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MEDIA RELEASE

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HO'OPONOPONO

A sense of identity and connection with community are key factors in responsible citizenship. The need to personally establish these is even greater for former prisoners and parolees re-entering society after serving time for offenses.

S.C.R. 182, S.R. 118, and H.R. 210, seek to help Native Hawaiian ex-offenders become integrated back into society through re-acquaintance with their rich heritage in an innovative, culturally based, statewide program that would include Kaho'olawe. The island was included due to its sacredness to Native Hawaiians and its reputation as a healing center. Native Hawaiians comprise 44% of female offenders and 37% of male offenders.

The resolution requests the creation of a task force to determine the feasibility of a Native Hawaiian Healing Program. The statewide program would use cultural traditions and healing practices to help this group develop a connection with the community, a sense of identity and a purpose in life. Participants would learn life skills and other needed skills, on all neighbor islands, and possibly culminate with service and education on Kaho'olawe.

A successful program for female juvenile offenders program known as Girls' Court, has visited Kaho'olawe as part of their rehabilitation. The girls learned about Kaho'olawe's history and cultural significance, and restored the land by clearing trails and paths, and planting native species of vegetation. Along with the community service of stewardship of the island, they learned about their cultural heritage and gained a sense of personal identity.

The Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission, the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and other stakeholders are expected to be a part of the task force.

The Senate Committee on Public Safety Committee and Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture & Hawaiian Affairs heard the Senate resolutions. The House Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs, and Committee on Water, Land & Ocean Resources & Hawaiian Affairs heard the House resolution. All three resolutions were passed and will be voted on in their respective chambers.

S.C.R. 182, S.R. 118, and H.R. 210, Requesting the Establishment of a Task Force to Study the Feasibility of a Native Hawaiian Healing Program on Kaho'olawe.

END