



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

---

**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 610, RELATING TO COLD CASE INVESTIGATIONS.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

**DATE:** Friday, February 7, 2025 **TIME:** 2:05 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 325 and Videoconference

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Adrian Dhakhwa, Deputy Attorney General

---

Chair Tarnas and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) supports this bill and provides the following comments.

This bill establishes a Cold Case Investigation Unit within the Department to "assist federal, state, county, and tribal law enforcement, and other cold case units, in investigating unsolved homicide, missing person, and other cases that have a nexus to the State." (page 2, lines 1-6). In addition, the bill appropriates funding for the unit.

The bill requires the unit to "prioritize the investigation of cases having a Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Native Alaskan, or other indigenous victim" (page 3, lines 8-10). While the State may have a compelling interest in prioritizing such cases, this race-based wording may be subject to challenge on equal protection grounds under article I, section 5 of the Hawaii Constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. To avoid such legal concerns, the Department recommends replacing the proposed section 28- (d) on page 3, lines 8-10, with the following provision:

(d) Cases investigated by the cold case unit may include unsolved homicides, sexual offenses, sexually motivated offenses, missing persons, and cases of unidentified remains.

Additionally, section 28- (e) states that the proposed unit "may accept investigation requests and may proactively offer assistance to a law enforcement

agency or cold case unit; provided that the unit shall not assist with an active criminal investigation" (page 3, lines 11-14). The rationale for prohibiting assistance with active investigations is unclear. The Department suggests deleting this restriction.

The Department also recommends adding a new subsection (f) defining "cold case" as follows:

(f) For the purpose of this section, "cold case" means a case where all investigative leads have been exhausted, all physical evidence examined, and all witnesses interviewed to the point where the case has been closed for a significant period of time without any active leads.

Defining "cold case" this way will clarify the scope of the unit's duty.

While the bill makes an unspecified appropriation to the Department for the establishment of the unit, we believe that the creation and funding of new prosecutor and investigator positions is needed to achieve the unit's mandate. Specifically, the Department estimates that one deputy attorney general, one supervisory special agent, and four special agent positions would be necessary to effectuate the bill's purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HOUSE BILL 610**  
**RELATING TO COLD CASE INVESTIGATIONS**

House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs  
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 7, 2025

2:05PM

Room 325

---

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB 610 which establishes and appropriates money for a Cold Case Investigation Unit within the Department of the Attorney General which prioritizes unsolved cases involving an Indigenous victim.

In 2022, OHA and the Commission on the Status of Women published the Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls Task Force Report (MMNHWG).<sup>1</sup> Key findings revealed that more than a quarter of missing girls in Hawai'i are Native Hawaiian, and that Hawai'i has the eighth highest rate of missing persons per capita in the nation at 7.5 missing people per 100,000 residents. The average profile of a missing child is 15 years old, female, Native Hawaiian, missing from Oahu (MCCH, 2022).

On Hawai'i island, Kānaka Māoli children ages 15-17 represent the highest number of missing children's cases, with the most children reported missing in area code 96720, Hilo (Hawai'i Island Police Department, 2022). From 2018-2021, there were 182 cases of missing Kānaka Māoli girls on Hawai'i Island, higher than any other racial group (Hawai'i Island Police Department, 2022). Native Hawaiians are also disproportionately represented among homicide victims, including unsolved "cold cases." The State reported 2,182 homicides between 1965 and 2023, of which 728 remain unsolved.

---

<sup>1</sup> "HOLOI Ā NALO WĀHINE 'ŌIWI: MISSING AND MURDERED NATIVE HAWAIIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS TASK FORCE REPORT (PART 1)," Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women: Honolulu HI (2022), <https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/content/sites/hawaii/MMNHWG-Report-Web.pdf>

In 2020, police were able to develop a profile using DNA technology which led to an arrest in 2023 for the murder of Hawai'i teen Dawn Momohara in 1977, a case which had long since gone cold.<sup>2</sup> The same can be said for many other cases, thanks to a boost with genealogy forensics.<sup>3</sup> This high demand to process evidence for cold cases with the new technology available merits the establishment of a Cold Case Investigation Unit within the Department of the Attorney General. For these reasons, The Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges this committee to **PASS HB 610**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

---

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Sinco Kelleher and Hannah Schoenbaum, "Grim memories resurface after DNA advances lead to arrest of suspect in Hawaii teen's 1977 murder," Associated Press (January 31, 2025), [Grim memories resurface after DNA advances lead to arrest of suspect in Hawaii teen's 1977 murder | AP News](#)

<sup>3</sup> "IGG Cases," Genealogy Explained (February 2024), [IGG Cases](#)

Testimony of Zoiey Quipp  
Before the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee  
Hearing on House Bill 610  
2/7/25

Good afternoon, Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Zoiey Quipp, and I am a social work student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am testifying in strong support of House Bill 610, which addresses cold case investigations related to the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).

My understanding of the hardships within Indigenous communities comes from both academic research and deeply impactful coursework. The crisis of MMIW is a longstanding social issue rooted in colonialism. For centuries, Indigenous women and girls have been dehumanized, overlooked, and treated as disposable. Structural barriers, resource limitations for Tribal Police, and systemic biases have perpetuated this crisis, leaving countless families without justice or closure.

We cannot ignore the numbers. According to *A Modern Trail of Tears: The MMIW Crisis in the U.S.*, homicide is one of the leading causes of death for Indigenous women between the ages of 10 and 34, and more than 80% of Indigenous people experience violence in their lifetime. Despite these staggering statistics, Indigenous communities often lack the necessary resources and support systems to address these injustices.

Last semester, I read Keetsenak, a powerful compilation of real stories from Indigenous women, alongside an analysis of the root causes of this crisis. This book reinforced what so many already know—the importance of advocacy, awareness, and action. Today, I am using my voice to add to the growing call for justice.

Passing this bill is not just a legislative step; it is a step toward healing, accountability, and systemic change. It is an opportunity to provide Indigenous families with the exhaustive investigative efforts and justice that every person deserves. I urge you to support House Bill 610 and help ensure that these cases receive the attention they have long been denied.

Thank you for your time and consideration.