
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE WOMEN'S COURT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 PART I

2 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there has been a
3 significant increase in the number of women in Hawai'i jails and
4 prisons over the past forty years, resulting in a higher
5 proportion of women who are incarcerated. Research reflects
6 that for women, histories of abuse, trauma, poverty, mental
7 illness, substance use disorders, and unhealthy relationships
8 intersect with their entry into criminal behavior. Women
9 offenders also face unique barriers to success after
10 incarceration. They are more likely to be primary caregivers
11 for young children, have lower educational attainment, lack
12 stable work history, and experience economic or social
13 marginalization, which prevents them from having more positive
14 outcomes.

15 The legislature further finds that Act 243, Session Laws of
16 Hawaii 2022, established a three-year women's court pilot
17 program in the circuit court of the first circuit. This



1 program, known as Mohala Wahine, focuses on non-violent women
2 who are at high risk of recidivism and in need of multiple
3 services such as substance abuse treatment, therapy, or housing.
4 The program began accepting participants in January 2023, with a
5 goal of admitting twenty women each year. As of August 2024,
6 twenty-three women are currently participating in the program,
7 with eleven participants in phase one of treatment and twelve
8 participants in phase two of treatment.

9 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 10 (1) Permanently establish the women's court program in the
11 first circuit;
- 12 (2) Establish a two-year women's court pilot program in
13 the circuit court of the Kona division of the third
14 circuit, which is intended to acknowledge the distinct
15 pathways that lead women into the criminal justice
16 system and address their individualized needs; and
- 17 (3) Require the judiciary to submit reports to the
18 legislature regarding the pilot program for women's
19 court.

20 PART II



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 603, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§603- Women's court program; first circuit. (a)
5 There shall be established within the first circuit of the
6 judiciary the women's court program. The program shall
7 implement trauma-informed and evidence-based practices, employ
8 gender-responsive programming, collaborate with stakeholders,
9 and provide services to women in the court system with the goal
10 of diverting participants from incarceration, supporting their
11 success in the community, and reducing recidivism.

12 (b) The services offered by the program shall address the
13 following areas:

- 14 (1) Trauma and mental health treatment;
15 (2) Family support, including parenting, education, and
16 relationship improvement;
17 (3) Life-skills training;
18 (4) Education and vocational training;
19 (5) Domestic violence prevention;
20 (6) Medical services and health education;
21 (7) Substance abuse detection, prevention, and treatment;



- 1 (5) Domestic violence prevention;
- 2 (6) Medical services and health education;
- 3 (7) Substance abuse detection, prevention, and treatment;
- 4 (8) Mentoring; and
- 5 (9) Housing support.

6 SECTION 4. The judiciary shall submit a report of its
7 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
8 legislation, on the pilot program to the governor and
9 legislature no later than forty days prior to the convening of
10 the regular sessions of 2026 and 2027, regarding:

- 11 (1) The status of the women's court pilot program;
- 12 (2) The number of women accepted into the women's court
13 pilot program;
- 14 (3) The number of women who were eligible to participate
15 in the women's court pilot program but who could not
16 be accepted into the pilot program because of pilot
17 program limitations;
- 18 (4) The number of women completing the women's court pilot
19 program;
- 20 (5) The number of women who were removed from the women's
21 court pilot program; and



1 (6) Recommendations as to whether the women's court pilot
2 program should:

3 (A) Continue as a pilot program;

4 (B) Expand to include additional participants;

5 (C) Provide additional services; or

6 (D) Be discontinued.

7 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$514,900 or so much
9 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
10 \$557,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
11 2026-2027 for mental health, substance abuse treatment, and
12 other services and equipment, and the establishment of one full-
13 time equivalent (1.0 FTE) temporary Kona drug court probation
14 supervisor position for the women's court pilot program
15 established pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

16 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary
17 for the purposes of this Act.

18 PART IV

19 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025;
20 provided that part III shall be repealed on June 30, 2027.



H.B. NO. 727

H.D. 1
S.D. 2
C.D. 1

Report Title:

Judiciary; Women's Court Pilot Program; Reports; Appropriations

Description:

Permanently establishes the Women's Court Program in the First Circuit. Establishes a temporary two-year Women's Court Pilot Program within the Kona division of the Third Circuit. Requires reports. Establishes a temporary position. Appropriates funds. Sunsets 6/30/2027. (CD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

