



TO: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Board of Directors

Officers

David Bell
Chair

FROM: Sumeet Sharma, Director
Correctional Association of New York

Stephen Phelps
Vice-Chair

SUBJECT: House Bill 300, Relating to the State Budget
Hearing: Wednesday March 8th 10:00am
State Capitol, Room 308

Martha King
Secretary

Richard Foudy
Treasurer

March 7, 2023

Kenneth Henderson
Officer

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

Wes Caines
Officer

I am writing to request that you consider supporting the budget request from the Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC, the Commission). The Commission is requesting \$995,395 for FY24 and \$880,395 FY25 which includes seven total positions, travel costs to visit each correctional facility, memberships and conferences, consultation for special projects, and office equipment. Given that this office is so new, opened in July 2022, it is important to ensure they are properly funded to fulfill their mandated requirements set by Hawai'i Revised Statute 353L.

Directors

Jessica Charles, PhD
Michelle Daniel
Arti Finn
Ken Miller
William Snipes
Jay Wardle

Correctional Oversight in New York

Established in 1844, the Correctional Association of New York (CANY), under New York's Correction Law, is charged with providing independent oversight of the state's prisons by visiting and examining the state's correctional facilities to identify and report on prison conditions, the treatment of incarcerated individuals, and the administration of policy in New York.

Staff

Christine Cook
Director

Since its inception, CANY's monitoring and reporting has been integral in movements to end corporal punishment in state prisons, suspend the use of mandatory sentencing laws in New York, and abolish the death penalty in the state, among other reforms. Furthermore, the organization's advocacy has helped support improved access to medical and mental health care in prisons, improved quality of care for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis-C and other infectious diseases, and most recently, the limitation of the use of solitary confinement in New York.

Yassmin Fashir
Associate

Aidan King
Director

Laura Miller
Senior Associate

Nashla Rivas Salas
Senior Director

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, CANY has conducted 23 comprehensive prison monitoring visits, interviewed more than 3,000 incarcerated individuals, carried out three systemwide surveys, distributed vaccine education materials to approximately 20,000 incarcerated individuals, published 19 reports, responded to hundreds of requests for information and assistance, and held dozens of briefings with legislators, advocates, and other stakeholders – providing value and insight to policymakers, the department of corrections and community supervision, advocates and stakeholders in the public.

Jennifer Scaife
Executive Director

Sumeet Sharma
Director

The Importance of Independent Oversight for Correctional Institutions

In an article for the NYU Brennan Center for Justice, Michele Deitch, senior lecturer and director of Prison and Jail Innovation Lab (PJIL) at the University of Texas, notes independent oversight 'as essential for a safe and healthy prison system' with it being crucial for promoting accountability and transparency and building public trust in the criminal justice system.

Similarly, the American Bar Association has encouraged every jurisdiction to statutorily establish an independent government body to routinely monitor prisons, jails, and other detention facilities, and construct public reports about conditions inside these facilities. The ABA Resolution created a checklist of the elements necessary to make these oversight bodies effective, including that the entity be independent of the corrections agency, have unlimited access to every part of the facility, and be able to monitor conditions without prior notice.

The State of Hawai'i has already recognized the value of independent oversight for correctional facilities and must ensure that the office now has funding to provide value to the state's policymakers.

Should you have additional questions, I can be reached at ssharma@correctionalassociation.org. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.