

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1197  
RELATING TO CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY.**

by  
Tommy Johnson, Director  
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

House Committee on Public Safety  
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Friday, January 31, 2025; 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & via Videoconference

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) provides comments on House Bill (HB) 1197, which proposes DCR to utilize student education partnerships to increase mental health care providers in state correctional facilities.

The DCR appreciates the legislature's interest and support. The department has utilized student education partnerships for several years now through Hawai'i Residency Program, Queens Health Group and the Hawaii Psychologist Internship Consortium (HiPIC). We spend approximately \$1 million annually for 2.0 FTE residents with a preceptor, 2.0 FTE post-doctoral psychologists, and 2.0 intern psychologists. Our HiPIC status was inactive last year due to a shortage of supervising psychologists. We plan to reactivate our sites shortly.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB 1197.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



MARK PATTERSON  
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OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

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**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION**  
**E HUIKALA A MA'EMA'E NŌ**  
235 S. Beretania Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
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TO: The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair  
The Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Public Safety

FROM: Mark Patterson, Chair  
Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission

SUBJECT: House Bill 1197, Relating to Clinical Psychology  
Hearing: Friday, January 31, 2025; 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Room 411

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) **supports** House Bill 1197, Relating to Clinical Psychology, which authorizes the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to utilize student education partnerships to increase the amount of mental health care providers in correctional facilities across the State.

The importance of mental health care within the jails and prisons cannot be overstated. During the Commission's most recent facility tour of the Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) in December 2024, the Commission found that there was a surprisingly large vacancy rate in mental health – 9 total vacancies including five Clinical Psychologists, two Psych Social Workers, and two Office Assistants. Not having Office Assistants forced the current Psych Social Workers to be bogged down with paperwork instead of meeting their clients' needs. Currently, the facility is doing the best it can with one Clinical Psychologist and two Psych Social Workers, which is not enough to meet the needs of the population. Of the four suicides that occurred in 2024, two occurred at HCF – both individuals were considered close custody (more restrictive custody class).

HCF is one example, but the Commission understands there are large mental health vacancies in every state correctional facility. While the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has done an impressive job with expanding its recruitment efforts, more support and partnerships should be encouraged to assist in their efforts. Additionally, creating student education partnerships allows students to consider corrections as a career choice, which often is not highlighted in the mental health fields in colleges and universities. For these reasons, the Commission supports this bill.

Should you have additional questions, the Oversight Coordinator, Christin Johnson, can be reached at 808-900-2200 or at [christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov](mailto:christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov). Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**HB1197 Psychologists Benefit to Jails**  
**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY**  
Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair  
Friday, Jan 31, 2025: 10:00: Room 411 Videoconference

**Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB1197:**

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS.  
My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.*

Psychologists working in jails provide essential mental health care as well as substance use disorder assessments for treatment. They contribute to safer, more rehabilitative correctional environments:

1. **Mental Health Treatment** – Many incarcerated individuals suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and schizophrenia. Psychologists provide assessment, therapy, and crisis intervention to support their well-being.
2. **Substance Use Disorder Assessments** – A large majority of offenders suffer from substance use disorders. A qualified assessment can help offenders get the treatment they need to be successful in reentering their community.
3. **Behavioral Management** – By identifying and addressing problematic behaviors, psychologists help reduce aggression, self-harm, and suicide risk among inmates.
4. **Rehabilitation & Reintegration** – Therapy and counseling programs help inmates develop coping skills, emotional regulation, and social skills, increasing their chances of successful reintegration into society.
5. **Reduced Recidivism** – Evidence-based treatments, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), help address criminal thinking patterns, reducing the likelihood of reoffending.
6. **Support for Correctional Staff** – Psychologists help train staff on mental health awareness, crisis intervention, and de-escalation techniques, promoting a safer work environment.
7. **Risk Assessment & Parole Decisions** – Psychologists assess inmates for risks related to violence, self-harm, and reoffending, providing valuable insights for parole boards and prison management.
8. **Crisis Intervention** – They play a critical role in responding to suicide attempts, psychotic episodes, and other mental health crises, preventing harm and stabilizing inmates.

9. **Specialized Treatment Programs** – They design programs for substance abuse, trauma recovery, and anger management, addressing key factors that contribute to criminal behavior.

Overall, psychologists improve the mental health of incarcerated individuals, enhance prison safety, and contribute to rehabilitation efforts that benefit both inmates and society.

HSAC appreciates the opportunity to testify and is available for questions.