



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1967, H.D. 1, RELATING TO THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM SERVICES FUND.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

DATE: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 308 and Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Julie Ebato, Administrator, Crime Prevention and Justice
Assistance Division

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General supports this bill that changes the administration of the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to the Department of the Attorney General.

The Department of the Attorney General is committed to combatting all forms of human trafficking and sex trafficking in Hawai'i. The Department's Special Investigation and Prosecution Division was created to fulfill this purpose, as it is a mission-driven unit that investigates and prosecutes human-trafficking and sex-trafficking crimes. As the Department comes into contact with victims of human trafficking, the human trafficking victim services fund may be used to supplement programs, grants, or purchase of service contracts that support or provide comprehensive services to victims of labor trafficking or sex trafficking.

We respectfully ask the Committee to pass this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIE DOMINGO DELA CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
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IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 24.1074

February 26, 2024

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair,
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 308, State Capitol & Videoconference

From: Jovanie Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director
Office of Community Services – OCS

Position: Support

**Re: H.B. 1967 HD 1 RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS
SERVICES FUND**

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

This bill would amend HRS §706-650.5 to transfer the human trafficking special fund from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, where it is being administered by the Office of Community Services (OCS), to the Department of the Attorney General.

II. CURRENT LAW

The Office of Community Services has had a special fund for serving human trafficking victims since 2014. However, the sum that was collected was never sufficient to administer services for trafficking victims.

III. COMMENTS ON THE BILL

This bill would transfer the special fund to the Department of the Attorney General where any funds could be consolidated with funds from other sources, in order to provide for reparations to trafficking victims. OCS supports the measure and thanks the Committee for the opportunity to testify.



February 27, 2024

TO: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Finance

From: Jeanne Y. Ohta, Co-Chair
Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus

RE: HB 1967 HD1 Relating to the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus writes in strong support of HB 1967 HD1 Relating to the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund which would move the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to the Department of the Attorney General.

The Department of the Attorney General currently plays an important role in prosecuting traffickers and coordinating victim services. Shifting these funds would place the funds where they may be used more efficiently and focused on the care needed by trafficking survivors.

This measure is a priority for the Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus. The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus is a catalyst for progressive, social, economic, and political change through action on critical issues facing Hawaii's women and girls.

We respectfully request that the Committee pass this crucial measure. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony in strong support of HB 1967 HD1.



HB 1967, HD1, RELATING TO THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM SERVICES FUND

FEBRUARY 26, 2024 · FIN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: Imua Alliance supports HB 1967, HD1, relating to the human trafficking victim services fund, which changes the administration of the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to the Department of the Attorney General.

Imua Alliance is a victim service provider for survivors of sex trafficking. Over the past 15 years, we have provided comprehensive direct intervention (victim rescue) services to over 200 victims, successfully emancipating them from slavery and assisting in their restoration, while providing a range of targeted services to over 1,000 victims and individuals at risk of sexual exploitation. During the pandemic, demand for victim services to our organization skyrocketed by 330 percent, driven in part by a fivefold increase in direct crisis calls.

Each of the victims we have assisted has suffered from complex and overlapping trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, dissociation, parasuicidal behavior, and substance abuse. Trafficking-related trauma can lead to a complete loss of identity. A victim we cared for in 2016, for example, had become so heavily trauma bonded to her pimp that while under his grasp, she couldn't remember her own name. Yet, sadly, many of the victims with whom we work are misidentified as so-called "voluntary prostitutes" and are subsequently arrested and incarcerated, with no financial resources from which to pay for their release.

Sex trafficking is a profoundly violent crime. At least 23 percent of trafficking victims in Hawai'i report being first exploited before turning 18, according to a recent report, with the average age of trafficked keiki's initial exposure to exploitation being 11. Based on regular outreach and monitoring, we estimate that approximately 150 high-risk sex trafficking establishments operate in Hawai'i. In a recent report conducted by the State Commission on the Status of Women, researchers from Arizona State University found that 1 in every 11 adult males living in our state buys sex online. When visitors are also counted, that number worsens to 1 in every 7 men walking the streets of our island home and a daily online sex buyer market of 18,614 for O'ahu and a total sex buyer population for the island of 74,362, including both tourists and residents.

ASU's findings are grim, but not surprising to local organizations that provide services to survivors of sex trafficking. Imua Alliance, for example, has trained volunteers to perform outreach to victims in high-risk locations, like strip clubs, massage parlors, and hostess bars. More than 80 percent of runaway youth report being approached for sexual exploitation while on the run, over 30 percent of whom are targeted within the first 48 hours of leaving home. With regard to mental health, sex trafficking victims are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD as a soldier in a war zone.

Greater than 80 percent of victims report being repeatedly raped and 95 percent report being physically assaulted, numbers that are underreported, according to the United States Department of State and numerous trauma specialists, because of the inability of many victims to recognize sexual violence. As one underage survivor told Imua Alliance prior to being rescued, "I can't be raped. Only good girls can be raped. I'm a bad girl. If I *want* to be raped, I have to *earn* it."

Accordingly, **we support measures to advance our state's fight against sexual servitude, including this bill's placing of the state's Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund within the auspices of the Department of the Attorney General.** That said, we note that the fund had a cash balance of \$2,750 at the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Additional revenue streams beyond criminal fees need to be created to help the fund meet its purpose of serving survivors.

Kris Coffield · Executive Director, Imua Alliance · (808) 679-7454 · kris@imuaalliance.org

Kapalama Neighborhood Security Watch

Dear Chair, Vice Chair & The Committee

Kapalama Neighborhood Security Watch is in strong support of this bill. NSWs are a grassroots of the Honolulu Police Department. Neighborhood Security Watches are nationally recognized programs similar to Weed & Seed which was initiated by the US Federal Prosecuting Attorney.

There were a series of studies provided by a trafficking organization from Hawai'i to help address the dire subject matter in the State of Hawaii

The second study was completed in 2019 and explored the stories of 22 female sex trafficking survivors who were sex trafficked in Hawai'i. The victims were from Oahu and Hawai'i Island and a majority was Native Hawaiian. The survivors' stories included their recruitment experiences, their violent victimizations by their families, traffickers, and the involvement of systems including law enforcement, medical services, and schools that did not identify or respond to their victimization.

Please refer to this study from Arizona State University, published from Hoolanapua.

This report is the third study in a series of research studies exploring sex trafficking in Hawai'i. The first study conducted in 2018 explored the scope of the online sex buyer market. The online buyer market was found to be robust with many thousands of sex buyers looking for sex online every day in Hawai'i.

The State of Hawaii is a major destination for trafficking. Please consider supporting this subject matter immediately. We are in strong support of this work to be worked on by the AG.

**Blessings,
Kaplama NSW**

February 26, 2024

Testimony in support for HB 1967

Dear Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa, and all members of the Finance Committee: Members, Aiu, Chun, Cochran, Garrett, Kahaloa, Kila, Kobayashi, Lamosao, Morikawa, Nishimoto, Poepoe, Takenouchi, Alcos, and Ward:

I am writing as a private individual from the island of Kaua'i to strongly support the moving of the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund to the Department of the Attorney General. As a woman who is deeply interested in the protection and care of adult and child survivors of Human Trafficking, I feel that this bill should be a priority in the state of Hawai'i in order to protect all persons, no matter their gender identity from the horrors of the crimes of rape, abuse, and sexual attacks prevalent in Human Trafficking.

The two previous committees of JDH and LGO who have voted in support of this bill with amendments proves that victims of Human Trafficking need such support items as food, personal medications and personal items, including replacement clothing and also need immediate mental health counseling support and often severe medical resources. This criminal act harms Hawaii's children and minors, as well as adults and the immediate help that is needed in families within our communities is usually urgent and will be best served by moving these funds to the office of the Attorney General where they can use these funds immediately to make certain that victims of Human Trafficking can get the support they need at the moment that they need it to try and repair all damage caused from trauma and from physical abuse.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. I strongly support this bill for the many community members who are looking to the legislature to provide the relief and support victims deserve.

Mahalo,

Bevin Parker-Evans

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