

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
**CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION
COMMISSION**

1136 Union Plaza, Suite 600
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Telephone: 808 587-1143
FAX 808 587-1146

LISA A. DUNN
Chair

VACANT
Commissioner

REBECCA S. WARD
Commissioner

PAMELA FERGUSON-BREY
Executive Director

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2433
MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CAREER CRIMINAL PROSECUTION UNITS
AND
VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Pamela Ferguson-Brey, Executive Director
Crime Victim Compensation Commission

Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs
Senator David Y. Ige, Chair

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Senator Colleen Hanabusa, Chair

Thursday February 9, 2006; 2:45 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

Good afternoon Chair Ige, Chair Hanabusa and members of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs. Thank you for providing the Crime Victim Compensation Commission (the "Commission") with the opportunity to testify before you today. The Commission supports the passage of Senate Bill 2433. Senate Bill 2433 appropriates funds for grants-in-aid to the Prosecuting Attorney's office of each county for the career prosecution units and the victim witness assistance programs.

The Commission was established in 1967 to mitigate the suffering and financial impact experienced by victims of violent crime by providing compensation to pay unreimbursed crime-related expenses. Many victims of violent crime could not afford to pay their medical bills, receive needed mental health or rehabilitative services, or bury a loved one if compensation were not available from the Commission.

The Commission estimates that over eighty percent (80%) of the violent crime victims who apply for compensation are referred through the county victim witness assistance programs. The county victim witness assistance programs play an important role in mitigating the emotional and financial suffering experienced by victims through their referrals to the Commission and other social service agencies. The county victim witness assistance programs also support and guide victims through the criminal justice process, helping to ensure that offenders can be successfully prosecuted.

Many victims and surviving family members, particularly victims and survivors of violent crimes like murder and sexual assault, would not be able to make it through the criminal justice process without the support and guidance of a victim witness counselor. Victim witness counselors notify crime victims of hearing dates and major developments in their case, accompany victims and survivors to court where necessary, and help victims and survivors with victim impact statements to enable them to exercise their right to be heard at sentencing. This is all in addition to informing victims and survivors about the social services and financial assistance available to them as crime victims.

The county victim assistance programs need sufficient funding for staff in order to continue to provide these important services. The Commission urges you to support the appropriation of grants-in-aid to the Prosecuting Attorney's office of each county for the victim witness assistance programs. Thank your providing the Commission with the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2433.