REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO CORRECT ISSUES AND DISMANTLE BARRIERS RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF CIVIL IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS TO AND SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY REENTRY OF INMATES EXITING INCARCERATION.

WHEREAS, millions of people in the United States are living with a record of an arrest or criminal conviction; and

WHEREAS, people with histories of arrests and criminal convictions are routinely prevented from entering into employment, housing, and educational opportunities due to state and local restrictions, as well as social stigma; and

WHEREAS, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, ninety-five percent of people incarcerated in state prisons will eventually be released into society; and

WHEREAS, all individuals, including those who have been convicted of and incarcerated for criminal offense, have inherent worth, and those persons deserve the chance to learn from their mistakes, grow, and start again; and

WHEREAS, reentry programs assist people who are released from jails and prisons to obtain post-secondary education, housing, employment, and treatment; and

WHEREAS, these reentry programs help formerly incarcerated people undergo a smooth and successful transition back into their communities, which results in reduced recidivism and improved public safety; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the resulting economic downturn have exacerbated existing barriers to successful reintegration, due in part to high unemployment and increased demand for housing assistance; and
WHEREAS, pursuant to section 353H-3(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Department of Public Safety is required to develop a comprehensive and effective offender reentry system plan for adult offenders exiting the prison system; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 353H-32, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Department of Public Safety is required, upon request, to:

(1) Issue civil identification cards to inmates exiting correctional facilities; and

(2) Assist those inmates in obtaining the inmates' own birth certificates, social security cards, and any other relevant identification documents necessary for the inmates' transition from incarceration; and

WHEREAS, despite section 353H-32, Hawaii Revised Statutes, many inmates are exiting incarceration without identification documentation; and

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Public Safety's December 2019 report to the Legislature, between November 2018 and October 2019, fifty-six percent of all people exiting jails and forty-six percent of all people exiting prisons statewide left without an identification card; and

WHEREAS, without civil identification documents, it is nearly impossible for an individual to obtain housing and legal employment, both of which are essential for successful reentry into the community; and

WHEREAS, although state agencies face significant budget cuts as a result of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19, the lack of civil identification among individuals exiting correctional facilities predates this downturn and should be treated as priority issue; and

WHEREAS, if the rate of individuals exiting correctional facilities without civil identification is not reduced, those released individuals without identification will be without legal means to support themselves as they reenter the community,
which will eventually drain state resources as the individuals seek public assistance, or in some cases, backslide into recidivism; and

  WHEREAS, the increased investment in comprehensive reentry programs for former inmates reintegrating back into their communities is more important now than ever and is critical to improving public safety; and

  WHEREAS, this body is committed to ensure that, at a minimum, there shall be no reductions to existing reentry services or funding for contracts for reentry services; and

  WHEREAS, this body is committed to identifying meaningful opportunities to divest from retributive approaches to corrections and reinvest in reentry support; now, therefore,

  BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of Public Safety is requested to expeditiously identify and correct issues that prevent the Department from complying with section 353H-32, Hawaii Revised Statutes, with respect to providing requested civil identification cards and assistance with other identification documents to individuals exiting correctional facilities; and

  BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Safety is requested to actively seek out information regarding existing barriers to the successful reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals into the community; and

  BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Safety is requested to work with community stakeholders to develop, support, and implement policy changes that dismantle barriers identified by the Department; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Public Safety and Chairperson of the Hawaii Paroling Authority.

OFFERED BY: [Signature]

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