



STATE OF HAWAII ORGANIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS

" A Police Organization for Police Officers Only "
Founded 1971

April 14, 2022

ONLINE/FAX: 808-586-6879; 808-587-7230

The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara
Chair
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite
Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
Hawaii State Capitol, Rooms 214, 231
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: **HCR 87-Urging The City And County Of Honolulu To Establish A New Police District In Leeward Oahu To Provide Adequate Police Services And Law Enforcement Response For Growing Leeward Oahu Communities**

Dear Chair Nishihara, Vice-Chair DeCoite, and Honorable Committee members:

I serve as the President of the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (“SHOPO”) and write to you on behalf of our Union in **strong support** of HCR 87 which calls for the creation of a new police district on the Leeward side to provide “adequate police services” to the Leeward communities.

While we strongly support the creation of a new district and police station to police the Ewa/Kapolei areas and the Waianae Coast, which all sounds great and hopeful, the resolution fails to address how the Honolulu Police Department (“HPD”) is expected to staff this wish list with police officers given the severe staffing crisis we are in. As a union, we would like to know how we are supposed to staff a new district and a new police station with warm body officers and provide “adequate police services” when we cannot fill the districts, sectors and beats that already exist. Not a single legislator to my knowledge has answered that question but the big ask still proceeds forward.

If I may give you an example of the cold reality and dire situation we are in when it comes to staffing and the lack of officers. A prime example is the newly constructed Waianae district station that cost over \$16 million dollars to build and has a full service receiving desk, the

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capacity to process and book prisoners, a fully functioning cellblock, gas pumps for police vehicles, over 65 parking spaces for officers, and is over 25,000 square feet in size with room to expand. The new station was built with the objective of facilitating faster response times and improved services to the residents on the Leeward coast. However, the station sits virtually empty and is basically useless because we do not have officers to staff the station. The bottom line is that you can build all sorts of police facilities but if there are no officers to operate the facilities and provide police services for the area, it will be a fruitless exercise and venture despite the good intentions.

The resolution correctly acknowledges the need for “a greater police presence,” “better law enforcement response,” and “an additional police station” to serve the Waianae area. The resolution also refers to District 8 and the assaults, burglaries, drug and alcohol violations, homicides, motor vehicle thefts, sex crimes, vandalism, and disturbing the peace calls that our officers must respond to daily while also dealing with an area that has one of the highest percentage of homeless individuals. Having a high crime rate in an area with an inadequate staffing of officers is not coincidental. It is the direct result of not having a sufficient number of officers policing the district, however, it is impossible to staff an area if we simply do not have enough police officers. This problem will be compounded by the Law Enforcement Standards Board that will make it that much more difficult to recruit and retain officers in the HPD.

The recent broad daylight shootout and gun fight in a Waianae neighborhood that left one person dead and another wounded by gun fire involving multiple rounds being discharged is something we should not have to accept or normalize. The people who reside on the Leeward Coast deserve better. But these constant calls to defund the police and putting into place various new boards to make people feel something positive is being done is pure window dressing. We need more police officers in uniform patrolling our neighborhoods and streets to deter and stop crime from happening in the first instance. That is basic policing that is lacking in many of our community areas including Waianae, Nanakuli, Makaha and Maili where many of our police officers were raised and continue to live with their families.

You will recall that former Chief Susan Ballard publicly stated in 2018 and 2019 that HPD was cutting services including the investigation of certain **felony** crimes. She announced to you and the rest of the public that certain reported crimes would simply not be investigated because of the lack of officers. The criminals are smart and know this. This is 2022 and the staffing crisis is worse and the criminals know that. Turnover is constant, new recruits enlist and then cannot make it through our training or they graduate and soon leave for other jurisdictions that offer higher compensation and take our training with them. Our most experienced officers

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who are eligible to retire get out as soon as they can. The officers who continue to work are fatigued and burned out working excessive hours.

The local residents and business owners of the Leeward Coast have been desperate for a greater police presence for years but it has fallen on deaf ears because nothing productive has been done to increase the number of police officers in District 8 to provide those residents with the level of police protection they deserve. Instead of helping us find ways to recruit and retain officers, we have seen our compensation rates fall substantially behind similarly sized jurisdictions, our retirement benefits slashed by the legislature, and we have been working without a contract for almost a year creating an atmosphere of instability and anxiety. Our current pay and reduced retirement benefits do not attract a sufficient number of qualified recruits, the attrition rate at the police academy is staggering and shocking, and those who are eligible to retire are exiting at the first opportunity. We are in the midst of a staffing crisis yet this resolution calls for an expansion of police services and greater police presence and protection without offering any real world solutions on how to make this all happen. You simply cannot have your cake and eat it too.

As far as our union is concerned, the residents and business owners in Waianae deserve the same level of police service, presence, and protection as those who live in Kahala and Hawaii Kai. It should be no less of a priority to maintain their safety and to protect the property and possessions of those who live and work in Waianae than areas that have higher real estate values and income levels. Moreover, the residents and business owners did not only recently call for a greater police presence as the resolution seems to infer. They have been crying out for greater police protection for years, but shamefully no one has responded with any substance. The simple fact is we do not have enough officers to adequately protect the residents of Waianae and other areas, and have made this known for a long time but the situation remains the same. HPD's hierarchy seems more concerned about saving overtime funds and returning the unspent funds to the City council rather than spending it on protecting the citizens of Waianae and other neighborhoods that require greater police protection. Your resolution urges an increase in staffing for the Waianae Coast but again I have to ask you, where do you propose we get the officers from? Please tell us how we are going to staff a new district when we cannot fully staff our current districts. While we certainly support the intent of this resolution, we wish this honorable body would do more to provide substantive support for our officers instead of working earnestly to pass legislation that creates additional and unnecessary certifications and standards that discourages rather than encourages people from joining the police department.

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We thank you for allowing us to be heard and to share our concerns on this resolution and hope your committee will also offer concrete and specific solutions to address and mitigate the shortage of police officers so that we can provide the necessary level of police protection to the residents and businesses of Waianae and other communities.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT "BOBBY" CAVACO
SHOPO President

HCR-87

Submitted on: 4/18/2022 12:54:05 PM

Testimony for PSM on 4/20/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allan Vosburgh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Respectfully request you support HCR 87, bills pertaining to support for enhanced safety and security of the Leeward Coast of Oahu.

As a long time Leeward Oahu resident, I notice the impact of increased development on the ability of the Honolulu Police Department to provide adequate police coverage throughout District 8. Despite more and more residential and business activity, HPD has struggled to cover such a large area that stretches from Kaena Point to Pearl City. On any given day, HPD officers are stretched thin trying to respond to calls for assistance, traffic issues, accidents, and investigations. As the Coordinator for the Kamakana at Hoakalei Neighborhood Security Watch, I am aware of the challenges to law enforcement in our community.

The new Waianae Station was built to enable management of a separate HPD District. The station contains the space, but not the facilities and manning to take on those responsibilities. It makes sense to develop those resources in advance of the certain population growth taking place on the Leeward Coast.

Providing support for additional officers is critical. Just adding leadership for a District 9 without additional officers just spreads the pain thinner and forces HPD to make hard decisions. Too few officers creates a dangerous situation for both the department and the public. Adequate fire protection always seems to be provided, with new firehouses and more firefighters. HPD is already stretched too thin and needs your support now.

I urge you to act immediately to enhance HPD's ability to provide safety and security to Leeward Oahu. Please provide the funds and support that will enable the development of an HPD District 9, or at a minimum, provide additional officers and funding to District 8, enabling them to meet the challenges as the community expands.

Thank you for your consideration.

Allan Vosburgh

91-1051 Waikai Street

Ewa Beach, HI 96706

808-291-9756

HCR-87

Submitted on: 4/19/2022 10:23:09 AM

Testimony for PSM on 4/20/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With the growing population in Ewa due to new residential housing and commercial developments, we need a dedicated Police District for our area. With the continued development, we are seeing and experiencing all that comes with it - crime, traffic, drugs, vandalism, etc. Having our own district would provide the necessary police presence to make our neighborhoods safer for residents, businesses and visitors.

We need more uniformed police officers to patrol our neighborhoods and streets to deter and stop crime - and that means having dedicated districts and stations in Waiane and Ewa Beach. Mahalo to the men and women of the police force who serve and protect us citizens. You are valuable and critical - we appreciate you! A firm 'YES' on this bill.

LATE

HCR-87

Submitted on: 4/19/2022 5:20:37 PM

Testimony for PSM on 4/20/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danny Liebertz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a member of the Ewa Beach community, an HOA Board member and block captain of our Neighborhood Watch Program, I've witnessed how inadequate the financial support of police services for all of the west end of our island - from Ewa Beach up to Ka'ena Point. One police district cannot effectively support such a large community - not only in area, but in population. I support this bill urging the City and County of Honolulu to establish a new and separate Police district in Leeward Oahu. And in the process, hopefully fund more staffing instead of simply creating two districts and splitting up the already strapped numbers of officers we now employ. Thank you