

SR-20

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Rich	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Monday April 1, 2024

Aloha Chair WakaiI, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee,

My Name is Linda Rich , I am a retired social worker and addictions treatment professional and I am testifying in Strong Support of SCR 31/SR20 REQUESTING THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN INCARCERATED AT THE WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER BY TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

The majority of women incarcerated in Hawaii and non-violent offenders the majority of whom have addiction and/or mental health disorders that could be effectively treated in community settings with court supervision. There is a growing body of research in the US and internationally that supports the effectiveness of a wide range of alternatives to incarceration, especially for women with children. The current WCCC recidivism rate strongly suggests that different strategies are needed to rehabilitate Hawaii's justice involved women whose lives are often characterized by addiction, trauma, abusive relationships, dependent children, limited education or job skills, and poverty.

Research has shown that the needs of female inmates are markedly different than those of their male counterparts and that alternatives to imprisonment offer greater opportunity for rehabilitating female offenders and relieving pressures on the prison system. Alternatives may also reduce the long term effects of trauma experienced by children who are separated from their mothers by incarceration. Alternatives can be cost effective when compared to the cost of prison.

This resolution sets a specific target for 25% reduction of the population of the Women's Community Corrections Center (WCCC) within a clear time frame of 5 years and requests WCIC to develop a viable roadmap for accomplishing that goal. This resolution expresses the intent to actually create change, to bring about a real reduction in incarceration of women and find the strategies that will reduce recidivism.

The Women's Corrections Implementation Commission (WCIC) is uniquely positioned to achieve this task. The membership of WCIC is structured to bring together representatives of the Judiciary, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, as well as The Chief Justice, or the Chief Justice's designee; A social worker who assists in the rehabilitation and attainment of housing for female inmates; The Public Defender or the Public Defender's designee; the Prosecuting Attorney of the County of Hawai'i, Honolulu, Maui, or Kauai, or the Prosecuting Attorney's designee; A former prison inmate; leader of a private foundation that assists women in rehabilitation after release from prison; and non-profit and community advocate representation. WCIC members have experience with the population, as well as knowledge of the various systems interacting with the women, the barriers women encounter and what is already working. The members are already collaborating and sharing insights and information.

I urge you to pass SCR 31/SR20 and endorse the goal of reducing the number of women incarcerated at WCCC by 25% within 5 years with WCIC charged with developing the strategies to make it happen,

Thank you,

Linda L. Rich