



# 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 Higher Education & Technology  
Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 2:15 p.m.

By

Erika Lacro Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

### HB 67 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE PU'UHONUA PROGRAM

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 67, which would appropriate funds for the Pu'uhonua Program at Windward Community College (WCC). Since 2017, WCC has offered credit bearing college education at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) and Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF). Courses have been offered at Halawa Correctional Facility since 2022. All college coursework and support services to date have been provided through the use of federal extramural grant funding. These funding sources are non-renewable and expire in June 2023 and September 2023.

WCC's Pu'uhonua Program has a proven history of success. Between Fall 2018 and Spring 2022, 218 students were enrolled in college coursework at WCCC and HYCF. These students earned 1057 college credits and 13 certificates. Their overall grade point average was 3.6, which is higher than the on campus student grade point average, demonstrating their aptitude and engagement year after year. In the one semester WCC has provided classes at Halawa Correctional Facility, 16 men have enrolled, earning 45 credits to date and with an overall grade point average of 3.12. Through supportive practices like pro-active counseling and tutoring, Pu'uhonua has resulted in positive educational change for carceral populations.

The Pu'uhonua Program provides effective pathways for incarcerated students to grow critical thinking, career and life skills. It also serves as a pathbreaking model for Hawai'i's educational institutions. WCC is the first college in the University of Hawai'i system to offer significant credit-bearing education to incarcerated populations. We are also the first to be designated as a Pell Experimental Site, utilizing federal financial aid to cover the cost of tuition, fees and educational materials.

Completing college coursework while incarcerated has been shown both nationally and locally to have significant benefits for the incarcerated individuals, the overall incarcerated environment and society. While in prison, there is a substantial reduction in violence and disciplinary infraction. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, formerly incarcerated individuals who receive no further education within or after leaving

prison are 76% more likely to recidivate within five years; that recidivism number drops to 14% for individuals who obtain an associate's degree. There is a 13% increase in post-release employment for parolees who participate in prison education programs.

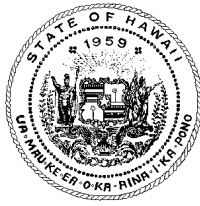
After students are released from prison, these positions will continue to benefit the incarcerated individuals and our State. The supportive counselors created herein will connect students post-release to further educational opportunities. For example, the students can be referred to career services and placement both online and in person through WCC's career center.

This bill supports an effective, supportive educational intervention that has been proven over seven years of implementation and growth. WCC urges the legislature to invest in effective rehabilitation for incarcerated populations by appropriating the funds to provide the positions necessary to staff WCC's Pu'u honua program.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 67, on the condition that any funds appropriated in support of this program does not supplant any portion of the University's budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 67.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
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No. \_\_\_\_\_

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 67  
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE PU'UHONUA PROGRAM.

By  
Tommy Johnson, Director

House Committee on Higher Education & Technology  
Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 2:15 p.m.  
CR 309 and Via Videoconference

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Public Safety (PSD) supports House Bill (HB) 67, which seeks to appropriate funding to the Windward Community College Pu'uhonua program for three (3) full-time positions. With the reinstatement of the Pell grant, these positions will support higher education opportunities at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC), the Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF), and the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF).

PSD has been working with Windward Community College Pu'uhonua program for the last 5 years at WCCC and more recently, at HCF for the past year, providing college credited classes. PSD is supportive of providing committed persons with higher education opportunities to lower the recidivism rate in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 67.

## COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Rep. Amy A. Perruso Chair  
Rep Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 8, 2023 2:15 pm  
Via videoconference, Conference Room 309  
State Capitol

### **STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB67 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE PU'UHONUA PROGRAM.**

Women's Prison Project strongly supports HB67 which would appropriate funds for the Pu'uhonua Program at Windward Community College (WCC), which has offered credit bearing college education at the Women's Community Correctional Center since 2017 through the use of federal extramural (grant) funding expiring this year.

Completing college coursework while incarcerated has been shown both nationally and locally to decrease recidivism. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, formerly incarcerated individuals who receive no further education within or after leaving prison are 76% more likely to recidivate within five years, yet that recidivism number drops to 14% for individuals who obtain an associate degree. WCC both provides education leading to an associate's degree for students while they are incarcerated and helps them to continue post-release through the supportive counseling positions created herein.

WCC's Pu'uhonua Program has a proven history of success. They have enrolled 144 women in coursework since 2017, earning 825 college credits and 13 certificates. The vast majority of women complete coursework with an A, demonstrating their aptitude and engagement. This program provides effective pathways for incarcerated students to grow critical thinking, career and life skills.

Women's Prison Project urges the legislature to invest in a more effective corrections system that reduces recidivism by appropriating the funds to provide college education to incarcerated populations through WCC's effective Pu'uhonua program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB67.

Linda Rich  
On Behalf of Women's Prison Project.

**HB-67**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 1:57:23 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB67.

**HB-67**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 8:38:42 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cindy Texeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**HB67– MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE PU‘UHONUA PROGRAM**

**Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela and Members of the Committee:**

**I am writing to express my support for House Bill 67, which appropriates funds for three full-time equivalent positions for the Windward Community College's Pu‘uhonua Program.**

**As a member of the community, I believe in the importance of investing in programs that support rehabilitation and reentry for those who have been incarcerated. Pu‘uhonua has demonstrated a commitment to this goal through its efforts to provide education and support to incarcerated women and teens at the Women’s Community Correctional Center (WCCC) and Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF).**

**The addition of three full-time equivalent positions will greatly enhance the program's ability to serve its participants. These positions will allow for increased support and guidance, both in and out of the classroom, leading to better outcomes for the students involved in the program.**

**Furthermore, by providing education and resources for personal and professional development, this program has the potential to equip these individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully reintegrate into society. This, in turn, will reduce the likelihood of recidivism and promote public safety.**

**In conclusion, I urge you to support HB 67 and invest in the future of the incarcerated, their families, and our community as a whole.**

**Thank you for your consideration.**

**Sincerely,**

**Cindy Texeira**

**HB-67**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 10:56:29 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
TAMELA WILCOX	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Tamela Wilcox, and I am currently the Pu'uhonua Counselor here at Windward Community College. I am also teaching the IS-103 Introduction to College course at the WCCC Facility. I have only been with the Puuhonua for 7 months, but it has been such a privilege to be a part of this program. Recently we lost our support through grant funding, and need the legislative support to continue to inspire change through education.

We currently have 91 students registered who are taking classes toward an AA Degree. This program gives these women hope that through education they can make positive changes in their lives. We not only offer college classes but guidance, transition support, and resources upon release.

Out of 91 inmates over 90% of these incarcerated women come from Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Ancestry. Most of these women are in this situation due to social economic background, and have become first generation college students.

It has been without a doubt the most rewarding position I have held in my entire career. Please continue to build and support the Pu'uhonua Program here at Windward Community College. I ask for your kokua in support of HB67 to appropriate funds for staff to continue the Puuhoinua Program.

Mahalo Nui

Tamela Wilcox





House Committee on Higher Education & Technology  
Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 2:15 pm

HB67– MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE PU’UHONUA PROGRAM

Position: Strongly Support

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kathleen O’Dell and I am an instructor in Human Development and Family Studies at Windward Community College (WCC). I have been teaching in the Pu’uhonua Program for the past year through WCC. I strongly support HB67, which would appropriate funds for the Pu’uhonua Program at WCC.

Completing college coursework while incarcerated has been shown both nationally and locally to have significant benefits for the incarcerated individuals, the overall incarcerated environment and society. While in prison, there is a substantial reduction in violence and disciplinary infraction. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, formerly incarcerated individuals who receive no further education within or after leaving prison are 76% more likely to recidivate within five years; that recidivism number drops to 14% for individuals who obtain an associate’s degree. There is a 13% increase in post-release employment for parolees who participate in prison education programs.

After students are released from prison, these positions will continue to benefit the incarcerated individuals and our State. The supportive counselors created herein will connect students post-release to further educational opportunities. For example, the students can be referred to career services and placement both online and in person through WCC’s career center.

I have learned so much with and from my incarcerated students. What I know now more than ever is that we, as a society, failed so many of them in their childhood and youth. We failed to care for and protect them from harm. Despite the neglect and abuse so many have experienced, they rise up to get an education in an environment that is challenging beyond what most of us can imagine. They are making a commitment to positive change, to plan for a future without crime, to know more and do better. Now, we have to commit to support them in these endeavors because it is their right and our duty as democratic citizens.

This bill supports an effective, supportive educational intervention that has been proven over seven years of implementation and growth. I urge the legislature to invest in effective rehabilitation for incarcerated populations by appropriating the funds to provide the positions necessary to staff WCC’s Pu’uhonua program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB67.

Kathleen O’Dell, PhD

**HB-67**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 2:46:35 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline Noa-Cameron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Jacqueline Noa-Cameron and I am one of the Pu‘uhonua counselors here at Windward Community College.

The success of this program throughout the past 6 years has shown substantial progress within not only the participants, but within our community as a whole.

Manulani Aluli Meyer discusses the importance of Ho‘oponopono in which she states "For Ho‘oponopono, which is the healing of relationships to occur, there has to be pono. Pono in this case translates: to become one with yourself, and becoming one with yourself you will then become one with akua, or your higher self.

It has become a natural habit to fall into the stigma of incarceration, in which becomes the "out of sight out of mind" mindset. Stepping into the facility and working one on one with these women, you witness their desires and effort to change their lives yet, they have no idea which steps need to be taken. With education provided, we not only reduce recidivism, we perpetuate Hawaiian values.

With the growth of our program, each class we have offered has been full to capacity, and over 80% of the women that participated in our program within the last 6 years have over a 3.0 GPA. The students that have graduated from our program, have continued their educational journey, while giving back to the community and becoming more culturally intuned. This is just a glimpse of the work these women have done in order to heal within themselves and genuinely practice Ho‘oponopono.

It is only right for us to provide the resources to our ohana (in the true sense of the word) as they continue to do the work needed. Therefore I humbly request that you support HB67 and appropriate the funds to hire the staff for the Pu‘uhonua Program.

*My testimony is submitted as an individual and not as a representative of the University of Hawai‘i*



**HB-67**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 5:26:05 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nancy Davlantes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**WCC's Pu'uhonua Program has a proven history of success. The program provides provides effective pathways for incarcerated students to grow critical thinking, career and life skills.**

**HB-67**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 4:59:58 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nancy Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly urge support of Windward Community Colleges request of support for needed 3 positions to staff the Pu'uhonua program. Thank you for yourf consideration of my testimony.

Aloha.