



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

November 30, 2021

The Honorable David Y. Ige
Governor, State of Hawaii
Executive Chambers
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Aloha Governor Ige:

I am writing to respectfully request your consideration of declaring an emergency by executive order to address the adult correctional officers staff shortages contractually required at all essential security posts at the State's prisons, namely Halawa, Waiawa and Kulana Correctional Facilities and the Women's Community Correctional Center.

Representatives of the State's Department of Public Safety (PSD) in an official statement acknowledged that Halawa Correctional Facility is dealing with a staffing shortage. See attached article. While acknowledging a shortcoming is a critical first step, decisive action must follow to meet PSD mandates to provide care and safe custody of inmates, as well as to maintain operations for the safety and security of facility staff and the general public.

The State's portion of the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which must be expended by 2024, or other federal enactments and awards, provides an opportunity to immediately address the health and safety risks for overworked and understaffed correctional officers. An emergency declaration and the use of federal funds can immediately address vacancies through increased external recruitment, additional correctional recruitment classes, including day and evening classes, the immediate hiring of additional emergency hires with the option of conducting on the job training at each facility while emergency hirers await the completion of a nearly one-year permanent hiring process.

During my site visit on Monday, November 29, 2021, only 58 of the 91 correctional officers required for the morning shift at Halawa Correctional Facility were at work, leaving 33 positions vacant or on leave. It is common practice for officers to work 16 hour shifts due to

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the dire staff shortages. Also, on November 29th, a correctional officer worked a total 64-hour shift. This required the Acting Warden to direct staff to confirm whether a family member could provide home transportation, otherwise, staff would be directed to provide transportation to the correctional officer's home. This situation presents a potentially dangerous situation for exhausted correctional officers who are not at the top of their game when interacting with prison inmates, but also a probable risk to the general public on our roads and highways.

Your response to this request would be appreciated. I am available to discuss this important matter in greater detail should you or members of your administration have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Senator Kurt Fevella
State of Hawaii, District 19
Minority Leader/ Minority Floor Leader

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Attachment

cc: Director Max Otani, Department of Public Safety

Attachment

Halawa guards working 40 to 50 hours straight as absences and vacancies mount

by: [Gina Mangieri](#)

Posted: Nov 29, 2021 / 05:23 PM HST / Updated: Nov 29, 2021 / 06:05 PM HST

[Halawa guards working 40 to 50 hours straight as absences and vacancies mount | KHON2](#)

HONOLULU (KHON2) — A state lawmaker is raising a red flag at Halawa prison, over what he calls health-and-safety risks for overworked, understaffed corrections officers.

State Sen. Kurt Fevella, the Senate minority leader, held an unannounced visit to the prison and said he found out many are working 16 hours straight, and some as much as 50 hours in a row. That's to cover for short-staffing and others not showing up for shifts.

“So now imagine you're working one 40-hour shift, and you have to walk the line where the inmates are,” Fevella said. “That presents a safety hazard because of your reaction time. Everybody knows fatigue is big on your safety.”

Fevella says critical posts are going unmanned, and services such as the clinic, church, and even cafeteria time for inmates have to be cut back. He's asking for emergency hires, assign sheriffs to fill in, or even bring in the National Guard.

Prison officials told KHON2 there are 52 vacancies out of about 330 Halawa positions, plus another 50 staff out on various types of leave.

“The staff that are present and able to work are commended for their public service, dedication, and hard work, which largely goes unnoticed by the community,” a DPS spokesperson said.

“The Department of Public Safety has made no secret of the fact that the Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) is dealing with a staffing shortage. Contractually, essential security posts have to be filled whenever possible, which requires holding over some employees to work longer shifts in order to maintain adequate coverage of the essential posts. The facility and PSD have a mandate to provide for the care and safe custody of inmates and will do what is necessary to ensure the inmates under our custody are taken care of. It is challenging but HCF is addressing all mandatory post requirements as best it can and working diligently to maintain operations for the safety and security of inmates, staff, and the general public.

HCF is allocated 332 Adult Correctional Officer positions; however, based on vacancies (52), protected leaves, workers' compensation, TDI, and other extended absences, the staff physically present at work is considerably less than HCF's 332

allocated positions. Of the 332 allocated ACO positions, there are a total of 280 filled ACO positions and over 50 staff out on various types of leave including workman's comp, sick, FMLA, and military. The staff that are present and able to work are commended for their public service, dedication, and hard work, which largely goes unnoticed by the community.

PSD is making every effort to address the staffing issues. Sheriffs are frequently requested to assist with perimeter security. They help when they can, but the Sheriff Division is also short-staffed and working to fill vacancies. Their collective bargaining unit agreement does not include correctional training. In order to consider that option, union consultation with both HGEA and UPW would be necessary. PSD is working as quick as possible to fill vacancies through increased external recruitment efforts, additional corrections recruitment classes, including day and evening classes, and the hiring of additional emergency hires. Several of the vacant ACO positions will soon be filled by recruits currently undergoing training at our Training Services Division (TSD). Once they have completed training, they will be report to their respective facility for duty. In addition, PSD has been in contact with retirees to see if they wish to work part-time as well."