

LATE

HR-157

Submitted on: 3/24/2022 11:23:51 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/24/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James P. Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our ohana has lived in Makaha for several decades. Makaha used to be a safe family oriented community, but has slowly changed since 2010. The influence of west coast mainland gang culture has infiltrated our community and only compound the issues of substance abuse and violence. We have been exposed to random gun fire (weekly), manufacturing of methamphetamines in plain veiw, brutal attacks with bats and weapons, and even threats against our ohana for assisting HPD in addressing the Gameroom and drug distribution that occurs 24/7.

The level of organization and collaboration between these criminal enterprises demonstrate a sophistication I haven't seen here locally. It is reminiscent of the organized crime I observed in Albany Georgia when it was murder capitol of the US. I grew up here with many of the people engage in illegal activity and they mock HPD because they know there are insufficient resources to address community concerns and needs.

We desperately need more enforcement presence, increased patrols, and tools for our officers to address the hazards of our community. I support this bill and pray that it will help our offices restore some semblance of order and make the Waianae coast a safer place for family's, keiki, and kupuna again.

My comments are based on observing activities of the game room and multigenerational meth house across the street from us for 4-6 hours nightly since 2019.

Mahalo for your time,

James P. Jones

Former Public Health Nurse

VIA EMAIL TRANSMITTAL

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RE: House Concurrent Resolution 157

Aloha Honorable Gates and members of the Legislature:

As a former social worker for Child Welfare Services (CWS) under the Department of Human Services (DHS), a former Behavioral Health Specialist for the Department of Education (DOE) Nānākuli-Wai‘anae complex area, a current third-year law student at the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and a resident of Wai‘anae, mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.C.R. No. 157 which urges the allocation of additional resources for police prescense in Wai‘anae and the creation of a seperate policing district.

Additional resources to increase police presence on the Wai‘anae Coast will significantly contribute to the overall safety and qualify of life of the residents.

It is beyond imperative that we work towards keeping our residents safe and improving the qualify of life. There are many elderly residents and families with young children walking, commuting, and engaged in leisure and recreational activities on this the Coast. This population may be more saturated on the Coast because of the variety and availability of affordable housing programs up and down the Coast, from shelters, to elderly affordable housing, to transitional housing, to temporary housing for homeless as-risk/very low-income individuals and families. These individuals represent our more vulnerable members of the community. These individuals may attract the attention of non-violent and violent criminals more often than we'd like to acknowledge. We need to protect the vulnerable members of our society. Increase police presence will improve the quality of life by cutting the delay in reaching people who are calling into dispatch and requesting HPD services. More police being visible on the Coast will deter behaviors against the vulnerable population by increasing the reactions and responses and may lead to more arrests and incarcerations of individuals who prey on our Kapuna and keiki.

Many calls to HPD from this Coast are involving matters of safety. Stray dangerous animals, domestic and intimate violence, violent crimes, theft, harassment, and situations involving exposure to and abuse of substances and access to weapons can be frequent. These types of calls cannot wait and need to be addressed immediately. A delay in response by HPD could be the difference in life or death. It is also unfair to force the officers to choose between emergencies that are truly emergencies. Household emergencies involving weapons are just as much an emergency as an armed robbery on commercial property. If the resources for police are thin, dispatch will have to choose who receives help first. Also, a delay in response may lead to a decrease in evidence available, be in eye witnesses, body cams, etc., which could contribute to less deserving arrests and failed convictions. We need officers available and we need them compensated well and not subject or burn out because they are stretched too thin. The safety of the residents of the Wai‘anae Coast are relying on our elected officials of the State and the City & County to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to them. Additional resources to increase police presence will show that our leadership is taking our safety and security seriously.

Constituents have a propensity to believe that an increase in police presence helps to deter small petty crimes and crimes against small business owners. There are many small businesses on the Wai‘anae Coast and also pop-up vending on private property. These business people deserve to feel safe in their own community while conducting the activities of commerce. Patrons also want to feel safe and secure doing transactions. The perception of more police actively available, gives the reassurance and peace of mind *should* HPD be needed for assistance or an emergency affecting a business, officers will actually be available. Having secure local businesses is essential for the sustainability of a community and the overall quality of life for all the residents.

Additional resources to increase police presence on the Wai‘anae Coast will significantly contribute to the overall safety and quality of work performance of professional workers who require HPD’s assistance.

From my experience as a Social Worker with CWS and Behavior Health Specialist at Nānākuli Intermediate, I have lost count of the times we’ve had to call on HPD for assistance. For our own protection, for the protection of faculty and clients, sometimes police presence is needed in order to facilitate certain social and mental health services. Workers are unable to assess or even intervene in certain situations without the assistance of presence of HPD per the internal regulations. Police presence needs to be readily available and trained to be able to assist professional workers serving the community on the Wai‘anae Coast. In some cases, workers are risking their own safety to service certain populations and police presence is essential. HPD is sometimes required to place minors into custody or to intervene with domestic violence or mental health situations that involve a professional worker attempting to perform job duties. Having these additional resources allocated to increase police presence will increase the safety

and support of workers that perform duties, live in, or come into the Wai‘anae Coast community to serve the people.

The creation of a new police district for Wai‘anae, separate from Kapolei and ‘Ewa, will ensure that the unique needs of the Wai‘anae Coast without infringement or thinning of the resources that are needed to serve other deserving communities.

The Wai‘anae Coast deserves our own policing district. The traffic alone between Kapolei/‘Ewa should be reason enough to warrant an entire division that only services this unique 16 miles of coastline. Police rushing from other areas on Farrington Hwy during commuting hours poses a risk to public safety. Having police of the Coast will assist in efforts in a timely manner without the police themselves having to commute.

In addition, the Wai‘anae Coast has a unique set of needs that ought to be policed by dedicated individuals who are committed to *this* community and are working to build a rapport within this area. Kapolei/‘Ewa/Wai‘anae is too expansive of a region to ensure the officers will be consistent. Some levels of policing a unique community can only be achieved by the people having trust and faith in the officers, and the officers having a positive rapport with the people. Creating a policing district would be a great step in the right direction of allowing the people to work closely with HPD especially for issues that are commonplace and frequent on this side.

Lastly, we need to protect our officers as resources. The community does not benefit from burnt out and discouraged members of the police force. We are currently having officers servicing three very deserving, very distinct, and very active communities that expand over twenty miles, and this is too much for one division. The population of the Wai‘anae Coast is increasing, we have a huge houseless population, we have an increase in mental health needs and needs of the community in general since Covid-19, we are seeing more and more tourist, and we are seeing more traffic not only on the major roadways, but also the neighborhood and the beaches. We need more officers, and we need our own distinct police district. We need officers to show up ready and able to serve and committed to serving the Wai‘anae Coast in all her tribulations and in all her glory.

For the aforementioned reasons I urge you submit my testimony and encourage the other members of legislation to pass H.C.R. No. 157.

Mahalo nui loa,

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