



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 2230 HD1

Relating to Law Enforcement

Committees on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs and Health and Human Services
Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 3:00 pm
State Capitol Conference Room 225, Via Videoconference

Chairs Wakai and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Elefante and Aquino, and members of the Committees:

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** H.B. No. 2230 HD1, Relating to Law Enforcement and offers suggestions regarding language in this measure for the committee's consideration.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022), the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. One of our priority areas focuses on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. We explore avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support. We aim to start this with our state workforce.

Law enforcement officers are exposed to various stressors that make them more vulnerable to the onset of mental health disorders. Research shows that when law enforcement officers are provided with mental health professionals support and peer support programs, there are decreased mental health symptoms related to depression and trauma symptoms, better coping skills implemented, and overall improvement in wellness.¹ H.B. 2230 HD1 provides our state's law enforcement officers supports to increase their mental health literacy and gain skills needed to manage stressors and obligations at work and in other domains of life.

The OWR appreciates that the committee recognizes the support our law enforcement officers need to address their wellness. Our office addresses the State's workforce wellness and resilience by providing training and technical support to state departments. We would like to humbly offer these services to our colleagues at the Law Enforcement Standards Board and the Department of Law Enforcement.

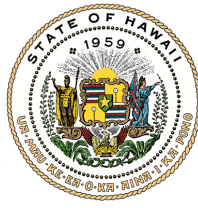
Finally, for the committee's consideration, we humbly propose inserting "trauma-informed mental health support" or "evidence-based mental health support" instead of "trauma-informed therapy" as currently described in the measure.

Thank you for considering these comments and for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.

Tia L R Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor

¹ Uhl, Alexis, et al. "Mental Health Providers and Peers Help Enhance the Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Mental Health Interventions." *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2023, pp. 774–81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09604-3>

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DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2230, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Before the Senate Committees on
Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

And

Health and Human Services

Wednesday, March 13, 2024; 3:00 p.m.

State Capitol Conference Room 225, Via Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chairs Wakai and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Elefante and Aquino, and members of the Committees:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) submits the following **comments** on House Bill 2230, House Draft 1.

This requires the Law Enforcement Standards Board to develop, and each department employing law enforcement officers to implement, a structured health intervention program to support law enforcement officers' physical and mental health.

The DLE is supportive of the health and wellness of law enforcement officer and exploring and implementing measures to improve officer health, wellness, and overall quality of life. As pointed out in the bill, the law enforcement profession sees ". . . high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, heart attacks, and other mental and physical health problems."

The DLE is concerned with the implementation of the goals of this measure. For example, there will be significant costs associated with the program from various sides, the requirement for participation by officers is unclear, there is no provision to address workers compensation related issues or the significant issues that must involve collective bargaining.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII ORGANIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS
" A Police Organization for Police Officers Only "
Founded 1971

March 8, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Wakai
Chair
The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante
Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental & Military Affairs
Hawaii State Capitol, Rooms 407, 217

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura
Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino
Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol, Rooms 213, 204
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: **HB 2230 HD1 – Development of Structured Health Program**

Dear Chairs Wakai and San Buenaventura, Vice-Chairs Elefante and Aquino, 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 HB 2230 HD1 which calls for the development and implementation of a structured health intervention program that supports law enforcement officers’ physical and mental health. This bill will further the public interest by addressing the high levels of occupational stress experienced by our law enforcement officers and the impact that can have on officer performance, morale, turnover and public safety.

As you are aware, our officers are regularly exposed to violence, suffering, death, and disturbing situations, which causes high levels of job-related stress, and in turn contributes to the high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, heart attacks, and other mental and physical health problems that law enforcement officers deal with. Moreover, there is potential stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance that may prevent law enforcement officers from receiving help. The health intervention program proposed by this bill would include:

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The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Chair and Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental & Military Affairs
The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair and Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
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Re: HB 2230 HD1 – Development of Structured Health Program

1. Physical training designed to help equip law enforcement officers to apprehend and arrest suspects and to perform other physical aspects of their duties;
2. Fitness classes, martial arts classes, and other activities, to be made available to law enforcement officers during regular business hours;
3. Training on best practices for safely restraining a suspect, including training on effectively monitoring the suspect's vital signs; and
4. Mental health support, including confidential, stigma-free, and trauma-informed therapy; mentoring programs; and peer-to-peer support groups.

We support this bill as it offers critical physical and mental health support to our officers and in turn, benefits the public. This program, when implemented, should be a voluntary benefit made available to our officers and should be made available as soon as the measure is passed.

For our community, it is imperative that our police officers have access to adequate physical and mental health support. Development of a structured health intervention program such as the one described above is one step in that direction.

We thank you for allowing us to be heard on this very important issue and we hope your committee will unanimously support HB 2230 HD1.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT "BOBBY" CAVACO
SHOPO President



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL & MILITARY AFFAIRS

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

March 13, 2024 3:00 P.M. Conf Rm 225 & via Video conference

Testimony in Support of HB2230 HD1 RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) supports the efforts of HB2230 HD1 to create a health intervention program that promotes mental health support to law enforcement officers.

However, to strengthen this proposal we encourage this Health Intervention Program to include referrals and resources from the community, including psychologists and other licensed mental health providers who can help assist and offer therapeutic consultation as they build this program.

This health intervention program proposal plans to include "confidential, stigma-free, and trauma-informed therapy; mentoring programs; and peer-to-peer support groups." The HPA greatly supports these types of services and encourages the administrators building this program to include training and referrals from licensed providers.

Concurrently, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and other community organizations are providing Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) 2-3x a year to help law enforcement utilize clinical strategies in working with high-risk individuals. This proposed Health Intervention Program should collaborate with the CIT trainings that are being provided by HPD at this time.

Finally, HPA recognizes the need to have peer support and collaboration from mentoring officers to prevent burnout and mitigate other mental health challenges with current police officers. It is important to destigmatize mental health services for law enforcement; as the positive impacts will ripple through the criminal justice system and the broader community at large.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important bill.

Sincerely,

Raymond A Folen, Ph.D., ABPP.
Executive Director