



The Judiciary, State of Hawaii

Testimony to the House Committee on Veterans, Military and International Affairs, and Culture and the Arts

Representative K. Mark Takai, Chair
Representative Ken Ito, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 5, 2014, 8:30 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 312

by
Cheryl Marlow
Acting Deputy Chief Court Administrator, First Circuit

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 1883, Making an Appropriation for the Veterans Treatment Court.

Purpose: Appropriates funds to support the Veterans Treatment Court.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill No. 1883, which appropriates funds to the Judiciary to support the First Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court.

The Judiciary along with its stakeholders (Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of the Attorney General, Office of the Public Defender and Department of the Prosecuting Attorney) have worked in collaboration with each other, to form the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) which held its first hearing on January 4, 2013, and admitted its first clients on January 11, 2013. Currently the VTC has twelve clients. The majority of these clients have multiple mental health diagnoses related to their military service and also have a long history of substance abuse and criminal behavior.

In addition to the VTC Coordinator and the Judge, the VTC team consists of a dedicated Public Defender, Prosecuting Attorney and Veterans Affairs Officer. The legislature previously appropriated a position for the VTC Coordinator but did not fund this position. Currently the



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position is being funded through federal grant monies. This grant is currently in the second year of its three year duration.

If funds are provided through this measure, the Judiciary will use the funding to cover the established Coordinator position, as well as establish two additional permanent positions, a necessary Probation Officer position and a Circuit Court Clerk, to assist with the calendars of the VTC as well as the Mental Health Court. Both of these courts hold a weekly calendar and when at capacity, have a combined client total of 75 which stretches the judicial clerk resources in both of the courts. The VTC caseload is continuing to increase and a dedicated probation officer would allow the VTC to better serve its clients in such activities as coordinating services and treatment for clients; attending court/team meetings; tracking client progress; and providing the intensive supervision that is an important element of treatment courts. Without this Probation Officer position, this role of oversight, court attendance and tracking, and coordinating client supervision and activities that will fall to the Coordinator, which will reduce the Coordinator's effectiveness in overall VTC program management and may affect the VTC's ability to meet its objectives in helping its clients achieve success in this court as well as possible growth and expansion of the VTC.

The Judiciary's only concern regarding this bill is to ensure that because the funding amount identified constitutes an addition to the original Judiciary budget request contained in House Bill No. 1638, this addition does not come with a corresponding reduction to any items already included in our base budget request. If the Legislature is inclined to move forward with this funding, we would respectfully request that the bill be amended to include language that provides funding for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) social worker V (\$53,364), and the authorization and funding to establish two additional permanent positions: (1) one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) social worker IV (\$47,400) and (2) one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) circuit court clerk 1 (\$37,968), for a total cost of \$138,732.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1883.