



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 3:17 p.m.

By

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HB 1129 HD1 – RELATING TO INCARCERATED WOMEN

Chairs Wakai and Kim, Vice Chairs Elefante and Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

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. 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.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1129 HD1, on the condition its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

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