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Sent: Wednesday, February 8, 2017 11:00 AM
To: PSMTestimony
Cc: blawaiianlvr@icloud.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB613 on Feb 8, 2017 13:15PM

SB613

Submitted on: 2/8/2017

Testimony for PSM/AEN on Feb 8, 2017 13:15PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
De MONT R. D. CONNER	Ho'omana Pono, LLC.	Support	Yes

Comments: We FULLY SUPPORT this bill. Personally, I have participated in the Kulani Agriculture program before Kulani got closed down. It was a great learning experience which I continue to practice today. Prisoners will learn a marketable job skill, which could help in our public policy to rehabilitate our prison population. Mahalo.

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Testimony regarding SB 613
Will Caron
YPDA Hawaii

Aloha, my name is Will Caron and I'm testifying today in strong support of SB 613 on behalf of the Hawaii chapter of the Young Progressives Demanding Action, a community organizing group representing more than 550 registered members.

George Helm famously said, "the culture cannot exist without the land." He was referring to Hawaiian culture specifically, but more broadly, this axiom speaks to the need for people to be connected to land and place. Land, therefore, is a part of our identity. Colonialism and neoliberal capitalism has broken that connection in many respects, and contributed to a myriad of socio-economic problems for people all over the world: poor health, poverty and, most relevantly today, high rates of incarceration.

In Hawai'i, the most disenfranchised group within these socio-economic frameworks is Hawaiians. Native Hawaiians make up almost 40 percent of the population in Hawai'i's prisons and jails while only comprising roughly 10 percent of the state population. Because Hawaiians are so over-represented, restorative justice programs that deal with place and with the land will be particularly beneficial and impactful for prison populations.

The proposed pilot program at Kulani Correctional Facility is the epitome of a place-based, restorative justice program. As George Helm fully recognized, connection to the land has a restorative, healing impact on disenfranchised peoples. Working the land provides purpose and a sense of progress. Contributing to food-production, empowers through the enablement of inmates to provide for themselves and will, as is mentioned in the bill, bring down food supply costs for the state and improve the health and dieting habits of the inmates, which will, in turn, reduce future healthcare costs to the people affected.

The sense of independence and self-reliance enabled by this program is an important way of rehabilitating inmates so that, when they leave prison and re-enter the larger community, they will do so with some sense of pride in the accomplishments they have made, rather than the emptiness, fear and anger that is so commonly felt by incarcerated people. This program will provide a direct means and avenue to reconnect with the larger community by way of the valuable farming skills inmates would be able to develop while serving time. This will, in turn, give inmates a direct avenue to an important, sustainable job route once released.

The more we can implement restorative justice programs like this that truly contribute to the healing of our brothers and sisters who have made mistakes in life, the healthier our communities will be. Rates of recidivism will be lower and our society will be strengthened by the contributions these men and women will be able to make. In other words, this program is a win, win, win scenario, and we ask that you fund the necessary administrative and equipment costs needed to get this program off the ground. Mahalo.