



Reimagining Public Safety

**BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS
STATE OF HAWAI'I
2025**



**SHARE THIS REPORT
OR VIEW IT ONLINE:**



Scan the QR code or type this into your web browser:
bit.ly/hisafetycoalition

REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY IN HAWAII

“HOUSING IS HEALTHCARE.”

–GOVERNOR JOSH GREEN

**“FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING
FROM MENTAL ILLNESS,
JAIL IS THE MOST EXPENSIVE,
LEAST EFFECTIVE OPTION.”**

–TOMMY JOHNSON,
*DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION*

REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY IN HAWAII

The purpose of the following budget recommendations is to identify:

- 1. Public safety priorities that require significant new state funding**
- 2. Gaps in current state funding vs. actual needs**
- 3. Potential cost savings**
- 4. Policy changes required**

BACKGROUND

The problems we see on the streets of Hawai'i are primarily driven by a housing and public health crisis. At least 40% of all people in jail in Hawai'i are homeless, and many more are suffering from mental illness and substance addiction.

More than 60% are unsentenced and legally innocent, stuck in jail because they can't afford bail often as low as \$50. The mass incarceration of Hawai'i residents is having a disproportionate and devastating impact on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

In 2023 and 2024, key public safety actors across the state, including police, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, service providers, and criminal justice experts convened in a number of settings to identify opportunities to dramatically reduce incarceration through diversion and investing in root causes.

The following budget recommendations were primarily drawn from:

- **Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) workshops** for the City/County of Honolulu and Hawai'i County.
- **Reimagining Public Safety Coalition budget working group** which convened experts—including many with lived experience—from a diverse range of sectors including public health, housing, the criminal legal system, economic revitalization, mental health, youth development, among others.

The recommendations reflect broad agreement among justice system actors and service providers regarding current resource gaps and specific investment that could significantly reduce the cycle of incarceration in Hawai'i.

PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET PRIORITIES

1 PAUSE PLANNING FOR \$1 BILLION SUPER JAIL

The Department of Corrections is proposing to build a larger jail to replace OCCC at an estimated cost of \$1 billion. However, diverting people suffering from mental illness and addiction and enacting bail reform will significantly decrease the jail population and eliminate the need for the proposed super jail. Simply put, the state can't afford to fund both critical diversion infrastructure and a \$1 billion jail. Funding diversion should be the priority as it is proven to generate better public safety outcomes than incarceration, at a fraction of the cost.

2 INVEST \$250 MILLION INTO DIVERSION INFRASTRUCTURE

Despite Hawai'i having a robust diversion mandate, very little is actually happening due to a severe lack of places to divert people. "Divert to where?" is a common response among law enforcement and justice system officials. The state must adequately fund diversion infrastructure, including a range of supportive and transitional housing options, robust community based mental health and substance abuse treatment, crisis responder service 24/7 on all islands, vocational training, and peer support systems. The state must also significantly bolster workforce capacity to address the severe shortage of staff required to implement diversion directives. Collectively, these investments will relieve current diversion bottlenecks and ensure residents suffering from mental illness and substance abuse avoid coming into contact with law enforcement in the first place.

3 EXPAND COMMUNITY BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The acute shortage of community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment services in Hawai'i is driving overcrowding in our jails and the state hospital. The state must fund a major expansion of "step down" continuum of care infrastructure so residents not requiring or no longer needing care at the state hospital can receive services in a variety of state-funded community based facilities. This includes permanent supportive housing with 24/7 mental health support and long-term beds such as sober living homes which are essential for diversion and cost effective.

PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET PRIORITIES

4 LEVERAGE MEDQUEST AND RECENT HEALTH POLICY CHANGES TO FUND DIVERSION AND REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation, diversion, and prevention will not succeed unless the state fully leverages the critical services and funding streams of the health system. Hawai'i was recently approved for a Medicaid 1115 waiver that will allow MedQUEST to cover the cost of community based health providers reaching into jails and prisons to provide mental health and other healthcare services, which can continue seamlessly upon reentry. This could be a game changer that saves the state hundreds of millions of dollars, but state leaders need to direct the Department of Corrections (DCR) to remove current barriers to community providers accessing correctional facilities and collaborate closely with them to ensure healthcare is delivered at Medicaid standard. Also, reinvestment dollars mandated by the state's 1115 waiver must be directed towards improved community services that will prevent incarceration.

5 MAKE HISTORIC INVESTMENTS IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

To address the root causes of crime and violence, particularly in under-resourced communities, the state must significantly increase funding for youth development and move to permanent budget allocations rather than short-term grants. Out-of-School-Time (OST) programs are proven to decrease crime rates and improve student safety, yet 74,000 youth in Hawai'i are currently waiting for an available spot. Fully subsidize OST programs for low-income youth, removing financial barriers to participation. The state should also shift funding away from punitive juvenile justice measures and toward prevention-first approaches, including hiring more school counselors and funding proven accountability models in schools such as restorative justice and Ho'oponono.

6 PAY TRUE COST FOR CONTRACTED SOCIAL SERVICES

The State has habitually set contract rates for community providers below the actual costs of providing the service, which has forced organizations to scramble to find other funding to cover the gap. According to the True Cost Coalition, rates have not increased in the last decade. If services providers cannot find other funds to cover the gap, they cease provision of service. This has led to shortages for critical services, including reentry beds in Hawai'i County. See True Cost Coalition survey here: hitruecost.com

PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET PRIORITIES

7 BOLSTER WORKFORCE CAPACITY

The state should address vacant positions and turnover; increase funding for hiring and training more mental health and outreach workers, as well as other types of community health workers to address severe workforce shortages across the board; offer financial incentives, such as higher wages or relocation assistance, to attract qualified workers; and implement peer mentorship programs to guide individuals through reentry and parole, helping them access services, secure housing, and find employment. While police and firefighters do not require a college degree, many outreach and crisis responder jobs do, and the state should amend requirements to ensure that contracts for programs, such as 988, do not require credentials that are unnecessary for carrying out job functions.

Disclaimer: Please note, budget numbers in this document are approximate. Amounts listed are state only, and do not including certain federal funds that may not be included in state budget. The extreme difficulty in determining exactly how much the state actually spends on a given area reflects a lack of budget transparency, as well as insufficient public access to the budget process generally.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Current Spending

- Estimated \$20 million on permanent supportive housing
- Estimated \$10-\$15 million for other types of supportive housing.

Funding required to meet statewide need:

- Total \$150 million/year.
- State needs to invest an estimated \$766 million over 10 years to provide permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless. (Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice).
- Other types of supportive and transitional housing estimated \$75 million/year.

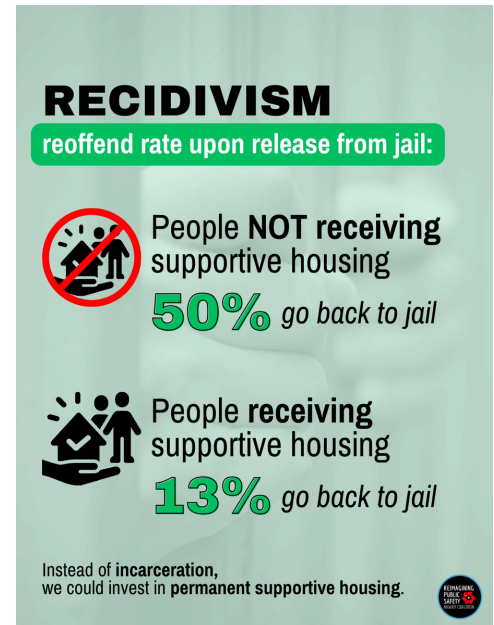
Public Safety Gap

- At least 40% of all people sitting in jail in Hawai'i are homeless. The lack of supportive housing severely limits diversion and reentry efforts, contributing to overcrowding in jails, recidivism, and delays in parole approvals.
- Many residents also needlessly end up or get stuck at the State Hospital, which costs \$365,000 per person/per year, or \$1,000 per day.
- According to Hospital Administrator, 77% of people at State Hospital do not need to be there, only remaining due to court backlog of evaluations and lack of transitional housing.

Budget Recommendations

The state should invest **a minimum of \$150 million per year** to fund a range of supportive housing options including:

- **Permanent supportive housing** with 24 hour wrap around MH, substance abuse disorder, and social services support, which is essential for achieving stability and breaking the ongoing cycle of jail-state hospital-emergency room.
- **Transitional housing for justice involved individuals** such as clean and sober housing and group homes. Critical for successful reentry, and reducing jail overcrowding as low-level offenders who are homeless can await trial in a supervised community setting.
- **Rapid rehousing** which provides time-limited rental subsidies to people who have recently become homeless.



BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

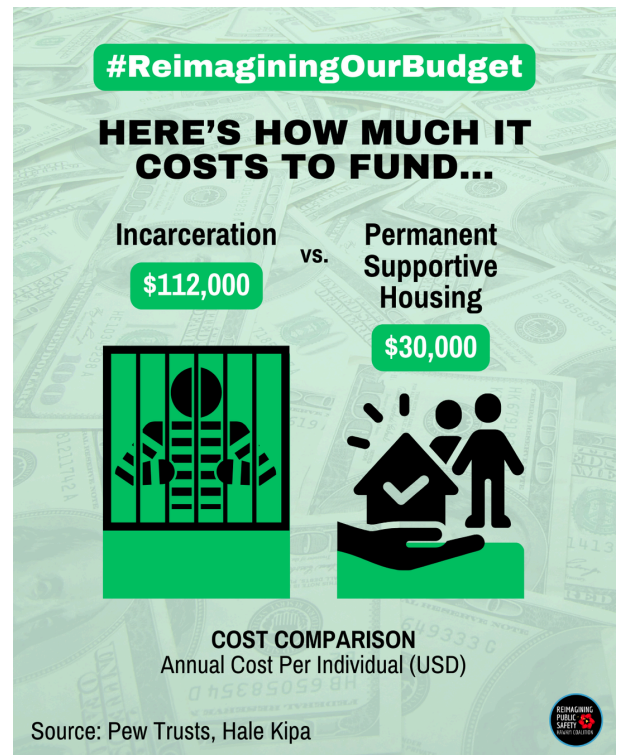
Cost Savings

- Permanent supportive housing average cost of \$30,000/year is far less expensive than incarceration at \$112,000 per/year and State Hospital at \$360,000/year.
- Housing chronically homeless could save over \$2 billion in healthcare costs (Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice).

Policy Changes Required

- Remove counterproductive restrictions and ensure housing first policy that allows individuals who are still struggling with substance use to still qualify for all forms of supportive housing.
- Ensure that families with formerly incarcerated/criminalized family members are not restricted from accessing affordable/supportive housing.

**AT LEAST
40% OF
PEOPLE IN JAIL
IN HAWAI'I
ARE HOMELESS**



**THE STATE OF
HAWAI'I SPENDS
\$268 MILLION
A YEAR ON
INCARCERATING
RESIDENTS BOTH
IN STATE AND OUT
OF STATE THROUGH
PRIVATE PRISONS**

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Current Spending

- \$81.5 million in 2024 for outpatient and capital improvement projects.
- 2012–2023, average annual spending (in 2022 dollars) decreased by 24% for Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) and 20% for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD).
- Alcohol and Drug Addiction Division (ADAD) ranged from \$35M to \$44M
- Spending on the Hawai'i State Hospital (HSH), which serves people with severe mental illnesses in the criminal justice system, increased by 40%, with cost of stay skyrocketing to \$360,000/year per person.

**LESS THAN 1/2
OF STATE
MENTAL
HEALTH
SPENDING
GOES
TOWARD
COMMUNITY
BASED
TREATMENT**

Funding required to meet statewide need: Additional \$200 million/year

Public Safety Gap

- According to MH America's 2023 Access to Care Data, Hawai'i ranks last in the nation for the percentage of adults in need of MH care that were unable to get treatment (69%), and 49th for youth unable to get MH treatment (75%).
- The acute shortage of mobile crisis responder service and MH and substance abuse treatment in Hawai'i dramatically increases the flow of residents into jail, while also causing diversion bottlenecks as people sit in jail waiting to get into the few programs available.
- Residential treatment and detoxification access is a major problem, especially on neighbor islands. Hawai'i Island has no residential treatment facility for the public.
- Jail diversion programs could help individuals with serious mental illness (SMI), but many are not eligible due to restrictive criteria, not to mention lack of staffing, leaving them stuck in the criminal justice system without the care they need.
- Many residents also needlessly end up or get stuck at the State Hospital, which costs \$365,000 per person/per year, or \$1,000 per day. According to the State Hospital Administrator, 77% of those at State Hospital do not need to be there, only remaining due to a court backlog of evaluations and lack of transitional housing.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Budget Recommendations

Invest significant new funding into expanding community based mental health and substance abuse treatment infrastructure including:

- **A “step down” continuum of care structure** in which those not requiring or no longer needing care at the state hospital can receive services in a variety of state-funded community based facilities, including permanent supportive housing.
- **Behavioral Health Crisis Centers” across the state**, where residents in crisis can get immediate help including stabilization, treatment, temporary housing, and case management services.
- **Expansion of long-term beds** such as sober living homes that are evidence backed and cost effective. State could subsidize providers of sober living homes including churches and nonprofits.
- **Expanding coverage of mobile crisis responder service so it is available 24/7 on all islands with fast response times.** Should follow proven CAHOOTS model with objective to divert 911 calls away from police, deploying a crisis counselor and EMT.
- **To relieve overcrowding at the State Hospital, expand supportive housing which provides options after emergency psychiatric stabilization** instead of releasing back into houselessness. Needed for individuals undergoing court ordered diversion and for family members who need options for their mentally ill loved ones.
- **Divert funding from the State Hospital to community based services and transitional housing, and increase staffing for court evaluators** which are critical to effectively carry out diversion.

Funding required to generate impact at scale

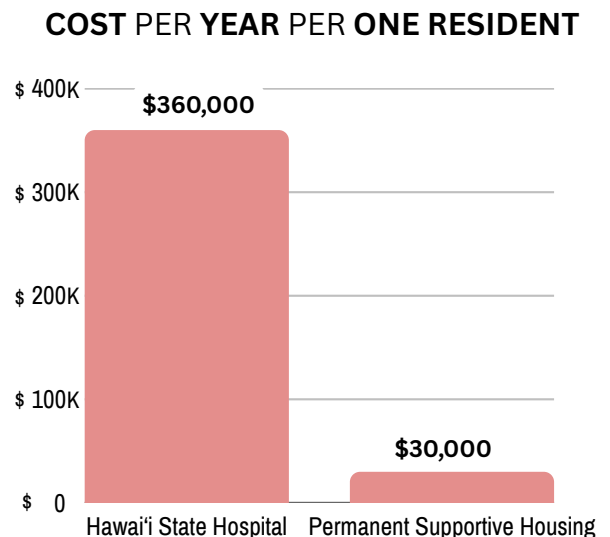
- \$60M annually for 24/7 mobile crisis responder teams to cover all areas of all islands.
- \$70M for Behavioral Health Crisis Centers statewide, 6 on O‘ahu, and at least 2 for each neighbor island.
- \$20M to expand voluntary residential substance abuse treatment beds statewide
- \$40M for community facilities for co-occurring MH/substance abuse treatment.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Cost Savings

- Permanent supportive housing with 24/7 wrap around support including MH is \$30,000 per person/year **vs.** incarceration \$112,000/year and State hospital \$360,000/ per year.
- According to Hospital Administrator, in 2024, 77% of people in the State Hospital shouldn't be there (at over \$1,000 a day). The cost is astronomical to hold those who are backlogged by the court and/or don't need the State Hospital level of care. Lack of transitional supported housing and community based MH care are the main cause.
- Cost of emergency room visits, and EMS and police time responding to 911 calls relating to MH and substance abuse, while difficult to quantify, is extremely expensive compared to mobile crisis responder service and community based services.



Policy Changes Required

- Rehabilitation, diversion, and prevention will not succeed unless the state fully leverages the critical services and funding streams of the health system.
- State must change policies to guarantee community health providers have access to reach into jails and prisons to provide quality health care, which can continue seamlessly upon reentry.
- The state should set up a system of Conservatorships to ensure comprehensive support for individuals with serious mental illness so that they are simultaneously treated, housed, and cared for outside of the state hospital setting.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Current Spending

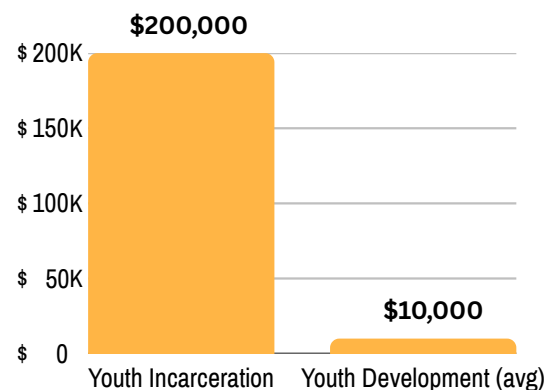
- The Office of Youth Services currently allocates \$18 million toward youth programs, with program costs ranging from \$1,000–\$15,000 per youth annually, depending on the type of service, including substance abuse treatment, homeless outreach, and foster care.
- Hawai'i ranks near the bottom nationally in Out-of-School Time (OST) investment, only 1.3% of the state budget.
- School-based OST programs in Hawai'i receive \$700–\$1,800 per student annually.

Funding required to meet statewide need: Additional \$75 million/year

Public Safety Gap

- Chronic underfunding of OST programs, job training, mental health services, and restorative justice initiatives has left thousands of youth—particularly Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and other marginalized youth--without access to critical enrichment, mentorship, and career-building opportunities.
- 74,000 youth in Hawai'i are currently waiting for a spot in an OST program, and nearly 45% (33,000) come from low-income households, making them most vulnerable to being funneled into the criminal legal system.
- The lack of mental health counselors, social workers, and school-based therapists leaves struggling youth without adequate support, while punitive school policies continue to fuel the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Rising youth violence and crime, especially in under-resourced communities, reflect the long history of failing to invest in prevention strategies that align with the values of aloha, mālama, pono, and kuleana.

COST PER YEAR PER ONE RESIDENT



BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Budget Recommendations

Hawai'i must ensure permanent, dedicated funding for youth development rather than relying on short-term grants or discretionary funding.

- **Fully fund OST programs, including subsidies for low-income youth, to ensure every child has a safe, structured, and enriching environment after school.** These programs should incorporate Native Hawaiian practices that foster identity, belonging, and leadership while reinforcing pathways to higher education and career success.
- **Invest in historic expansion of school-based mental health infrastructure** by hiring more counselors, social workers, and therapists to provide proactive care.
- **School-based restorative justice must be fully funded and implemented**, ensuring that ho'oponopono—a deeply rooted Indigenous approach to accountability and healing—replaces suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests.
- Instead of increasing law enforcement presence in schools and communities, **invest in hiring teams of trained community members—including credible messengers with lived experience—who can:**
 - Identify and de-escalate conflicts in real-time, preventing escalation into violence.
 - Engage at-risk youth in mentorship, social services, and career pathways before they enter the justice system.
 - Build community trust and foster peer-led solutions that prioritize prevention over punishment.
- **Expand workforce development and job training programs** to ensure that youth, especially those from historically underserved communities, have access to paid apprenticeships, career mentorship, and entrepreneurship pathways that lead to economic security and self-determination.
- **Fund expansion of Community Schools in Hawai'i** which contribute to community safety by providing at risk children with a stable and supportive school environment, offering after-school programs that keep youth engaged in positive activities and connecting families with essential social services.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Cost Savings

- Punitive responses to juvenile delinquency, such as incarceration, are not only far more expensive but also less effective than prevention strategies. Incarcerating one youth in Hawai'i costs approximately \$200,000 per year, whereas high-quality OST and intervention programs cost between \$4,500 and \$5,500 per youth per year.
- Restorative justice programs, mental health support, and workforce training reduce recidivism, improve long-term outcomes, and create safer communities.
- Cities that have invested in violence prevention initiatives have seen substantial reductions in crime, reinforcing the effectiveness of proactive, cost efficient, community-centered approaches over extremely costly punitive measures.

Policy Changes Required

- To build a future that aligns with the values of our host peoples– aloha, mālama, pono, and kuleana, Hawai'i must prioritize community-centered, healing-based interventions that foster agency and empowerment in young people, rather than punitive measures that criminalize them.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & HO‘OPONOPONO

Current Spending

- \$360,000/year for traditional, family based ho‘oponopono and \$120,000 for modern restorative justice (Huikahi circles) for Hawai‘i corrections.

Funding required to meet statewide need

- \$600,000/yr for Huikahi circles for all jails/prisons; \$500,000/yr for ho‘oponopono
- \$10 million/year restorative justice and ho‘oponopono programs in all public schools.

Public Safety Gap

The recidivism rate in Hawai‘i is over 50%. Under the current punitive model which has been failing for decades, both victim satisfaction and offender accountability are low.

Budget Recommendations

Ho‘oponopono and restorative justice (RJ) use talking circles to restore relationships, foster collective healing and ensure accountability that strengthen communities. Ho‘oponopono reflects Indigenous Hawaiian worldviews of balance, healing, and collective responsibility.

The state should invest in:

- **Expanding RJ/ho‘oponopono programs to all jails and prisons**, available year round.
- **Funding peacemaking programs** including traditional, family-based ho‘oponopono and modern RJ in all public schools, including permanent staff positions.
- **Funding community based organizations** to conduct reentry circles for residents returning to their communities from incarceration to ensure successful reintegration.

Cost Savings

- Studies indicate that restorative justice programs can lead to a reduction in recidivism rates by as much 25% compared to conventional methods. Conducting one RJ process costs \$1,600 versus \$307/day and \$112,000/year for incarceration in Hawai‘i.

Policy Changes Required

- Schools should phase out suspensions and implement restorative justice as the primary mechanism for conflict resolution and achieving real accountability among students.
- DCR must loosen restrictions on the types and frequency of RJ programs in jails/prisons

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Current Spending: Ranges from \$10-\$20 million. The state has heavily relied on the federal government and private sources to fund job training, which still falls far short.

Funding required to meet statewide need: \$80 million

Public Safety Gap

- One of the biggest threats to public safety in Hawai'i is the pervasiveness of low wage jobs combined with the extremely high cost of living. This is a key driver of the worsening homelessness crisis gripping Hawai'i.
- Economic security is a key protective factor against crime. Yet, the state is failing to provide residents with adequate training opportunities for living wage jobs. According to Aloha United Way, 41% of households in Hawai'i have income below the "Threshold of Financial Survival". Poverty and crime are positively correlated, with up to 80% of people in jail/prison falling below the poverty line.

Budget Recommendations

- **Hawai'i must rapidly expand workforce training and livable-wage career pathways programs for promising industries** including health care, technology, clean energy, skilled trades, and creative industries.
- **Significant new funding for programs that ensure youth, particularly those in historically underserved communities, have access to:**
 - Job training and apprenticeships in industries that provide livable wages.
 - Entrepreneurship programs that equip youth with the skills and resources to create their own opportunities.
 - Paid internships and mentorship programs that connect young people with leaders in their communities.

Cost Savings: These investments are particularly critical for youth who have been justice-involved, providing a pathway to stability and success rather than cycles of re-incarceration and economic hardship. Incarcerating one youth at Hawai'i Correctional Youth Facility is \$200,000/year versus vocational training which averages \$2000-\$10,000 per youth

Policy Changes Required: DCR must loosen restrictions on vocational opportunities inside jails and prisons, and significantly expand work furlough programs and eligibility.



REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY IN HAWAI'I COALITION MEMBERS

ACLU of Hawai'i
Ceeds of Peace
Common Cause Hawai'i
Community Alliance on Prisons
Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i
'Ekolu Mea Nui
Going Home Hawai'i
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA)
Hawai'i Island Going Home Consortium
Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice
Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC)
Honolulu Police Commission Task Force
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Youth Fellows
Mothering Justice
Prison Reform Hui
Project Vision
Sex Worker Outreach Project
University of Hawai'i, Professor of Sociology, Nick Chagnon
University of Hawai'i, Instructor of Sociology, Colleen Rost-Banik
University of Hawai'i, Professor of Social Work, Cameron Rasmussen

MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ACLU OF HAWAI'I



The **Reimagining Public Safety in Hawai'i Coalition** is a diverse group of Hawai'i-based organizations and everyday residents that bring both lived experience and expertise from a range of sectors including public health, the criminal legal system, economic revitalization, restorative justice, police oversight and accountability, mental health, street medicine and harm reduction, among others.

The Coalition is working to transform Hawai'i's safety system away from policing and incarceration toward an intersectional, public health and wellness based approach to community safety. This includes advancing policies that reduce incarceration through deploying non-police responders, diversion, and addressing the root causes of poverty and crime.

The Reimagining Public Safety coalition is driving investment into upstream solutions that disrupt the incarceration pipeline, provide people with real opportunities to succeed, and minimize the need for policing because communities are strong, resourced, and thriving.

The Coalition is committed to racial justice and equity, and acknowledges that Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and African Americans are disparately impacted by our criminal legal system in Hawai'i. Members of the coalition are working daily to advance proven community based solutions that are responsive to the unique cultural, historical, and political landscape in Hawai'i.



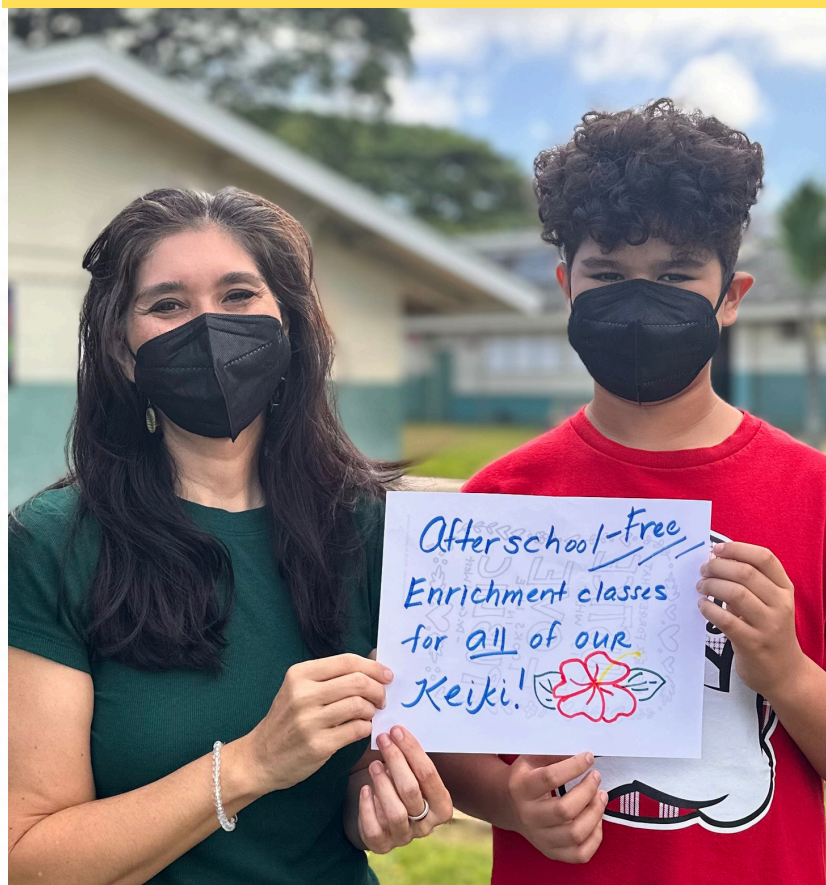
Email:
ReimagineSafetyHawaii@gmail.com



Instagram and Facebook:
[@ReimaginingPublicSafetyHawaii](#)



Safety for ALL means...



What follows is an updated text of the Reimagining Public Safety 2025 Budget Recommendations. Most significantly, the following includes citations and available links to the related source data.

Reimagining Public Safety in Hawai'i Coalition

**Budget Recommendations
State of Hawai'i
2025**

"Housing is healthcare."

- Governor Josh Green

"For people suffering from mental illness, jail is the most expensive, least effective option."

**- Tommy Johnson, Director of the
Department of Corrections and
Rehabilitation**

The purpose of the following budget recommendations is to identify:

- **Public safety priorities that require significant new state funding**
- **Gaps in current state funding vs. actual needs**
- **Potential cost savings**
- **Policy changes required**

BACKGROUND

The problems we see on the streets of Hawai'i are primarily driven by a housing and public health crisis. At least 40% of all people in jail in Hawai'i are homeless,¹ and many more are suffering from mental illness and substance addiction.²

¹ Email from Frank Young of Hawai'i Department of Public Safety Intake Services (Dec. 13, 2022).

² See Hawai'i State Senate, *WAM-PSM Informational Briefing - Statement of Hawai'i Director of Corrections and Rehabilitation Tommy Johnson* at 4:00, YOUTUBE (Jan. 7, 2025), www.youtube.com/live/YNmnzV6OMQM.

More than 60% are unsentenced and legally innocent,³ stuck in jail because they can't afford bail often as low as \$50. The mass incarceration of Hawai'i residents is having a disproportionate and devastating impact on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

In 2023 and 2024, key public safety actors across the state, including police, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, service providers, and criminal justice experts convened in a number of settings to identify opportunities to dramatically reduce incarceration through diversion and investing in root causes.

The following budget recommendations were primarily drawn from:

- **Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) workshops** for the City/County of Honolulu and Hawai'i County.
- **Reimagining Public Safety Coalition budget working group** which convened experts—including many with lived experience—from a diverse range of sectors including public health, housing, the criminal legal system, economic revitalization, mental health, and youth development, among others.

The recommendations reflect broad agreement among justice system actors and service providers regarding current resource gaps and specific investments that could significantly reduce the cycle of incarceration in Hawai'i.

PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET PRIORITIES

1. Pause Planning for \$1 Billion Super Jail

The Department of Corrections is proposing to build a larger jail to replace OCCC at an estimated cost of \$1 billion.⁴ However, diverting people suffering from mental illness and addiction and enacting bail reform will significantly decrease the jail population and eliminate the need for the proposed super jail. Simply put, the state can't afford to fund both critical diversion infrastructure and a \$1 billion jail. Funding diversion should be the priority as it is proven to generate better public safety outcomes than incarceration, at a fraction of the cost.

³ STATE OF HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, WEEKLY POPULATION REPORT (October 24, 2024).

⁴ Victoria Budiono, *The Cost of a New Oahu Jail Is Now More Than \$900 Million*, Civil Beat (Sep. 11, 2023), www.civilbeat.org/2023/09/the-cost-of-a-new-oahu-jail-is-now-more-than-900-million/; Kevin Dayton, *Corrections Commission Again Urges a Pause in Planning For a New Jail*, CIVIL BEAT (Dec. 16, 2021), www.civilbeat.org/2021/12/corrections-commission-again-urges-a-pause-in-planning-for-a-new-jail/.

2. Invest \$250 Million into Diversion Infrastructure

Despite Hawai‘i having a robust diversion mandate, very little is actually happening due to a severe lack of places to divert people. “Divert to where?” is a common response among law enforcement and justice system officials. The state must adequately fund diversion infrastructure, including a range of supportive and transitional housing options, robust community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment, crisis responder service 24/7 on all islands, vocational training, and peer support systems. The state must also significantly bolster workforce capacity to address the severe shortage of staff required to implement diversion directives. Collectively, these investments will relieve current diversion bottlenecks and ensure residents suffering from mental illness and substance abuse avoid coming into contact with law enforcement in the first place.

3. Expand Community-Based Mental Health Services

The acute shortage of community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment services in Hawai‘i is driving overcrowding in our jails and the state hospital. The state must fund a major expansion of “step down” continuum of care infrastructure so residents not requiring or no longer needing care at the state hospital can receive services in a variety of state-funded community-based facilities. This includes permanent supportive housing with 24/7 mental health support and long-term beds such as sober living homes which are essential for diversion and cost-effective.

4. Leverage MedQUEST and Recent Health Policy Changes to Fund Diversion and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation, diversion, and prevention will not succeed unless the state fully leverages the critical services and funding streams of the health system. Hawai‘i was recently approved for a Medicaid 1115 waiver that will allow MedQUEST to cover the cost of community-based health providers reaching into jails and prisons to provide mental health and other healthcare services, which can continue seamlessly upon reentry. This could be a game changer that saves the state hundreds of millions of dollars, but state leaders need to direct the Department of Corrections (DCR) to remove current barriers to community providers accessing correctional facilities and collaborate closely with them to ensure healthcare is delivered at Medicaid standard. Also, reinvestment dollars mandated by the state’s 1115 waiver must be directed towards improved community services that will prevent incarceration.

5. Make Historic Investments in Youth Development

To address the root causes of crime and violence, particularly in under-resourced communities, the state must significantly increase funding for youth development and move to permanent budget allocations rather than short-term grants. Out-of-School-Time (OST) programs are

proven to decrease crime rates and improve student safety, yet 74,000 youth in Hawai‘i are currently waiting for an available spot.⁵ Fully subsidize OST programs for low-income youth, removing financial barriers to participation. The state should also shift funding away from punitive juvenile justice measures and toward prevention-first approaches, including hiring more school counselors and funding proven accountability models in schools such as restorative justice and Ho‘oponono.

6. Pay True Cost for Contracted Social Services

The State has habitually set contract rates for community providers below the actual costs of providing the service, which has forced organizations to scramble to find other funding to cover the gap. According to the True Cost Coalition, rates have not increased in the last decade. If service providers cannot find other funds to cover the gap, they cease provision of service. This has led to shortages for critical services, including reentry beds in Hawai‘i County. See the True Cost Coalition survey here: hitruecost.com

7. Bolster Workforce Capacity

The state should address vacant positions and turnover; increase funding for hiring and training more mental health and outreach workers, as well as other types of community health workers to address severe workforce shortages across the board; offer financial incentives, such as higher wages or relocation assistance, to attract qualified workers; and implement peer mentorship programs to guide individuals through reentry and parole, helping them access services, secure housing, and find employment. While police and firefighters do not require a college degree, many outreach and crisis responder jobs do, and the state should amend requirements to ensure that contracts for programs, such as 988, do not require credentials that are unnecessary for carrying out job functions.

Disclaimer: Please note, the budget numbers in this document are approximate. Amounts listed are state only and do not include certain federal funds that may not be included in the state budget. The extreme difficulty in determining exactly how much the state actually spends on a given area reflects a lack of budget transparency, as well as insufficient public access to the budget process generally.

⁵ THE HAWAI‘I AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, FUTURE OF HAWAI‘I’S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: CASE FOR SUPPORT, www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawaii_afterschool_funding_factsheet.pdf (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Supportive Housing

Current Spending

- Estimated ~~\$20 million~~ [Update: \$20-\$50 million] on permanent supportive housing⁶
- Estimated \$10-\$15 million for other types of supportive housing⁷

Funding required to meet statewide need:

- Total \$150 million/year
- State needs to invest an estimated \$766 million over 10 years to provide permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless⁸
- Other types of supportive and transitional housing estimated \$75 million/year

Public Safety Gap

- At least 40% of all people sitting in jail in Hawai‘i are homeless.⁹ The lack of supportive housing severely limits diversion and reentry efforts, contributing to overcrowding in jails, recidivism, and delays in parole approvals.
- Many residents also needlessly end up or get stuck at the State Hospital, which costs \$365,000 per person/per year, or \$1,000 per day.¹⁰

⁶ The Statewide Office of Homelessness & Housing Solutions secured SFY24 funds including \$15,000,000 for the Kauhale Initiative; \$15,000,000 for the ‘Ohana Zones Pilot Program (which will be re-focused on programs that result in permanent housing placements for homeless individuals); and \$2,784,000 for Permanent Supportive Housing support services to be paired with \$1,740,000 in rental assistance from the Hawai‘i Public Housing Authority (HPHA). State of Hawaii Department of Human Services, Annual Report 48 (2023), <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/DHS23-AnnualReport-FINAL-spreads-1.pdf> (last accessed Apr. 28, 2025); see also *Ohana Zones*, State of Hawaii Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions, <https://homelessness.hawaii.gov/ohana-zones/> (last visited Apr. 28, 2025).

⁷ Since late 2023, the state has spent \$37.1 million on no bid contracts to Homeaid for building Kauhale under Governor Green’s Kauhale Initiative. Some do not consider Kauhale permanent supportive housing, especially the more basic units. Associated Press, *Hawaii Spent Millions on Housing for the Homeless. Show Us the Receipts*, U.S. News (Apr. 17, 2025), www.usnews.com/news/best-states/hawaii/articles/2025-04-17/hawaii-spent-millions-on-housing-for-the-homeless-show-us-the-receipts.

⁸ Wayne Yoshioka, *Update on State’s Homelessness Plans*, HAWAII PUBLIC RADIO (Sept. 17, 2018), www.hawaiipublicradio.org/government-politics/2018-09-17/update-on-states-homelessness-plans.

⁹ Email from Frank Young of Hawaii Department of Public Safety Intake Services (Dec. 13, 2022).

¹⁰ Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don’t Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

- According to Hospital Administrator, 77% of people at State Hospital do not need to be there, only remaining due to court backlog of evaluations and lack of transitional housing.¹¹

Budget Recommendations

The state should invest **a minimum of \$150 million per year** to fund a range of supportive housing options including:

- **Permanent supportive housing** with 24-hour wrap-around MH, substance abuse disorder, and social services support, which is essential for achieving stability and breaking the ongoing cycle of jail-state hospital-emergency room.
- **Transitional housing for justice involved individuals**, such as clean and sober housing and group homes. Critical for successful reentry and reducing jail overcrowding as low-level offenders who are homeless can await trial in a supervised community setting.
- **Rapid rehousing**, which provides time-limited rental subsidies to people who have recently become homeless.

Cost Savings

- Permanent supportive housing average cost of \$30,000/year is far less expensive than incarceration at \$112,000 per/year¹² and State Hospital at \$360,000/year¹³
- Housing chronically homeless could save over \$2 billion in healthcare costs¹⁴

Policy Changes Required

- Remove counterproductive restrictions and ensure housing first policy that allows individuals who are still struggling with substance use to still qualify for all forms of supportive housing.
- Ensure that families with formerly incarcerated/criminalized family members are not restricted from accessing affordable/supportive housing.

¹¹ Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don't Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

¹² Hawai'i State Senate, *WAM-PSM Informational Briefing - Statement of Hawai'i Director of Corrections and Rehabilitation Tommy Johnson* at 4:35, YOUTUBE (Jan. 7, 2025), www.youtube.com/live/YNmzV6OMQM.

¹³ Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don't Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

¹⁴ Wayne Yoshioka, *Update on State's Homelessness Plans*, HAWAII PUBLIC RADIO (Sept. 17, 2018), www.hawaiipublicradio.org/government-politics/2018-09-17/update-on-states-homelessness-plans.

The State of Hawai‘i spends **\$268 million** a year on **incarcerating residents** both in-state and out-of-state through **private prisons**.¹⁵

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment

Less than 1/2 of state mental health spending goes toward community-based treatment.¹⁶

Current Spending

- \$81.5 million in 2024 for outpatient and capital improvement projects¹⁷
- 2012–2023, average annual spending (in 2022 dollars) decreased by 24% for Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) and 20% for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD)¹⁸
- Alcohol and Drug Addiction Division (ADAD) ranged from \$35M to \$44M¹⁹
- Spending on the Hawai‘i State Hospital (HSH), which serves people with severe mental illnesses in the criminal justice system, increased by 40%, with cost of stay skyrocketing to \$360,000/year per person²⁰

Funding required to meet statewide need: Additional \$200 million/year

Public Safety Gap

- Hawai‘i ranks last in the nation for the percentage of adults in need of MH care who were unable to get treatment (69%), and 49th for youth unable to get MH treatment (75%).²¹
- The acute shortage of mobile crisis responder service and MH and substance abuse treatment in Hawai‘i dramatically increases the flow of residents into jail, while also

¹⁵ STATE OF HAWAII‘I DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY / CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION, FB23-25 PFP REPORT 1366 (Dec. 12, 2022), https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/25.-Department-of-Public-Safety-Corrections-and-Rehabilitation-FB23-25-PFP.Lk0_.pdf.

¹⁶ Beth Giesting, *Hawai‘i’s Serious Mental Health Care Needs Take a Top Spot in Governor Green’s 2025 Supplemental Budget*, HAWAII APPLESEED (Jan. 30, 2025), <https://hiappleseed.org/blog/hawaii-mental-health-care-governor-green-2025-supplemental-budget>.

¹⁷ STATE OF HAWAII‘I DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, FB23-25 PFP REPORT 858 (Mar. 18, 2021), available at https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/18.-Department-of-Health-FB23-25-PFP.Lk2_.pdf.

¹⁸ Beth Giesting, *Hawai‘i’s Serious Mental Health Care Needs Take a Top Spot in Governor Green’s 2025 Supplemental Budget*, HAWAII APPLESEED (Jan. 30, 2025), <https://hiappleseed.org/blog/hawaii-mental-health-care-governor-green-2025-supplemental-budget>.

¹⁹ Beth Giesting, *Hawai‘i’s Serious Mental Health Care Needs Take a Top Spot in Governor Green’s 2025 Supplemental Budget*, HAWAII APPLESEED (Jan. 30, 2025), <https://hiappleseed.org/blog/hawaii-mental-health-care-governor-green-2025-supplemental-budget>.

²⁰ Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don’t Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaii.newsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

²¹ Maddy Reinert, et al., *The State of Mental Health in America 2023*, MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA 21-25 (Oct. 2022), <https://mhanational.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2023-State-of-Mental-Health-in-America-Report.pdf>.

causing diversion bottlenecks as people sit in jail waiting to get into the few programs available.

- Residential treatment and detoxification access is a major problem, especially on neighbor islands. Hawai'i Island has no residential treatment facility for the public.
- Jail diversion programs could help individuals with serious mental illness (SMI), but many are not eligible due to restrictive criteria, not to mention lack of staffing, leaving them stuck in the criminal justice system without the care they need.
- Many residents also needlessly end up or get stuck at the State Hospital, which costs \$365,000 per person/per year, or \$1,000 per day.²² According to the State Hospital Administrator, 77% of those at State Hospital do not need to be there, only remaining due to a court backlog of evaluations and lack of transitional housing.²³

Budget recommendations

Invest significant new funding into expanding community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment infrastructure including:

- **A “step down” continuum of care structure** in which those not requiring or no longer needing care at the state hospital can receive services in a variety of state-funded community-based facilities, including permanent supportive housing.
- **Behavioral Health Crisis Centers” across the state**, where residents in crisis can get immediate help including stabilization, treatment, temporary housing, and case management services.
- **Expansion of long-term beds**, such as sober living homes that are evidence-backed and cost-effective. The state could subsidize providers of sober living homes including churches and nonprofits.
- **Expanding coverage of mobile crisis responder service so it is available 24/7 on all islands with fast response times.** Should follow proven CAHOOTS model with objective to divert 911 calls away from police, deploying a crisis counselor and EMT.
- **To relieve overcrowding at the State Hospital, expand supportive housing which provides options after emergency psychiatric stabilization** instead of releasing back into houselessness. Needed for individuals undergoing court-ordered diversion and for family members who need options for their mentally ill loved ones.

²² Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don't Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

²³ This is based on an informational briefing presentation by the Department of Health and Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to update the public and the committee on the implementation of Behavioral Health centers and hospitals, intentions for the Kāne'ohe State Hospital, and utilization of the centers and hospitals for mentally ill criminal defendants. Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don't Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

- **Divert funding from the State Hospital to community-based services and transitional housing, and increase staffing for court evaluators,** which are critical to effectively carry out diversion.

Funding required to generate impact at scale

- \$60M annually for 24/7 mobile crisis responder teams to cover all areas of all islands
- \$70M for Behavioral Health Crisis Centers statewide, 6 on O‘ahu, and at least 2 for each neighbor island
- \$20M to expand voluntary residential substance abuse treatment beds statewide
- \$40M for community facilities for co-occurring MH/substance abuse treatment

Cost Savings

- Permanent supportive housing with 24/7 wrap-around support including MH is \$30,000 per person/year²⁴ vs. incarceration \$112,000/year and State hospital \$360,000/ per year
- According to Hospital Administrator, in 2024, 77% of people in the State Hospital shouldn't be there (at over \$1,000 a day).²⁵ The cost is astronomical to hold those who are backlogged by the court and/or don't need the State Hospital level of care. Lack of transitional supported housing and community-based MH care are the main cause.
- Cost of emergency room visits, and EMS and police time responding to 911 calls relating to MH and substance abuse, while difficult to quantify, is extremely expensive compared to mobile crisis responder service and community-based services.

Policy Changes Required

- Rehabilitation, diversion, and prevention will not succeed unless the state fully leverages the critical services and funding streams of the health system.
- State must change policies to guarantee community health providers have access to reach into jails and prisons to provide quality health care, which can continue seamlessly upon reentry.
- The state should set up a system of Conservatorships to ensure comprehensive support for individuals with serious mental illness so that they are simultaneously treated, housed, and cared for outside of the state hospital setting.

²⁴ *Housing First*, STATE OF HAWAII STATEWIDE OFFICE ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SOLUTIONS, <https://homelessness.hawaii.gov/housing/> (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

²⁵ Daryl Huff, *State Psychiatric Hospital Overcrowded with Patients Who Don't Have Medical Needs*, HAWAII NEWS NOW (Feb. 5, 2024), www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/02/06/state-psychiatric-hospital-overcrowded-with-patients-who-dont-have-medical-needs/.

Youth Development

Current Spending

- The Office of Youth Services currently allocates \$18 million toward youth programs [Update: at-risk youth services,²⁶] with program costs ranging from \$1,000–\$15,000 per youth annually,²⁷ depending on the type of service, including substance abuse treatment, homeless outreach, and foster care
- Hawai‘i ranks near the bottom nationally in Out-of-School Time (OST) investment, only 1.3% of the state budget²⁸
- School-based OST programs in Hawai‘i receive \$700–\$1,800 per student annually²⁹

Funding required to meet statewide need: Additional \$75 million/year

Public Safety Gap

- Chronic underfunding of OST programs, job training, mental health services, and restorative justice initiatives has left thousands of youth—particularly Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and other marginalized youth—without access to critical enrichment, mentorship, and career-building opportunities.
- 74,000 youth in Hawai‘i are currently waiting for a spot in an OST program, and nearly 45% (33,000) come from low-income households, making them most vulnerable to being funneled into the criminal legal system.³⁰
- The lack of mental health counselors, social workers, and school-based therapists leaves struggling youth without adequate support, while punitive school policies continue to fuel the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Rising youth violence and crime, especially in under-resourced communities, reflect the long history of failing to invest in prevention strategies that align with the values of aloha, mālama, pono, and kuleana.

²⁶ STATE OF HAWAI‘I DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, FB23-25 PFP REPORT 1010 (Dec. 20, 2022), https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/20.-Department-of-Human-Services-FB23-25-PFP.Lk0_.pdf.

²⁷ E.g. Hale Kipa, Pu‘uhonua 2024 Annual Report (Mar. 2025), www.halekipa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/AR-2024g.pdf; Palama Settlement, <https://www.palamasettlement.org/>.

²⁸ THE HAWAI‘I AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, FUTURE OF HAWAI‘I’S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: CASE FOR SUPPORT, www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawaii_afterschool_funding_factsheet.pdf (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

²⁹ THE HAWAI‘I AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, FUTURE OF HAWAI‘I’S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: CASE FOR SUPPORT, www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawaii_afterschool_funding_factsheet.pdf (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

³⁰ THE HAWAI‘I AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, FUTURE OF HAWAI‘I’S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: CASE FOR SUPPORT, www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawaii_afterschool_funding_factsheet.pdf (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

Budget Recommendations

Hawai‘i must ensure permanent, dedicated funding for youth development rather than relying on short-term grants or discretionary funding.

- **Fully fund OST programs, including subsidies for low-income youth, to ensure every child has a safe, structured, and enriching environment after school.** These programs should incorporate Native Hawaiian practices that foster identity, belonging, and leadership while reinforcing pathways to higher education and career success.
- **Invest in historic expansion of school-based mental health infrastructure** by hiring more counselors, social workers, and therapists to provide proactive care.
- **School-based restorative justice must be fully funded and implemented**, ensuring that ho‘oponopono—a deeply rooted Indigenous approach to accountability and healing—replaces suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests.
- **Instead of increasing law enforcement presence in schools and communities, invest in hiring teams of trained community members—including credible messengers with lived experience—who can:**
 - Identify and de-escalate conflicts in real time, preventing escalation into violence.
 - Engage at-risk youth in mentorship, social services, and career pathways before they enter the justice system.
 - Build community trust and foster peer-led solutions that prioritize prevention over punishment.
- **Expand workforce development and job training programs** to ensure that youth, especially those from historically underserved communities, have access to paid apprenticeships, career mentorship, and entrepreneurship pathways that lead to economic security and self-determination.
- **Fund expansion of Community Schools in Hawai‘i**, which contribute to community safety by providing at-risk children with a stable and supportive school environment, offering after-school programs that keep youth engaged in positive activities, and connecting families with essential social services.

Cost Savings

- Punitive responses to juvenile delinquency, such as incarceration, are not only far more expensive but also less effective than prevention strategies. Incarcerating one youth in

Hawai‘i costs approximately \$200,000 per year,³¹ whereas high-quality OST and intervention programs cost between \$4,500 and \$5,500 per youth per year.³²

- Restorative justice programs, mental health support, and workforce training reduce recidivism, improve long-term outcomes, and create safer communities.
- Cities that have invested in violence prevention initiatives have seen substantial reductions in crime, reinforcing the effectiveness of proactive, cost-efficient, community-centered approaches over extremely costly punitive measures.

Policy Changes Required

- To build a future that aligns with the values of our host peoples—aloha, mālama, pono, and kuleana, Hawai‘i must prioritize community-centered, healing-based interventions that foster agency and empowerment in young people, rather than punitive measures that criminalize them.

Restorative Justice & Ho‘oponopono

Current Spending

- \$360,000/year for traditional, family-based ho‘oponopono³³ and \$120,000 for modern restorative justice (Huikahi circles) for Hawai‘i corrections³⁴

Funding required to meet statewide need

- \$600,000/year for Huikahi circles for all jails/prisons; \$500,000/year for ho‘oponopono
- \$10 million/year restorative justice and ho‘oponopono programs in all public schools

³¹ *Youth Incarceration in Hawaii*, NO KIDS IN PRISON, www.nokidsinprison.org/explore/hawaii/?section=cost-interactive (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

³² THE HAWAI‘I AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE, FUTURE OF HAWAI‘I’S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: CASE FOR SUPPORT, www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawaii_afterschool_funding_factsheet.pdf (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

³³ Statement from Dr. Jamee Miller of ‘Ekolu Mea Nui.

³⁴ Statement from Lorenn Walker of Hawai‘i Friends of Restorative Justice. See also James Richardson & Lorenn Walker, *The Cost of Recidivism: A Dynamic Systems Model to Evaluate the Benefits of a Restorative Reentry Program*, JUSTICE EVALUATION JOURNAL (2022), DOI: 10.1080/24751979.2022.2123746.

Public Safety Gap

The recidivism rate in Hawai‘i is over 50%.³⁵ Under the current punitive model which has been failing for decades, both victim satisfaction and offender accountability are low.

Budget Recommendations

Ho‘oponopono and restorative justice (RJ) use talking circles to restore relationships, foster collective healing, and ensure accountability that strengthen communities. Ho‘oponopono reflects Indigenous Hawaiian worldviews of balance, healing, and collective responsibility.

The state should invest in:

- Expanding RJ/ho‘oponopono programs to all jails and prisons, available year-round.
- Funding peacemaking programs including traditional, family-based ho‘oponopono and modern RJ in all public schools, including permanent staff positions.
- Funding community-based organizations to conduct reentry circles for residents returning to their communities from incarceration to ensure successful reintegration.

Cost Savings

- Studies indicate that restorative justice programs can lead to a reduction in recidivism rates by as much 25% compared to conventional methods.³⁶ Conducting one RJ process costs \$1,600³⁷ versus \$307/day and \$112,000/year for incarceration in Hawai‘i.

Policy Changes Required

- Schools should phase out suspensions and implement restorative justice as the primary mechanism for conflict resolution and achieving real accountability among students.
- DCR must loosen restrictions on the types and frequency of RJ programs in jails/prisons

³⁵ FINAL REPORT OF THE HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 85 TASK FORCE ON PRISON REFORM TO THE HAWAI‘I LEGISLATURE, CREATING BETTER OUTCOMES, SAFER COMMUNITIES 3 (Dec. 2018).

³⁶ Shahid Khan & Mia Lucas, *The Effectiveness of Restorative Justice Programs in Reducing Recidivism* (2023), www.researchgate.net/publication/372750946_The_effectiveness_of_restorative_justice_programs_in_reducing_recidivism.

³⁷ Madeleine Valera, *The Money Is There, But This Restorative Justice Program Can’t Get It*, CIVIL BEAT (Dec. 1, 2023), www.civilbeat.org/2023/12/the-money-is-there-but-this-restorative-justice-program-cant-get-it/.

Workforce Development

Current Spending: Ranges from ~~\$10-\$20 million~~ [Update: \$10-\$30 million.³⁸] The state has heavily relied on the federal government and private sources to fund job training, which still falls far short.

Funding required to meet statewide need: \$80 million

Public Safety Gap

- One of the biggest threats to public safety in Hawai‘i is the pervasiveness of low-wage jobs combined with the extremely high cost of living. This is a key driver of the worsening homelessness crisis gripping Hawai‘i.
- Economic security is a key protective factor against crime.³⁹ Yet, the state is failing to provide residents with adequate training opportunities for living wage jobs. According to Aloha United Way, 41% of households in Hawai‘i have income below the “Threshold of Financial Survival.”⁴⁰ ~~Poverty and crime are positively correlated, with up to 80% of people in jail/prison falling below the poverty line.~~ [Update: Bureau of Justice Statistics data has shown that people in jail had a median annual income of \$15,109 prior to their incarceration, which is less than half (48%) of the median for non-incarcerated people of similar ages.⁴¹]

Budget Recommendations

- **Hawai‘i must rapidly expand workforce training and livable-wage career pathways programs for promising industries** including health care, technology, clean energy, skilled trades, and creative industries.
- **Significant new funding for programs that ensure youth, particularly those in historically underserved communities, have access to:**
 - Job training and apprenticeships in industries that provide livable wages.
 - Entrepreneurship programs that equip youth with the skills and resources to create their own opportunities.

³⁸ STATE OF HAWAII‘I DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, FB23-25 PFP REPORT 1120 (Dec. 21, 2022), https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/21.-Department-of-Labor-and-Industrial-Relations-FB23-25-PFP.Lk0_.pdf.

³⁹ See Tihanne Mar-Shall, *The Poverty to Prison Pipeline*, LAW JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (Mar. 29, 2021), <https://lawjournalforsocialjustice.com/2021/03/29/the-poverty-to-prison-pipeline/>.

⁴⁰ ALOHA UNITED WAY, ALICE IN HAWAII‘I: 2024 FACTS AND FIGURES (Jan. 2025), www.auw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024_ALICE-Report_Facts-and-Figures_v-25-01-09.pdf.

⁴¹ Bernadette Rabuy and Daniel Kopf, *Detaining the Poor: How Money Bail Perpetuates an Endless Cycle of Poverty and Jail Time*, PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE (May 10, 2016), www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/incomejails.html.

- Paid internships and mentorship programs that connect young people with leaders in their communities.

Cost Savings: These investments are particularly critical for youth who have been justice-involved, providing a pathway to stability and success rather than cycles of re-incarceration and economic hardship. Incarcerating one youth at Hawai‘i Correctional Youth Facility is \$200,000/year⁴² versus vocational training which averages \$2000-\$10,000 per youth.⁴³

Policy Changes Required: DCR must loosen restrictions on vocational opportunities inside jails and prisons and significantly expand work furlough programs and eligibility.

⁴² *Youth Incarceration in Hawai‘i*, NO KIDS IN PRISON, www.nokidsinprison.org/explore/hawaii/?section=cost-interactive (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).

⁴³ *Best Trade Schools in Hawai‘i for 2025*, LEARN.ORG, learn.org/articles/best_trade_schools_hawaii.html (last visited Apr. 22, 2025).