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THE HONORABLE DAVID TARNAS, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
Thirty-Second State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2024  
State of Hawai'i

February 1, 2024

**RE: H.B. 1866; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Takayama and members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu (“Department”) submits the following testimony in **strong support** of H.B. 1866. This bill is part of the Department's 2024 legislative package, and we thank you for hearing it.

The purpose of H.B. 1866 is to provide additional funding in the amount of **\$736,785**, to maintain the current level of service for the Department’s Victim Witness Kokua Services (“VWKS”) Unit. This is the remaining balance between actual costs, and costs covered by federal funds, funding from the Department of the Attorney General, and the funding from the City and County of Honolulu. VWKS advocates assist in guiding victims, witnesses and/or surviving family members through the criminal justice system—before, during, & after criminal prosecution of a case—and are specifically trained & qualified to do so.

Historically, the Legislature has supported the Victim Witness Assistance Program since 1983. In 1986, the Legislature enacted HRS §28-111, “whose purpose shall be to provide information, assistance, and support services to the victims of and witnesses to crimes committed in the State.”. While the statute established this program to be administrated by the Department of the Attorney General, direct services are provided by the office/department of the prosecuting attorney in each county. The counties continuously provide the most up-to-date information, assistance, funding, and support services to the crime victims and witnesses in their respective counties. Adequate funding is necessary for our Department and the neighbor island counties to be able to continue these vital services.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu **strongly supports** the passage of H.B. 1866. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

**HB-1866**

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:20:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in SUPPORT