



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### STAR ADVERTISER OP-ED BY PSD DIRECTOR NOLAN ESPINDA

HONOLULU – The Department of Public Safety’s (PSD) Work Furlough Program is available to Hawaii inmates who fully complete all mandatory rehabilitative, treatment, educational and vocational programs. The complex plan is professionally prescribed for each inmate. Participants must have acceptable behavior, meaning: no violence, criminal/gang activity or general misconducts during their incarceration. Inmates failing to meet these strict standards are forbidden from participating in the Work Furlough Program.

The program allows approved inmates who are within 12 months of scheduled release to participate in job searches or work at a job. They may also go to treatment and education programs in the community. This gradual re-entry process statistically provides inmates the best opportunity for success when granted parole. Inmates who leave without going through the program skip a critical step that teaches them better decision making and self-sufficiency, and allows staff to help correct possible lapses in judgement before they reenter their community. 95% of incarcerated people will return to their community. Without this program, most of them will likely commit new crimes and return to prison

The 2012 Legislature passed Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) legislation requiring PSD to increase the use of community-based programming and reduce the mainland prison population. Based on JRI recommendations, the Oahu Work Furlough Program increased from 96 to 214 spaces. This allowed PSD to move additional qualified minimum and community custody inmates into the program and freed up spaces meant for other, higher-level custody inmates. This allowed us to bring home minimum and community custody inmates housed in Arizona.

In late 2014, PSD committed to notifying the public of all furlough program deviations and walkaways that resulted in assigned inmates not returning within their scheduled return time. In years past, PSD generally only notified the public when program participants committed a new crime while on furlough.

Since March 2014, the Oahu Work Furlough Program had 355 participating inmates. Of those, 23 inmates (6%) have deviated or walked away from the program. Each was returned without incident. None of them were accused of or charged with committing a new crime. Four other

participants (less than 1%) were charged with committing a new crime while on furlough during this time period. We care a great deal about the victims of these crimes and have assisted in the prosecution of these four individuals.

All deviations are serious and we are working on better identifying the causes of such issues by reviewing program participation screening procedures. The work furlough program has a stringent monitoring system including sending staff into the field to verify the inmate is at the worksite, and phone monitoring throughout the day. A goal we are working on achieving with lawmakers in the next Legislative session includes electronic monitoring.

Simply put, doubling of the numbers of program participants in combination with more transparency in the reporting of participant deviations, has led to a new public awareness of this longstanding successful program. That transparency should not lead to the cut back or elimination of a program that benefits everyone who has a vested interest in inmates being successful in OUR communities. Rather, we should work together to help these individuals on a path towards success by continuing their rehabilitation through expanded community programs. That goal is universal and shared across all community, public, law enforcement, judicial and inmate advocacy lines.

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