

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

STATE OF HAWAII
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT BUILDING
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 107
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: 808-586-1400 FAX: 808-586-1412
EMAIL: oip@hawaii.gov

To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Cheryl Kakazu Park, Director

Date: February 24, 2017, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 456
Relating to Public Safety

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill. The Office of Information Practices (“OIP”) **supports this bill**, which would amend the Uniform Information Practices Act (“UIPA”), chapter 92F, HRS, to limit a clause giving special treatment to information about police officers’ misconduct. **The proposal would only protect from public disclosure an officer’s first suspension within five years, and would require police departments to include information about second or subsequent suspensions in their annual reports to the Legislature.**

In section 92F-14(b)(4), HRS, the UIPA recognizes a government employee’s significant privacy interest in information about possible misconduct, up to a point. While all other government employees’ misconduct information becomes public if the misconduct resulted in suspension or termination, the current law gives police officers a special statutory privacy interest even in information about misconduct that resulted in suspension. This bill would limit the special statutory privacy interest to apply only to an officer’s first suspension within a five-year period. If a police officer is suspended for a second time within a five-year period,

the officer must be identified in the police department's annual report to the Legislature.

The UIPA amendment proposed by this bill still would not place police officers on the same footing as all other government employees for public disclosure of misconduct information, but it would at least close part of the gap and provide a greater level of government accountability. Therefore, OIP supports this bill.



Feb. 24, 2017

Rep. Scott Nishimoto
House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HB 456

Rep. Nishimoto and Committee Members:

We support this bill, which would allow explicit disclosure of the name of a police officer suspended for the second time within five years.

We would prefer that the names of disciplined police officers be made public as are the identities of other disciplined government servants but recognize this as a first step.

Such openness is warranted for officers who must be accountable to the public because of their powers.

Sincerely,

Stirling Morita
President, Hawaii Chapter SPJ

SHOPO



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Barry Aoki

Main Office & Honolulu Chapter

1717 Hoe Street

Honolulu, Hawaii 96819-3125

Ph: (808) 847-4676 "84 SHOPO"

(800) 590-4676 Toll Free

Fax: (808) 841-4818

Hawaii Chapter Office

688 Kino'ole Street, Room 220 B

Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Ph: (808) 934-8405

Fax: (808) 934-8210

Maui Chapter Office

1887 Wili Pa Loop, Suite #2

Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Ph: (808) 242-6129

Fax: (808) 242-9519

Kaua'i Chapter Office

4264 Rice Street, Lihue

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1708

Lihue, Hawaii 96766

Ph: (808) 246-8911

TO: The Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Tenari Ma'afala, President 
State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers

DATE: February 23, 2017

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 456, Relating to Public Safety

HEARING: Friday, February 24, 2017
2:00 p.m. Conference Room 325

This bill regards provision of a police officer's name who has been suspended for the second time in a five-year period or discharged. The State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers ("SHOPO") opposes H.B. 456.

Currently, the Uniform Information Practices Act ("UIPA"), Hawaii Revised Statutes section 92F-14(b)(4)(B), provides that a police officer does not have a significant privacy interest regarding employment misconduct that results in a discharge, ninety days after the highest nonjudicial grievance adjustment procedure has concluded and a decision has been issued sustaining the discharge. Thus, UIPA already provides access to a police officer's name who has been discharged when this period ends.

Additionally, suspensions can result for a variety of reasons, including being late to work, turning in a mileage slip late, missing court, etc. Police officers should not be publicly named and shamed for suspensions.

Further, the Hawaii Supreme Court, in *Peer News LLC dba Civil Beat v. City and County of Honolulu and Honolulu Police Department, and State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (Hawaii'i, 2016)*, recognized that Hawaii Revised Statutes section 92F-2 provides in relevant part:

The policy of conducting government business as openly as possible must be tempered by a recognition of the right to people to privacy, as embodied in section 6 and section 7 of the constitution of the state of Hawaii'i.

The Court further stated that it is not:

[T]he Legislature’s exclusive role to “define” the constitutional privacy right, nevertheless...the legislature is not precluded from providing privacy protections greater than those provided by the constitution.

In conclusion, the Court held, that:

HRS § 92F-14 recognizes a significant privacy interest in police officers’ disciplinary suspension records, and this interest must be balanced against the public interest in disclosure of the requested records.

This case was sent back to the Circuit Court to come up with the factors for the balancing test and to balance each officer’s privacy versus the public’s interest.

Finally, please keep in mind that a Police Officer’s job is like no other government employee. Police Officers respond to robberies with suspects armed with shotguns, affrays with people fighting with baseball bats, and domestic violence cases, to name a few. No one is happy when they are pulled over for speeding. Yet how often does speed cause fatalities? Police Officers frequently interact with people when people are at their worst.

Thus, SHOPO opposes this bill and recommends that this Committee defer this bill so that the court can determine the factors to weigh in making a determination as to whether to release police officer suspension records or not. Thank you for consideration of our testimony.



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
www.lwv-hawaii.com | 808.531.7448 | voters@lwv-hawaii.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Friday, February 24, 2017, 2 PM, Conference Room 325
HB 456, RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

TESTIMONY

Douglas Meller, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Nishihara and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports the intent of HB 456 because the bill explicitly requires disclosure of the identify of any police officer upon the officer's second suspension in a five-year period,

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii requests that this Committee amend HB 456 so that UIPA unquestionably applies to ALL suspensions of police officers in exactly the same way that UIPA applies to all suspensions of other public employees. It should not be necessary to file a lawsuit and obtain a court order to compel a county police department to disclose the identity of, and summary information about misconduct by, police officers who have been suspended but not discharged for serious misconduct.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

THE CIVIL BEAT
LAW CENTER FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST

700 Bishop Street, Suite 1701
Honolulu, HI 96813

Office: (808) 531-4000
Fax: (808) 380-3580
info@civilbeatlawcenter.org

House Committee on Judiciary
Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Chair
Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

RE: Testimony Opposing H.B. 456, Relating to Public Safety
Hearing: February 24, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Brian Black. I am the Executive Director of the Civil Beat Law Center for the Public Interest, a nonprofit organization whose primary mission concerns solutions that promote government transparency. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H.B. 456. The Law Center **opposes this bill because it will not meaningfully increase public access to information about police discipline.**

Under existing law as recently interpreted by the Hawai'i Supreme Court in *Peer News LLC v. City & County of Honolulu*, No. SCAP-14-889 (June 9, 2016), police departments must weigh the public interest in disclosure of police disciplinary suspensions matters against the privacy interests of individual police officers.¹ In other words, disciplinary suspensions are not necessarily exempt from disclosure under the UIPA.

That case remains pending to litigate what information the courts will consider when weighing the public interest against the officer's privacy interests. An officer's subsequent discipline (*e.g.*, two suspensions within five years) is only one aspect of what the courts might consider relevant to that issue. There is no reason for the Legislature to make this minor amendment before the courts fully resolve the scope of existing law.

Also, amendments to HRS § 92F-14(b)(4) should only be made if they will increase public access. There is no indication that this amendment would do so. The Legislature has only required the annual police disciplinary reports to link multiple incidents by the same police officer since 2015. It is not apparent from the reports that many, if any, officers have been suspended twice or more within five years.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

¹ The Law Center represents Peer News in that litigation, but submits this testimony on its own behalf.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2017 2:04 PM
To: JUDtestimony
Cc: victor.ramos@mpd.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB456 on Feb 24, 2017 14:00PM

HB456

Submitted on: 2/22/2017

Testimony for JUD on Feb 24, 2017 14:00PM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

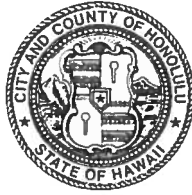
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POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

801 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET · HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 529-3111 · INTERNET: www.honolulu-pd.org

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OUR REFERENCE CO-MM

February 24, 2017

The Honorable Scott Nishimoto, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary
House of Representatives
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nishimoto and Members:

SUBJECT: House Bill No. 456, Relating to Public Safety

I am Cary Okimoto, Acting Chief of Police of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD supports the passage of House Bill No. 456, Relating to Public Safety.

The HPD already discloses the names of officers who have been discharged from the department, and this bill would add in the names of the officers who have been suspended twice within a five-year period. We believe that this bill is reasonable. We think that it will encourage public trust by providing additional information on officer misconduct. At the same time, it withholds the names of officers who have committed minor infractions, such as turning in a late mileage slip or missing the deadline for special duty.

As the acting chief, I am very aware of the public's push for transparency and accountability. We agree that more information should be provided, and we see this bill as a step in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cary Okimoto", written over a circular stamp or seal.

Cary Okimoto
Acting Chief of Police