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FOR RELEASE

OAHU COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER – FOR SALE OR LEASE?

Senator Will Espero, D-Ewa, Waipahu, Chair of the Senate Public Safety Committee, wants a study on the feasibility of selling or leasing the Oahu Community Correctional Center, and using the proceeds to fund the construction of a new prison or to pay bonds issued to finance such construction.

Designed in times of a much smaller inmate population, OCCC has a history of overcrowding due to increasing numbers of incarcerated persons. The Public Safety Committee believes the time is ripe for considering options to finance and construct a prison sufficient to meet state needs.

The largest prison in Hawaii, OCCC sits on 16 acres in the Nimitz-Dillingham corridor of Kalihi, and houses over 1400 male and female inmates. Pre-trial detainees (arrested persons who cannot make bail or persons held without bail until trial) are also kept at OCCC. Statistics from the Bureau of Justice show an explosion in Hawaii's prison population, from 985 in 1980, to the 5,454 in 2002.

Senator Espero thinks these numbers demonstrate a strong need for the State to build a much larger facility in a different location to accommodate and manage the continuing inmate increase.

Senator Espero's bill, S.B. 916, "Relating to Public Safety," would have the Department of Public Safety and Office of Planning cooperatively review and assess the market value of public safety properties, and consider the sale or lease of OCCC. The monies gained by the sale or lease would then be used to finance new prison construction, or pay off bonds made to fund the construction. A status report would be given to the Legislature before the 2008 Session opens.

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