



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.

By

Della Teraoka, Interim Associate Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawai'i System

HB 1129 HD1 – RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1129 HD1, which provides for education and re-entry of incarcerated women developed by Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice (HFRJ).

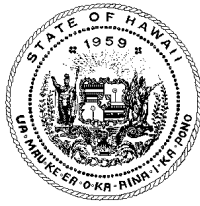
This program is not just a support program to help women study for and successfully pass the General Educational Development (GED) test, but also builds and recognizes employable skills while helping the women transition on to higher education post-GED. Windward Community College (WCC) has partnered with HFRJ to promote educational attainment at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC). Last semester, WCC created a certificate for those who complete the HFRJ peer tutor training program which recognizes the training and experience as a qualification for student employee positions in college level tutoring. During their incarceration, it allows them to serve as tutors both in the GED program and also in college level classes which they complete post-GED. Post-release, this helps students to find campus-based work in order to pursue their college studies.

In addition to supporting students academically to master the GED, this program helps students to enroll in college level coursework via correspondence or online in instances when there are not enough students to offer the class in person at the facility. This allows all students to progress toward their degree efficiently when incarcerated.

The GED is the first step for women at WCCC to be able to continue on and then benefit from higher education. Through the tutoring program offered by HFRJ, women have been able to attain their GED at greater rates and in shorter time periods than previously, and then work to support other women to complete their GEDs as well. This cycle of achievement and giving promotes a better living and learning environment. Education has been shown to decrease violence and negative behavior patterns while incarcerated and lead to better outcomes post-incarceration.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1129 HD1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
Ka 'Oihana Ho'opalekana Lehulehu
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TOMMY JOHNSON
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Melanie Martin
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Michael J. Hoffman
Acting Deputy Director
Corrections

William F. Oku
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1129, HD 1
RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

By

Tommy Johnson, Director

House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 22, 2023; 2:30 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Via Video Conference

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Public Safety (PSD) supports House Bill (HB) 1129, HD1 which appropriates funding to Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice for the education and reentry program for incarcerated women and offers the following comments.

As written, HB 1129, HD1 appropriates funding as a grant pursuant to Chapter 42F, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), to Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice for the purposes of this Act. PSD supports the standards for administrative grants that establish requirements for the selected applicant to comply with. Specifically, requiring the selected applicant to make available all records the applicant may have relating to the grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance.

PSD is mandated to follow education procedures that include Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) testing (a nationally recognized standardized test) to determine an initial Grade Equivalent (GE) level for each student, participation in Essential Education's "GED Academy" that supplements the 4 sections of the GED exam with supplemental course work and related practice tests, and the administering of the "GED Ready" practice tests for students scoring 145 or higher on GED Academy. More importantly, PSD is an authorized test center under Pearson VUE and to administer

computer-based and paper GED tests, a Pearson VUE Certified Administrator needs to be present that adheres to the rules of conduct and certification agreement. Failure to protect the exam content degrades the value of certifications and puts our GED test centers at risk of losing the right to deliver exams.

Currently, PSD and Department of Education (DOE), McKinley Community School for Adults Moanalua Campus (MCSA) collaborate to issue Hawai'i State Adult Community School Diplomas for students who pass their GED tests at WCCC.

To ensure the integrity of the GED tutoring and test-taking process by documenting GED records using Essential Education's website provided at statewide correctional facilities, PSD will continue to work with DOE/MCSA and the selected grant applicant in meeting the educational and counseling needs of incarcerated women.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1129, HD1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/22/2023

Time: 02:30 PM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1129, HD1 RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates moneys as a grant to the Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice for the education and reentry program for incarcerated women. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education supports HB 1129, HD1.

The McKinley Community School for Adults welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice and Windward Community College to provide counseling services to meet the educational needs of incarcerated women.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Honorable Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

HEARING DATE: Wednesday, February 22, 2023
TIME: 2:30 PM, Via Videoconference & Conference Room 308

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 1129 HD1 RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice (HFRJ) strongly supports this measure appropriating \$225,000 for the third year of this four-part higher and continuing education pilot program at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC), which includes the extraordinarily successful GED peer tutoring program. I am Diana Bethel, Phd, coordinator for HFRJ's instructors who support the peer tutors in this education pilot project at WCCC.

HFRJ is an educational non-profit entity that has decades of experience collaborating with other community partners to develop, apply, measure, and report on the outcomes of innovations to assist people in accessing justice. HFRJ's work has been replicated in other states and countries and is described in 50 academic articles. HFRJ uses restorative justice theory and practices in its innovations, which are ideal for accessing justice. This unique education program seeks to motivate and support women in prison and after release to earn college degrees. The pilot program was recently described in a peer reviewed [article](#) and other papers on the project are being drafted for publication.

Because the Department of Public Safety offered confusing testimony at hearings on the bills to continue funding this project regarding GED testing, we want to clarify that HFRJ has nothing to do with GED testing. Its involvement in this project was only to design and pilot the project for three years. This bill is to only to fund year three of the project. Year two was funded, but the funds have not been released by the state and HFRJ has supported it with a small donation.

The program's remarkable results include 20 women passing the GED within 10 months of its application while the prison averaged only two women a year passing previously. More women are actively studying for the GED at WCCC than all the other prisons in the state combined. Since October 2021, about 100 imprisoned women have participated in the program. Almost all the tutors released from WCCC are in college today with four enrolled at WCC (3 full-time and 1 part-time).

We urge the Committee to please pass this bill. If you have any questions about HFRJ's support or more details about the program please contact Lorenn Walker, JD, MPH, at lorenn@hawaii.edu or (808) 218-3712.



COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Honorable Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

HEARING DATE: Wednesday, February 22, 2023
TIME: 2:30 PM, Via Videoconference & Conference Room 308

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB1130 HD1 RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN.

[Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice](#) (HFRJ) strongly supports this measure appropriating funds necessary for Windward Community College (WCC) to create and provide a trauma informed certification program for adult correctional offices. I am Diana Bethel, Phd, working with HFRJ.

HFRJ has studied best practices [for youth](#) since 1980. In 2004 HFRJ began studying and working with state adult prisons working to develop evidence based knowledge and what works to [decrease incarceration](#) and increase peaceful behavior. HFRJ's experiences working in the prisons indicate that incarcerated people in Hawai'i suffer from a disproportionate share of [childhood abuse, neglect, and trauma](#). This is true for [other states](#) as well.

This bill would give WCC the means to create and provide a "level I trauma-informed certification program" for state adult correctional officers (ACOs). This would be for officers who *volunteer for the training*. While the state should require all ACOs to have knowledge about trauma informed care because most incarcerated people have experienced significant trauma, this program is for those ACOs who actively seek out more specialized training.

There are important differences in programs and learning when one is required to learn something compared to when one chooses to learn something, and earn a certification based on their individual efforts. A college certification is proposed here, which is different from mandating and requiring someone to learn something. This difference was discussed when continuing education was originally [suggested for nurses over 40 years ago](#): *Requirements for voluntary continuing education programs are higher than those required by most licensing boards to meet their mandatory requirements. This is because it is a recognition program, and the recognition represents an achievement beyond the minimal requirements established by licensing boards.*

The ACOs that choose to earn this trauma-informed certification would likely become assets to the Department of Public Safety (PSD) in role modeling the value in learning this vital subject. They would also provide specialized information to other ACOs and staff who know only what PSD requires them to learn. If PSD were most concerned with advancing trauma informed care in its institutions, it would give the ACOs who earned this certification pay increases.

Hawai'i in general [lacks training](#) opportunities for corrections professionals and especially in trauma informed care, which is vital for assisting incarcerated people and for those who work with them. Our state jails and prisons are our [de facto mental institutions](#). Corrections professionals need special skills to help the incarcerated. These skills can also help keep correctional staff and others safe while performing their duties. This measure would help address important needs and create a more rehabilitative and professional environment by creating a voluntary certification program.

We urge the Committee to please pass this bill. If you have any questions about HFRJ's support or would like more details about our testimony, please contact Loren Walker, JD, MPH, at lorenn@hawaii.edu or (808) 218-3712.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Kyle Yamashita, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Room 308

2:30 PM

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 1129 HD1-PEER TUTORING EDUCATION

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa 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 4,028 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the “care and custody” of the Department of Public Safety/Corrections and Rehabilitation on any given day. We are always mindful that 917 (41% of the male imprisoned population²) 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 appreciates the opportunity to share our thoughts and experiences in strong support of HB 1129 HD1 that appropriates funds for the education and reentry program for women at WCCC.

Education is the route to economic mobility and since many Moms are imprisoned, programs like this are important to open up opportunities for woman who never thought they could go to college. Some of the women have offered compelling testimonies at committees about how their lives changed when they were introduced to possibilities that they never imagined.

Poverty is one of the drivers of mass incarceration and education is the route out of poverty and onto economic mobility track.

¹ Department of Public Safety, Weekly Population Report, February 13, 2023.

https://dps.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2023-02-13_George-King.pdf

² Why are 41% of Hawai`i’s male prison population sent thousands of miles from home when the following prisons in Hawai`i have room here: Halawa is at 74.3%; Halawa Special Needs Facility is at 63.6%; Kulani is at 39.5%; Waiawa is at 59% of operational capacity.

This successful program has graduated 20 women with their GED's and many are taking college courses in anticipation of going to college when they are released. This is a dream that many women thought impossible for them and this peer tutoring program has helped them realize their own potential.

Community Alliance on Prisons urges the committee to pass HB 1129 HD1 with a strong recommendation that the program be sufficiently funded. This program is the route out of poverty for women and enables them and their families to dream.

The impact on the children of Moms going to college is enormous and opens up the doors of opportunity for them as well!

"Higher education is the strongest, sturdiest ladder to increased socio-economic mobility."

*Drew Faust
President Harvard University*

HB-1129-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 1:52:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Rich	Women?s Prison Project	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 22, 2023 2:30 p.m.

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE Conference Room 308

State Capitol

STRONG SUPPORT HB1129 RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN.

The Women’s Prison Project (WPP) strongly supports this measure appropriating \$225,000 for the third year of the higher and continuing education pilot program at the Women’s Community Correctional Center (WCCC). The program includes educational counseling provided by Windward Community College (WCC), the very successful cooperative learning GED Peer Tutoring Program, access to college courses leading to an associate degree from Windward Community College, academic advising for women transitioning from WCCC, and facilitation of their post-incarceration enrollment in community college or the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The program is a collaborative effort of WCCC, Windward Community College (WCC), Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice, and the College of Social Sciences, University of Hawai’i. The program’s remarkable results include 20 women passing the GED within 10 months of its inception, while the prison averaged only two women a year passing previously. .

The unique education program being piloted at WCCC has dramatically increased women’s enrollment in GED preparation, applications for GED testing and enrollment in college courses. Women transitioning out of prison are continuing their higher education with the support of academic advising by the Windward Community College counselor. This is what rehabilitation looks like.

Research has shown that engagement in education while incarcerated and after release from prison significantly reduces recidivism. Education is the proven pathway to better employment opportunities, financial stability and increased ability to problem solve and think critically. About 60% of WCCC residents are high school dropouts. Without additional education, these women face difficulty finding employment. If they find employment it is likely to pay minimum wage. Recidivism among women is often characterized by what researchers have called “survival crimes”. Faced with Hawaii’s high cost of living, women in low-paying minimum wage jobs are often unable to meet basic needs for housing, food, transportation, etc. for themselves and their children. Returning to low level, non-violent crime can be seen as a survival alternative. Women engaged in the collaborative program between Windward Community College, Hawaii Friends for Restorative Justice, and the College of Social Sciences have a better alternative; higher education and the potential for employment that will provide stability in their lives. Most of the program’s peer tutors have entered college upon release from prison or are working toward that goal.

Women’s Prison Project urges you to pass HB1129 and appropriate the requested funding of \$ 225,000 to Windward Community College.

Mahalo for this chance to testify in strong support of HB1129.

Linda Rich

On behalf of the Women’s Prison Project

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee:

HB 1129 – RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

February 22, 2023, FIN 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

My name is Alice Ambriz and I am testifying on behalf of the Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health. I am testifying in support of House Bill (HB) 1129, that appropriates funding for the education of and reentry program for incarcerated women developed and administered by Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice and I offer the following comments:

The reason that I support this bill is because I believe incarcerated women who wish to continue their education are very likely to become successful in completing their studies. As a student studying to become a social worker, I have learned much about the success and stages of people who are ready to utilize resources. In regard to the incarcerated women who wish to continue their education, this bill can provide reentry and transition services for those women who are ready to make better life decisions. The services and resources this bill would provide would help these women to draw out their own meaning, importance, and capacity for change. I believe this bill will help women gain the knowledge they need to become successful in life, avoid incarceration, and maintain their wellbeing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1129.

Alice Ambriz

The Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health

808-765-9542

HB-1129-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 12:56:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

HB-1129-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 6:54:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Evern Williams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a vital program for successful re-entry. Please pass this bill.

TO: COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS, MILITARY & VETERANS

Honorable Representative Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Honorable Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB1129 RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

Bill scheduled to be heard by FIN on Wednesday, 02-22-23, 2:30PM in House conference room 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE.

My name is Kupalokeku'upualeihiwaōkekau Kamohali'i, and I am writing in support HB1129, which provides funding to the University of Hawaii Windward Community College for a course of study and a reentry program for women behind bars.

I firmly believe in the ability of education to change lives as a caring community member. The Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice's (HFRJ) proposed education and reentry program has the potential to improve the lives of jailed women and their families significantly.

I can honestly claim that bill HB1129 will ultimately aid people still in custody but attempting to lead better lives as a former inmate of the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) and a Windward Community College (WCC) alumna. In my academic journey from gaining my GED at WCCC I was alone. No guidance counselors or funds were available to help me on my educational journey. I genuinely believe that with the help of WCC and (HFRJ), those incarcerated women will have a better chance at reintegrating with society and gaining their Associate's Degree.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kupalokeku'upualeihiwaōkekau Kamohali'i

Peer Mentor, Windward Community College, TRiO Student Support Services

Cell: (808) 745-5002 45-720 Keaahala Rd, Kaneohe, HI 96744

HB-1129-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 10:50:47 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla Allison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Carla Allison and I **strongly support HB1129**. This bill funds education for incarcerated women, exactly the resource needed to prevent recidivism and change the future of our local women and their families. **Please vote yes on HB1129** so the already successful programs can continue. Thank you

HB-1129-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 4:10:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diana Bethel	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in strong support of HB1129 HD1 which provides funding for an education and reentry program for incarcerated women through Windward Community College. This pilot education and reentry program, developed and administered by the Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice (HFRJ), has been extraordinarily successful in producing an unprecedented number of GED graduates in its first year of operation. This has been a dramatic ten-fold increase from previous years.

The HFRJ pilot program is about developing a model based on best practices in contemporary education. By measuring and reporting on the outcomes of this project, we hope to advance understanding of how to effectively educate prison populations and reduce the rate of recidivism in Hawaii. And so we are currently drafting a guidebook to help other correctional institutions implement this program.

To clear up any confusion, the HFRJ program is very different from past GED programs. The HFRJ program trains peer tutors to implement a cooperative, interactive learning model. The reason the program is so successful, I believe, is that this cooperative learning, peer tutoring program stimulates a desire to serve and gives many of the women a sense of meaning and purpose. This motivation to learn and help others to learn is not necessarily found in a traditional model of education, and this is precisely why we wanted to do this project. Simply duplicating the traditional model in a prison context doesn't inspire the same transformative, life-changing experience the way a cooperative learning model does. The HFRJ program also provides a continuum of care including reentry planning and various kinds of support and guidance after release to enable a successful college experience.

The fact is that the traditional model of education does not work for all students, and in many cases, past educational experiences are a contributing factor to funneling the women into the school-to-prison pipeline. In contrast, HFRJ has had several decades of experience tailoring projects specifically for this population. In surveys, the women explain that they had learning problems in school and when they entered the HFRJ program, they were surprised and relieved to discover that they were fully capable of learning. Meanwhile, it is my understanding that no GED teachers from McKinley High School have been at WCCC in the last four to five years. However, one did arrive unexpectedly last week. This is somewhat challenging, however, since this person is not familiar with the HFRJ program or philosophy and has not been integrated into the pilot project.

Funding allocated by the legislature in 2021 still has not been distributed for the 2022-2023 year due to a bureaucratic roadblock. To avoid this problem in the future, please pass SB1129 HD1 to allow this innovative and cost-effective program to complete the third year of this pilot project.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Diana Bethel

HB-1129-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 8:42:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB1129 HD1.