's 'ohana. The organization's roots date back to 1994 when in response to a growingly overburdened Child Welfare System, the Hawai'i State Legislature created the Child Welfare Services Reform Task Force for the purpose of developing a "Blueprint for reform in child protective services."

After several years of rigorous evaluation, the Committee finalized the core elements of the Neighborhood Place model, and in 2000, Blueprint for Change (BFC) was formed and incorporated as a nonprofit organization to serve as the Department of Human Services, master contractor for Neighborhood Place services and to continue the Committee's effort to improve the responsiveness of the State of Hawai'i – Child Welfare System.

By maintaining fluid relationships between state agencies, local service providers and community advocates, Blueprint for Change and the Neighborhood Place Partnership is able to significantly improve the responsiveness of the state's Child Welfare System while reducing instances of child abuse and neglect.

As part of the oversight of the (7) NP across the state, BFC collects Quarterly Activity Reports (QAR), which is designed to inform services, procedures, and practices moving forward. In 2013 the QAR were showing a significant increase in services delivered to families impacted by incarceration. This led BFC to exploring this issue further. Thus, the creation of the Family Reunification Working Group (FRWG). The FRWG gained support and interest through the Legislative Keiki Caucus, and began meeting regularly to explore and advocate for solutions to problems encountered by children and families in the State who are affected by incarceration.

The following are reasons for STRONG SUPPORT OF SR7:

S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

- Family friendly visitation centers will encourage families to stay in frequent contact with their significant others who are incarcerated;
- National data shows that incarcerated individuals who maintain regular contact with their children and families are less likely to recidivate when they reenter society;
- Having the visitation centers staffed by social service professionals will provide families with opportunities to receive information and referral and resource linkage services, guidance and counseling, wrap around services to address issues relating to poverty, etc;
- Visitation centers could also be staffed with kupuna and Hawaiian cultural practitioners who could provide Native Hawaiian families with more relevant cultural counseling and problem-solving practices;
- The bill provides an opportunity to begin breaking the cycle of incarceration that is generational in some families;
- The bill provides all stakeholders with the opportunity to begin the conversation about how we break the cycle of incarceration and not only help families sustain themselves but also save the State millions of dollars in the future by reducing our prison population and welfare costs; and
- The State of California has successfully operated visitation centers like those being proposed by the bill for over thirty years. These centers are operated by a non-profit, social service organization called, Friends Outside.

I strongly urge the committee to pass SR7. Mahalo a nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

SR-7-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2019 3:21:58 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
De MONT R. D. CONNER	Testifying for Ho'omanapono Political Action Committee (HPAC)	Support	Yes

Comments:

WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THIS BILL. HOWEVER, THIS BILL MUST HAVE MANDATORY LANGUAGE THAT WILL REQUIRE PSD TO FULLY COMPLY, WITH CLEAR SANCTIONS IF THE DEPARTMENT FAILS TO COMPLY. OTHERWISE THIS BILL WILL BECOME JUST ANOTHER TOOTHLESS BILL, WHICH THE DEPARTMENT WILL IGNORE OR ONLY PAY LIP SERVICE TO SUPPORTING.