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**Hawaii Community Correctional Center (HCCC)**  
**April 2025 Site Visit Observations Report**  
**Date of Report: May 8, 2025**

On Thursday, April 10, 2025, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Hawaii Community Correctional Center (HCCC) including Hale Nani. The tour included Chair Mark Patterson, Commissioner Martha Torney, Commissioner Ron Ibarra, Commissioner Mark Browning, and Commission staff. During the tour, the Commission was granted access to all areas of the facility and was able to communicate with people in custody.

General Observations

HCCC has a capacity of 226 and is organized into five housing units, with a sixth unit, Kaumana, recently constructed. HCCC expects to move a portion of its population to Kaumana by Sunday, April 13, 2025. HCCC staff were recently trained to prepare for assuming new posts at Kaumana.

Four of the six housing units are located at HCCC's primary jail location (commonly referred to as "the Main," and referred to as the Main hereafter), located at 60 Punahale St., Hilo, HI 96720. These include Punahale, Komohana, and Waianuenue, and the new unit, Kaumana.

The Hale Nani Annex site, located at 3196 Kai Ki St, Hilo, HI 96720, contains two housing units: Hale Nani Mauka, holding sentenced men on furlough preparing to reenter the community, and Hale Nani Makai, designated for the female general population.

The total headcount on the day of the tour in the Main was 248 with a capacity of 126 (**197% occupancy rate**). The total headcount on the day of the tour in Hale Nani was 49 with a capacity of 100 (49% occupancy rate).

Hale Nani

The Commission first toured Hale Nani which is comprised of two housing units: Mauka, which houses males, and Makai, which houses females.

Mauka has two large dorms (A and B) with an open dayroom in between them. The dorm has a total capacity of 50, with a capacity of 25 on side A and 25 on side B. Men in custody could move freely between the dorms and the dayroom. Dorm A housed five sentenced misdemeanants who work in the kitchen and Dorm B houses 12 men on furlough. Six of the 12 people on furlough were reportedly providing community service for Merrie Monarch and were concerned about their

ability to find a permanent job. Mauka had two operational portable fans and no working ceiling fans.

The kitchen is located in Mauka and services both Hale Nani and the Main. After inspecting the freezer, the Commission is concerned that the freezer may be over capacity which can prevent food from being kept frozen and preserved. It is unclear why HCCC is not utilizing the kitchen at the Main, especially since the Hale Nani kitchen servicing the Main requires additional staff, time, and vehicles to transport food six miles from Hale Nani to the Main.

Makai includes two dorms, dorm A and dorm B, with a total capacity of 50, 25 on side A and 25 on side B. Each dorm is secured by a locked chain-linked gate. The two dorms are separated by a day room which provides access to the phone, an ACO post, and a shared restroom.

Women housed in Makai reported not having confidential access to grievances. Instead, they have reportedly been told by staff to submit concerns via inter-unit requests in lieu of grievances. This was verified by staff which was corrected during the tour.

The Commission is also concerned that there is no access to a law library at Hale Nani.

#### Punahele

The Commission then toured the Main which started with Punahele. The Punahele unit covers multiple areas of the facility including the medical corridor where there are two wet cells (cell with sink and toilet), storage spaces, medical offices, and one dry cell (cell with no sink or toilet). The dry cell has cameras installed and is next to the control station and is meant for temporary (hours) housing as needed. However, the Commission found three women housed in the dry cell for a week due to fighting. Housing women in dry cells does not meet federal guidelines (*Federal Performance Based Detention Standards Rev. 11, May 2022, F.4 Prison Hygiene, F.4.1, pg. 48*).

After the medical corridor, there is a housing unit with multiple sets of cells on each side, a large glass dayroom commonly referred to as, “the fishbowl,” a general dayroom space where the ACO post is, and a back hallway encompassing additional cells. At the time of the tour, there were 25 people housed in “the fishbowl.” The fishbowl has no beds, sinks, or toilets – only thin mattresses on the floor.

The cells in Punahele that are meant to hold two people were overcrowded, housing 3-4 people in each cell. People housed in the Punahele cells reported that they are shackled by their hands and feet while they are in the dayroom. They reported that the shackles irritate their skin, which was confirmed by HCCC staff. The Commission sees no reason for this level of restraint.

In addition to potentially unnecessary shackling, people housed in Punahele are on 23-hour lockdown and are not given the opportunity to go outside for recreation. The only “recreational time” they experience is in the day room where the television station is reportedly changed every 20 minutes. This is against federal standards requiring fresh air and sunlight (*55-ACI-2E-01, Performance-Based Standards and Expected Practices for Adult Correctional Institutions, March 2021, Fifth Edition*) for at least one hour per day, every day. Some people in custody reported living under these conditions for 8-10 months.

### Komohana

Komohana is a two-story housing unit, designed to house 64 individuals. At the time of the tour, Komohana housed 89 people who share 8 showers – 4 showers on the lower level and 4 showers on the upper level. Two of the 4 showers on the upper level were in disrepair and not operational, leaving only 6 showers to be shared by 89 people.

People in custody reported outdoor recreation is occurring more frequently than it used to but is still not occurring daily. Staff reported that recreation is being offered on a limited basis – once per week – because of staffing limitations. The same staff member also reported that people turn down outside recreation in favor of using the phones located in the housing unit.

### Waianuenue

Waianuenue is comprised of two separate dorms with a large control station in the center. One dorm housed sentenced felons, the other dorm housed pretrial detainees. The Commission observed that the bathroom in general required significant maintenance and sinks were missing handles.

Staff reported that the only grievance box in Waianuenue is in the pretrial dorm. There is reportedly not a grievance box in the dorm where the sentenced population is housed. Staff reported that the sentenced population must hand their completed grievance form to an Adult Corrections Officer (ACO) in the control station so the ACO can then place the grievance form in the grievance box that is located in the pretrial dorm. This practice compromises the right to confidentiality when filing grievances. Staff also reported that the grievance box is not checked regularly by a dedicated grievance officer. Staff could not confidently name or identify a dedicated grievance officer. However, the Warden reassured the Commission that a dedicated grievance officer was recently hired to manage grievances at HCCC and KCF.

### Kaumana

Construction on the new housing unit, Kaumana, is complete. Starting Sunday April 13, Kaumana will reportedly house the pretrial population. None of the cells have windows for sunlight, however, the cell doors have 2 large windows that face the dayroom and outside area, providing the occupants with a view of the outdoor atrium. The dayroom includes a large, 3-piece panoramic landscape portrait of Mauna Loa with the ocean in the foreground that can be seen from the inside of all cells. This portrait helps to create a rehabilitative environment that starkly contrasts with the environments of the other housing units.

### Lack of Basic Necessities for Jail Operations

Although the Commission has reported on this before, it is important to highlight again here, HCCC lacks many necessities to make it a fully functional jail. The facility lacks a proper segregation unit, a proper protective custody unit, a proper mental health unit, an appropriate space for those on safety and suicide watch, a proper infirmary, a perimeter fence, and a proper female housing unit. This makes managing the population an *extremely* difficult task for all staff who work at HCCC, especially given the overcrowding.

The facility was originally built over 60 years ago. It is old, antiquated, and outdated, and these infrastructure deficiencies and the needs of the populations cannot be adequately addressed in this current facility.

#### Visitation

Currently, there is no in-person visitation, and this has been the case for over five years (initially due to COVID-19, then due to construction). In-person contact visits are imperative for maintaining relationships with family, friends, and communities. It is unacceptable that HCCC has not come up with any resolution to the lack of visits during this timeframe.

Additionally, people in custody explained that adding people to their phone or visitation list can only be done once every 6 months, which seems unnecessarily restrictive. Additionally, video visits cost \$8 for 14 minutes, which the vast majority of people in custody cannot afford and should not be considered a potential alternative to in-person contact visitation.

#### Follow-up on Previous Commission Recommendations

Unresolved concerns that require attention include facility overcrowding, which remains a significant issue, including the use of overcrowded modular unit cells and dry cells for long-term housing. The Commission recognizes that HCCC is opening a new housing unit, Kaumana, which, if used properly, will help address overcrowding in cells and house people in custody in a more rehabilitative environment. The Commission has previously recommended optimizing Kaumana by using it to house the mental health population. The Commission will continue to monitor how Kaumana is being used.

The Commission recognizes that its prior recommendation to complete the renovations to the front lobby and office area has been addressed. Completed renovations mean that staff now have access to restrooms and do not have to use portable toilets.

#### **Recommendations to be considered by the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation:**

The Commission restates and urges DCR to adopt the following prior recommendations:

##### **1) Expand Furlough Utilization at HCCC**

Currently, 12 men are in the HCCC furlough program despite the capacity to accommodate up to 50 participants. Identifying and addressing the roadblocks to furlough is crucial to allow more individuals to benefit from these programs and move through the correctional system. While the Commission acknowledges that custody status is not the only factor in furlough determinations, it is a significant one. Notably, 15 individuals at Kulani Correctional Facility have community status, which is required for furlough. It is important to note that this has improved from last year's count (34), however the Commission recognizes that it is important to examine why more people in custody in community status are not in furlough at HCCC or other sites.

## **2) Optimize New Housing Unit Utilization**

The new housing unit, Kaumana, should be assessed and utilized to balance current housing priorities and serve the needs of different populations. This includes decreasing overcrowding, especially in Punahele, better serving vulnerable populations, including the mental health population, creating a proper space for women, and allowing for necessary facility maintenance. With the completion of the new housing unit, it's crucial to consider how it can support the largest issues within the facility.

During the Commission's talk stories with HCCC staff, many recommended moving the mental health population to the new unit, transforming it into a dedicated mental health housing unit. The new unit includes suicide-resistant features, group space, and recreational areas suitable for this population. This move would help decrease overcrowding in Punahele, create more space for women in the main facility, and relocate others from inadequate spaces, significantly improving living conditions.

It should be noted that even with the addition of these 24 new cells, accommodating up to 48 more people, the true jail population will still exceed capacity, necessitating continued population reduction efforts.

## **3) Reduce Overcrowding through System-wide Population Reduction Efforts**

The most significant issue at HCCC remains overcrowding, particularly in Punahele, where vulnerable populations, such as those with acute mental illness and severe health issues, as well as new admissions, are housed. Even with the opening of the new unit, the facility will remain overcrowded. Addressing this requires a State and Third Circuit-wide priority on safely reducing the jail population. DCR alone cannot resolve this issue; instead, it must involve a coordinated system-wide effort.

All justice partners, including the Judiciary, Office of the Public Defender, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, Probation, the Department of Health, and Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, must work both individually and collectively to safely reduce the jail population. On Hawaii Island, a coordinated approach is essential.

**A. Further Diversion Initiatives.** The Commission supports ongoing and new diversion initiatives on Hawaii Island to address the needs of justice-involved individuals. The Commission is aware that this is in process and supports the furtherance of these and other diversion initiatives.

**B. Work Together to Reduce Pretrial Time.** Consider a Third Circuit-wide goal – Judiciary, Prosecutor, Public Defender, and criminal defense attorney – to reduce timelines for all cases, aiming to expedite both felony and misdemeanor proceedings and reduce the time people spend in HCCC pretrial.

**C. Population Analysis.** To safely divert people and support successful transitions post-incarceration, it is essential to understand individual needs. The Commission asks the

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to consider a population analysis with the following information in a confidential, non-identifying manner: *demographic data, mental health and substance use data, key health indicators, housing data, employment, and income status*. This information will be used to determine what services and support are needed, what is currently provided and available within the community, and where the gaps are. There is a strong community network, including providers, throughout Hawaii Island, but more data is needed to link people to services and support these efforts effectively.

#### **4) Enhance Programming Opportunities and Reduce Idle Time**

In addition to facility overcrowding, people in custody have too much idle time and limited access to programming. The Commission witnessed this idle time and recommended the following:

**A. Re-establish and Expand Programming Opportunities.** Re-establish programming opportunities at pre-COVID levels and then expand opportunities. Bring more programs back into the facility from community service providers. Community partnerships and programs are essential to enhance the facility's ability to manage operational issues.

**B. Increase VolinCore Training Opportunities.** Offer regularly scheduled continuous VolinCore training opportunities for community service and program providers.

The Commission urges DCR to consider and adopt the following new recommendations based on observations that were made on April 10, 2025.

##### **1) Ensure Access to Grievances**

The Commission noted the significant lack of access to the grievance process for individuals housed at Hale Nani and for those housed in Wainuenue. Staff should be retrained on proper grievance procedures, along with the implementation of ongoing monitoring to ensure consistent and equitable access to the grievance system.

##### **2) Reevaluate and Monitor Staff Posts**

People in Punahale reported being on 23-hour lockdown and are not given the opportunity to go outside for recreation. Additionally, staff reported that accommodating outdoor recreation in Komohana more than once a week is challenging with short staff. The Commission has observed on more than one visit what appears to be an excess number of staff posted at the temporary gate. At times, the Commission has observed four to five staff at the gate. The Commission strongly recommends that HCCC reevaluates how staff are posted and utilized throughout the facility to ensure that recreational time can be accommodated as frequently as possible.