

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1251

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 22 2023

RE: H.B. No. 580  
H.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Second State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2023  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Higher Education, to which was referred  
H.B. No. 580, H.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO VICTIM-COUNSELOR PRIVILEGE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Expand the victim-counselor privilege under the Hawaii Rules of Evidence to include confidential advocates employed by the University of Hawaii; and
- (2) Increase the minimum number of hours of training a domestic violence victims' counselor must complete to be considered a victim counselor.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the University of Hawai'i System, Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Women's Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, Education Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, American Association of University Women of Hawaii, The Every Voice Coalition, Imua Alliance, and fourteen individuals.

Your Committee finds that domestic violence survivors who receive services from the University of Hawaii are not afforded the same confidentiality protections as survivors who receive services from community advocates and service providers. The lack



of protections offered by the University may dissuade survivors from accessing resources and seeking justice. To encourage survivors to utilize University supports, this measure ensures communications between domestic violence survivors and University of Hawaii confidential advocates are afforded the legal privilege of confidentiality status.

Your Committee further finds that the number of training hours required for domestic violence victims' counselors in the State is one of the lowest in the nation. On average, states require thirty-five hours of training to qualify as a domestic violence victims' counselor, whereas Hawaii requires twenty-five. This measure aligns the number of training hours required of Hawaii domestic violence victims' counselors with national requirements to ensure Hawaii counselors are equipped with the necessary skills and best practices to serve the people of the State.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Higher Education that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 580, H.D. 1, and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to your Committee on Judiciary.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Higher Education,



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DONNA MERCADO KIM, Chair



