



## *The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i*

### **Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary**

Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair

Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 7, 2018 2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325

### WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

By

Judge Greg K. Nakamura

Chief Judge, Third Circuit

---

**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1 Relating to Veterans Treatment Court. (HB1965 HD1)

**Purpose:** Appropriates funds to continue the Third Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court by converting one (1) temporary Social Worker IV position and establishing one (1) additional full-time equivalent permanent Social Worker IV position.

### **Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1.

Veterans who are justice-involved typically face incarceration with very little help to address their underlying mental health problems, substance abuse problems, and or combat - related issues. In addition, they may have medical, health, housing, employment and financial issues. Veterans may be involved with the VA or may need extra assistance in pursuing eligibility for VA services. Lastly, they may have difficulty in sharing their problems with non-veterans.

Four years ago, the community, our Federal, State and County elected officials, came together to discuss with various community members, the development of a Veterans Treatment Court, on the Big Island. Community partners became the foundation for community and



House Bill No. 1965, H.D. 1 Relating to Veterans Treatment Court  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Wednesday, February 7, 2018 2:00 PM  
Page 2

ultimately a team approach to not only the planning and development stages of a Veterans Court on the Big Island but the eventual formation of the Big Island Veterans Treatment Court (BIVTC).

In 2014, the Judiciary was awarded a three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance federal grant for a Veterans Treatment Court. The Veterans Treatment Court model, based on the Drug Court 10 Key Components, its many years of research showing its effectiveness, and its successful implementation in many communities across the nation, was selected as the model to implement.

The goal of the BIVTC is to help justice-involved veterans struggling with untreated mental health issues, including PTSD, substance abuse disorders, and/or Traumatic Brain Injury. These veterans are at a high risk for recidivism (criminal reoffending) and have high treatment needs. The program is open to eligible veterans whether or not they are eligible for VA services. Collaboration with the VA via a Veteran Justice Outreach worker is critical and in place.

By the second year of the program, the BIVTC surpassed its goal by serving a total of 26 veteran participants. Since 2014, the BIVTC has worked with 30 veteran participants and 12 active Volunteer Veteran Mentors. Ten (10) of the veteran participants have graduated so far. Many of these graduates have jobs, attend mental health treatment and substance abuse sober support groups on a regular basis, have not recommitted any felony crimes, have stable housing, and have gone on to contribute back to society. In addition, many are now connected and proud of their military heritage.

House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1 will allow for the hiring of two full time BIVTC probation officers, one on the Big Island's East Side with a caseload of 20 veterans and one on its West Side also with a caseload of 20 veterans, and allow us to continue to expand the BIVTC.

Many of us either are veterans, know of veterans, and/or have family or loved ones who are veterans. Veterans have served our country and many have given their lives and sacrificed much. We all share the common goal to support them in their time of need and provide them with the best possible chance to be a healthy and successful part of our community.

We appreciate the Legislature's many actions to support veterans and respectfully request your support of House Bill No. 1965, House Draft 1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.