

The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Jennifer Vollen-Katz, John Howard Association of Illinois

DATE: March 2, 2023

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 354, Relating to the State Budget

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Vollen-Katz, I am the Executive Director of the John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA). JHA is an independent, nonpartisan, not for profit prison oversight organization that has been monitoring all of the adult and juvenile state prisons in Illinois for over 120 years.

I write to respectfully request that you support the budget request from the Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC, the Commission). The Commission is requesting \$995,395 for FY24 and \$880,395 FY25 which includes funding for seven total positions, travel costs to visit each correctional facility, memberships and conferences, consultation for special projects, and office equipment. Given that this office is new (*office opened in July 2022*), it is important to ensure that it is properly funded to fulfill the mandated requirements set by Hawai'i Revised Statute 353L.

The importance of the work of the HCSOC cannot be overstated, nor can the impact this office can have on improving outcomes for people who are detained and incarcerated, the corrections system, public safety and in responding to issues and offering changes in order to avert litigation against the State. Authorized oversight of the carceral system is critical to the democratic goals of system transparency and government accountability. The work of the HCSOC is fundamental to good government; monitoring the closed system of corrections where sight lines

to behavior, conditions and treatment are unavailable to the public is an important guardrail in a just, fair and equitable system. If properly resourced and supported, the HCSOC stands to become a national model for correctional oversight.

Should you have additional questions, I can be reached at jvollen@thejha.org or (331)264-4081. I appreciate your consideration of this testimony and funding request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Vollen-Katz".

Jennifer Vollen-Katz
Executive Director
John Howard Association of Illinois