



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

February 22, 2020

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2891 – RELATING TO OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES**

Hearing: February 25, 2020, 12:40 p.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration measure that continues the reform of the State's juvenile justice system.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill permits individual vocational programs within the purview of the Office of Youth Services to engage in commercial enterprises, including the sale of goods and services, for self-sustainability purposes, for young adults only. Establishes the Office of Youth Services Revolving Fund. Appropriates funds.

Act 201, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2014, initiated juvenile justice reform in Hawaii to improve and enhance Hawaii's juvenile justice system. Working collaboratively cross-sector, there has been a twenty-six per cent reduction in admissions to the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility since Act 201 became law.

Act 208, SLH 2018, established the Kawailoa Youth and Family Wellness Center at the campus of the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility, to provide much needed services for at-risk youth and young adults, including victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

Innovative programs have commenced at the Wellness Center, and this program will provide skills building, vocational training, and economic programming to prepare young adults for entry into the workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.



SB2891

RELATING TO OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES

Ke Kōmike 'Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki'ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai

Pepeluai 25, 2020

12:40 p.m.

Lumi 211

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB2891, which would allow the Office of Youth Services to establish a commercial enterprise vocational program for at-risk young adults and establish a revolving fund to collect the proceeds from enterprise activities to self-sustain the program. **The program envisioned by this measure would facilitate the continuing transformation of the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) into the Kawaihoa Youth and Family Wellness Center (Kawaihoa Center), and would allow the Office of Youth Services to provide job training services to a young demographic population in great need of economic opportunity and job skill training: young adults between 18 and 24 who have been involved with the criminal justice system or are experiencing other threats or issues, and who are no longer eligible for child protective services.**

Addressing the needs of youth involved in or at risk of being involved our juvenile and criminal justice systems has been an issue of longstanding concern for OHA. In 2010, OHA produced a comprehensive report detailing the overrepresentation and disparate treatment of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system.¹ This report found that Native Hawaiian youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system, and are also most frequently arrested in all offense categories.² Since 2012, OHA has also administered the Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force (NHJTF), which addressed the multi-faceted issue of Native Hawaiian involvement in the criminal justice system.³ In its report, the NHJTF further acknowledged that “an individual’s contact with the criminal justice system, regardless of race, often begins at youth.”⁴ And in its 2018 Final Report, the HCR85 Task Force on Prison Reform issued a key recommendation to address and counteract the risk of Native Hawaiians’ early involvement in our justice system, imploring the State to develop “early intervention strategies that are focused on diverting Native Hawaiian youth away from the criminal justice system and toward pathways for success.”⁵

¹ OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, THE DISPARATE TREATMENT OF NATIVE HAWAIIANS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM (2010), https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ir_final_web_rev.pdf.

² *Id.* at 68.

³ OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, NATIVE HAWAIIAN JUSTICE TASK FORCE REPORT (2012), https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2012NHJTF_REPORT_FINAL_0.pdf.

⁴ *Id.* at 21.

⁵ HCR85 TASK FORCE ON PRISON REFORM, FINAL REPORT: CREATING BETTER OUTCOMES, SAFER COMMUNITIES xix (2018) available at https://19of32x2yl33s8o4xza0gf14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/HCR-85-Task-Force-on-Prison-Reform_Final-Report_12.28.18.pdf.

OHA accordingly appreciates and supports this measure, in enabling the implementation and expansion of programming that would further reinforce ongoing efforts to prevent and reduce youth and young adult involvement in our juvenile and criminal justice systems. **OHA in particular appreciates that this measure may substantially reinforce the ongoing efforts of the recently-established Kawaihoa Center, which seeks to address the very concerning findings and recommendations made by the various criminal justice task forces OHA has been involved in or supported over the last decade.**

OHA notes that the Kawaihoa Center has already explored and adopted innovative approaches to serving and rehabilitating at-risk and offending youth that is individual-, family-, and community-focused. These include, for example, services to address the unique challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness, drug addiction, mental illness, and human trafficking. The Kawaihoa Center also supports broader efforts to reach beyond the walls of the HYCF, where it is located. The Kawaihoa Center houses RYSE, a residential and day program that offers homeless, trafficked, and “street entrenched” young adults access to safe temporary shelter and services and programs in furtherance of their short- and long- term needs and goals. The Kawaihoa Center also houses Kinai ‘Eha, an alternative education program intended to “disrupt the Pathway to Prison” for youth who need an individualized academic approach, and that provides them with a sense of purpose, offers them workforce training, and reinforces Hawaiian cultural connections. **The instant measure would complement and support the Kawaihoa Center’s much-needed and innovative, holistic approaches to addressing the root causes of young and lifelong criminal activity, by authorizing programming that can provide at-risk or formerly criminal justice system involved young adults with continued support even after they have “aged out” of child protective services, through values-based economic opportunities and job training critical to their ongoing rehabilitation and long-term success.**

Notably, by helping to prevent or reduce the risk of young adults’ continued criminal behavior later in life, the commercial enterprise vocational program envisioned in this measure may in itself save the State significant taxpayer dollars in reduced corrections costs over the long-term; meanwhile, the self-funding nature of the program could also enable it to become cost-neutral or nearly cost-neutral in the near future, even without considering these long-term savings.

OHA believes that early-stage therapeutic approaches as well as economic opportunity will help to heal our broken youth and promote success among our young adults; this will result in stronger individuals and families, and will likely provide long-term benefits to public safety and the overall well-being of our communities. In addition, OHA is hopeful that the success of the Kawaihoa Center, and its programs, may also serve as a model for greater reform within our criminal justice system.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB2891. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SB-2891

Submitted on: 2/23/2020 7:32:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2020 12:40:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kat Brady	Testifying for Community Alliance on Prisons	Support	Yes

Comments:

TESTIMONY ON SB2891 RELATING TO OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES BEFORE THE
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

February 25, 2020
12:40 PM
Conference Rm. 211

LATE

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Agaran, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, **my name is Lilinoe Kauahikaua, I am a Masters of Social Work Candidate at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and I am here today to support SB2891 relating to the Office of Youth Services, Office of Youth Services Revolving Fund; Commercial Enterprise Vocational Programs.**

In my current study as a Master's of Social work Candidate, I have focused primarily on the over-representation of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system, those currently incarcerated, and those housed in out of state facilities. I am called to this work because of my own experiences with incarceration, and substance abuse, and homelessness.

I have had the opportunity to visit Kawaioloa Youth and Family Wellness Center (KTFWC) on multiple occasions. KTFWC is changing the way we approach early predictors and contributing factors to juvenile delinquency. KYFWC instead centers on reframing the narrative, diverting focus away from deficit-based understanding, and instead, developing increased emphasis and interventions that focus on positive youth development that contribute to preferred outcomes.

SB2891 is a crucial element in the future of the Kawaioloa Youth and Family Wellness Center. The ability for OYS to create commercial enterprises will allow KYFWC to create a residential vocational program for those young adults (18-24) aging out of the Judicial and foster care system. Many of these youth may have no familial structure to fall back on. Vocational training instills a sense of confidence and independence for youth, building skills they are able to then apply to the job market and thrive through a deeper sense of self-determination and improve their chances of economic stability once released.

Unlike strictly trade programs, this program will allow youth to gain valuable skills through a wide range of vocational applications based on social entrepreneurship. These applications will allow them to flourish, learning life skills, inspiring further educational aspirations, and building both personal and professional relationships.

SB2891 would give our youth a fighting chance to show us just how resilient they are.