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**Kulani Correctional Facility (KCF)**  
**November 2025 site Tour Observations**  
**Date of Report: December 11, 2025**

On Thursday, November 13, 2025, the Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Kulani Correctional Facility (KCF) collectively as a group. The tour included two of the five Commissioners – Martha Torney, and Ronald Ibara in addition to Commission staff. This report encompasses notes from the Commissioners and will be discussed at the Commission's monthly public meeting held on December 11, 2025.

Facility Overview

On the day of the visit, KCF housed 86 incarcerated men, with capacity to hold 160. This means the facility was at 54% capacity. Since this facility plays a key role in providing minimum security programming and reentry preparation for individuals nearing release, the Commission has continuously pushed the Department to use the facility to its full capacity. The Commission has been and continues to be disappointed by the lack of bed space at KCF utilized by the Department.

During the visit, Warden Rowe shared updates on facility improvements, including the completion of the staff offices, training center, and vehicle storage area. The grounds have been cleared of old vehicles and debris, significantly improving the campus' appearance and safety. However, infrastructure challenges persist. The facility's water plant has been non-operational for over two years, requiring daily hauling of water. This issue has been repeatedly submitted for Capitol Improvement Funding (CIP) but remains unresolved. Non-portable water from the reservoir is repurposed for irrigation and fire control. Additionally, power outages and connectivity issues affect communication and limit opportunities for technology-based programming.

Programs and Services

Kulani currently offers several rehabilitation and education programs, including:

- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Levels 2.0 and 2.5
- GED and vocational education in partnership with the community college
- Sex Offender Treatment Programs
- Safety and vocational certification courses

Since the last visit, the facility has added two case managers and one Substance Use Disorder Counselor. However, there is no Level 3.0 program Substance Abuse Disorder class, potentially impacting people's opportunities to meaningfully parole. The Commission is also concerned that a single instructor continues to manage both 2.0 and 2.5 groups.

There remains a significant gap in cognitive-behavioral and trauma-informed classes, such as *Thinking for a Change* or anger management programming. Staff expressed interest in expanding partnerships with community and cultural-based organizations to fill these service gaps, provided they meet security clearance requirements, but there is no indication of a concerted effort to make that happen.

### **Library and Education**

The Commission toured the library and education. The men expressed appreciation that it has reopened and received new books, many of which were based on popular movies. The librarian had organized the space to allow wheelchair accessibility and added additional shelving. The law library remained well-equipped with Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), LexisNexis, and other required legal references, allowing men to conduct legal research and prepare for hearings.

### **Kitchen and Food Service**

The Commission toured the kitchen and spoke with both staff and incarcerated workers. Overall, the kitchen appeared organized and operational. Staff reported that one of the refrigerators was reading 57°F, but they were actively adjusting the thermostat to bring the temperature down. The Commission noted that this should be monitored to ensure compliance with food safety standards.

Men working in the kitchen shared positive feedback about the quality of food at Kulani, describing it as “restaurant-style” and noting it was better than food served at other facilities. The kitchen staff were engaged and appeared to have a good rapport with the workers. However, the Commission encourages ongoing oversight of food storage temperatures and maintenance to prevent equipment failures or spoilage.

### **Dorm 6 & 7 Observations**

The Commission visited Dorms 6 and 7, where several men openly discussed their concerns. A recurring issue was fear of submitting written requests or grievances. Multiple individuals stated that filing requests could lead to transfer delays, transfers back to Halawa, or other forms of retaliation. This fear discouraged men from reporting problems and undermines trust in the grievance process. Frustration was also expressed regarding delays in case management communication and a lack of clarity on program status or release timelines. Some individuals expressed that they have waited extended periods to enter SUD 2.5 classes due to limited staff and turnover. These concerns align with feedback received from previous visits and family calls to HCSOC, indicating ongoing issues with case management engagement and accountability.

Dorm 7 specifically required maintenance attention. One urinal had been non-functional for several months, tiles in the showers and walls were falling off, and the ceiling had active leaks. Maintenance staff reported that repairs are underway but have been delayed due to persistent rain.

### **Commissioner Recommendations**

Kulani Correctional Facility continues to demonstrate commitment to maintaining safety and order with limited resources. The facility has made visible progress in cleanup and infrastructure organization. However, the rehabilitative mission remains hindered by systemic issues that directly affect program access and reentry preparation.

## **Follow Up on Previous Recommendations**

Below are four recommendations that stemmed from the December 2023 KCF Site Observations report in addition to updated findings based on the October 2024 site observations.

### **1) Begin Offering In-Person Visitation and Expand Access to Phone Calls**

The Commission is pleased to report that KCF has begun offering in-person contact visitation and this recommendation is resolved.

### **2) Increase the Population at Kulani as Kulani is One of the Most Rehabilitative Facilities in Hawaii**

The DCR has not completed this recommendation, and in fact, the population numbers at KCF and WCF (both minimum custody) are worse in 2024 and 2025 than they were in 2023.

Kulani is one of the most rehabilitative facilities in Hawaii and sits around 50% capacity. As of November 2023, there were around 240 people in custody at Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) and Saguaro Correctional Facility in Arizona (AZSC) with a custody status of minimum or below. In October 2024, there were around 260. In 2025, there are around 244 with a custody status of minimum or below.

	<b>2023 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications</b>						
<b>Male Prison</b>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Close</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Unclassified</i>	<b>Total Population</b>
<i>AZSC</i>	--	53	455	369	--	--	877
<i>HCF</i>	4	183	435	187	2	11	822
<i>WCF</i>	27	154	--	--	--	--	181
<i>KCF</i>	24	61	--	--	--	--	85

*Source: Hawaii Department of Public Safety Roster, Dated Nov. 13, 2023*

	<b>2024 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications</b>						
<b>Male Prison</b>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Close</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Unclassified</i>	<b>Total Population</b>
<i>AZSC</i>	--	77	506	411	--	--	994
<i>HCF</i>	6	179	306	204	6	5	706
<i>WCF</i>	23	113	--	--	--	--	136 - DECREASE FROM 2023
<i>KCF</i>	13	65	--	--	--	--	78 - DECREASE FROM 2023

*Source: Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Roster, Dated Oct. 14, 2024*

	2025 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications						
Male Prison	Community	Minimum	Medium	Close	Maximum	Unclassified	Total Population
AZSC	--	67	409	340	--	--	816
HCF	4	173	351	271	5	8	812
WCF	17	148	--	--	--	--	165 - DECREASE FROM 2023
KCF	23	62	1	--	--	--	86 - DECREASE FROM 2023

*Source: Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Roster, Dated Nov. 17, 2025*

The Commission, again, recommends that the Department transfer eligible individuals at Halawa and Saguaro, with minimum custody or below, to Kulani and Waiawa Correctional Facilities. Due to the rehabilitative and therapeutic nature of the Kulani, this facility could be better utilized at a consistent capacity close to 100% and certainly over 90%.

**3) Remove the Monetary Eligibility Requirement for Furlough Participation at all Furlough Sites**

The Commission is pleased to report that the Department has fulfilled this recommendation.

**4) Reinstate Transportation Shuttle for Staff**

This recommendation has not been completed.

**Additional recommendations to be considered by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation:**

**5) Prioritize Maintenance and Repair of Water System**

The facility's water plant has been non-operational for over two years, requiring daily hauling of water. This issue has been repeatedly submitted for Capitol Improvement Funding (CIP) but remains unresolved. Non-portable water from the reservoir is repurposed for irrigation and fire control. The Department should prioritize securing CIP funding to repair the water system.

**6) Prioritize Maintenance and Repair of Dorm 7**

The Department should address long-standing needed repairs to plumbing, tiles, and leaking ceilings in the Dorm 7 bathroom. Additionally, the Department should address the lack of heat within the dorm given the cold temperatures that impact the facility.

**7) Improve Digital Connectivity**

The Department should secure funding to improve digital connectivity to support education and rehabilitation on tablets, computers, or other digital options. This is of particular importance given the distance of the facility from town and lack of in-person volunteers.