

Testimony of Karen M. Radius, President of the Board of Directors Surfrider Spirit Sessions

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Members of the City Council:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of the proposed amendment to the Grants In Aid Bill , Appendix B5 which provides much needed Grant in Aid funding to Surfrider Spirit Sessions, a 501©(3) non-profit that works with at-risk youth and adjudicated teens. We pair youth with volunteer mentors and provide Saturday sessions for 8 weeks in a row several times during each year. We teach the kids to surf and even more importantly we use surfing as a metaphor for life, teaching values, coping skills, environmental and cultural lessons and providing a caring group of mentors who listen to and guide the teens. We work with the youth to give back by doing community service with their mentors helping other youth. We offer an opportunity to have the ones who are excited about the program become junior mentors and work for the program on a part time basis thus teaching basic job skills.

The Family Courts, parents and counsellors report a significant reduction in truancy, drug use violent outbursts, antisocial behavior and incarceration rates among youth who participate in Surfrider Spirit Sessions programs. To incarcerate a single youth for one year at Koolau the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility costs \$199,000. How much better to reclaim the child's youth and provide positive influences. Our kids report increased confidence (they took a challenge and succeeded at surf--an activity they never thought they could do), a more positive attitude about their own potential and future and a commitment to return to school and take other positive challenges. We have former participants who are now in college and/or working full time.

We promise to be good stewards of funds that the City and County would provide through the Grants in Aid program. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us or look at our website [www.surferspirit.org](http://www.surferspirit.org). We also invite you to come down to the beach and meet our mentors and our kids.

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