



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

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HB 1130 HD1 – RELATING TO CORRECTIONS

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

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB1130 HD1, which creates a Trauma Informed Care Course (TICC) designed for Adult Corrections Officers (ACOs) taught by WCC.

According to the Center for Disease Control, 97% of inmates have had at least one traumatic childhood experience. A large national study found that 40.1% of female inmates and 17.8% of male inmates suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Other studies have found 30% of male inmates have current PTSD symptoms and 60% have lifetime PTSD. Incarceration compounds potential trauma related issues, as it is an environment where the incarcerated feel a lack of personal control over situations and their own safety. Due to this, individuals may remain in a constant state high alert due to concern for personal safety and may be triggered by perceived threats and actions and/or interactions which remind them of past trauma. This can lead to inappropriate responses, including aggression, violence, anxiety, depression and self-harm. Suicides are the leading cause of jail deaths nationwide. These impacts of trauma create a negative environment for the incarcerated individual, fellow prisoners, and the prison staff.

A TICC helps those serving incarcerated populations to better manage this population through understanding the impact of trauma. ACOs will be provided information on the lifelong effects of trauma, recovery needs and implementation of trauma-focused treatment interventions, including evidence based best practice. Trauma triggers and examples of calming and grounding strategies will be discussed to help staff conduct their work more effectively and with less frustration. Vicarious trauma impacting correctional staff and suggestions for self-care will also be explored.

This TICC positively impacts the prison environment for both workers and incarcerated individuals, and can have further positive impacts on retaining staffing due to decreased workplace frustration.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1130 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 1130 HD1.