

**HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT STAFF
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495**

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1382
RELATING TO THE NATIONAL GUARD

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL WALTER R. ROSS, JR.
DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT STAFF
HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD

MARCH 10, 2025

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, and members of the Committee:

I am Brigadier General Walter Ross, Director of the Joint Staff, Hawaii National Guard, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense.

I am presenting this testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB1382.

I strongly support SB1382. The passage of this critical bill is vital to providing National Guard servicemembers with the legal protection they need and deserve during times of state emergencies and urgent domestic response situations. These dedicated individuals serve our communities in these high-pressure and stressful conditions with remarkable courage and selflessness. They often put their lives on the line to serve and protect our communities in moments of crisis, such as natural disasters and other emergencies. We must establish this essential legal safeguard to protect them while performing their duties for the State of Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

BG Walter R. Ross, Jr., waltres.r.ross2.mil@army.mil; 808-844-6087

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA MĀKA'I O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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DEPUTY CHIEFS
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OUR REFERENCE TC-KK

March 12, 2025

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 411
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Belatti and Members:

SUBJECT: Senate Bill No. 1382, Relating to the National Guard

I am Thomas Chang, Captain of the Criminal Investigation Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD supports Senate Bill No. 1382, Relating to the National Guard.

This bill will provide a crucial safeguard for our National Guard members, shielding them from assaults while they carry out their essential duties. The National Guard members play a pivotal role in maintaining the safety of our communities and country. Signing these measures into law will significantly enhance the protection of National Guard members from potential threats and harm.

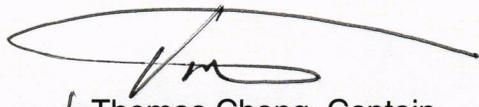
The HPD urges you to support Senate Bill No. 1382, Relating to the National Guard.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

Sincerely,


Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police


Thomas Chang, Captain
Criminal Investigation Division

SB-1382

Submitted on: 3/6/2025 4:48:57 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB1382. Please pass this bill.

Michael Golojuch, Lt Col, USAF(Ret)

SB-1382

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:59:21 AM

Testimony for PBS on 3/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frank Schultz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this initiative.

SB-1382

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:16:55 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Zehr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully oppose SB1382 because it undermines the foundational principle of equality before the law by creating arbitrary legal distinctions based on occupation. While the intention behind the bill may be to protect individuals in certain professions, such as National Guard members, emergency responders, and correctional officers, it risks elevating the value of their lives above those of other citizens. This creates an imbalance where individuals in certain roles are granted heightened protections, which undermines the fundamental tenet that all people should be treated equally under the law. I have great respect for those who choose to put on the uniform to serve our country, and I myself had the privilege of serving as a military officer for nearly 10 years. In defending our Constitution and the American way of life, I remain steadfast in my advocacy for equality and fairness, which are the cornerstones of our democracy.

The principle of equal protection under the law is a cornerstone of a just and free society. It asserts that no individual's life or rights are inherently more valuable than another's, regardless of their occupation or role in society. This bill, however, creates a hierarchy by granting special legal protections to certain groups based solely on their professional roles. By doing so, it implicitly suggests that the harm caused to a National Guard member, for example, is somehow more significant than harm caused to an ordinary citizen. This type of legal distinction fosters inequality and erodes the very foundation of fairness that ensures all individuals are treated impartially.

While supporters of this bill may argue that certain professions face unique risks that warrant special legal protections, we must be cautious not to create a system where some lives are considered more worthy of protection than others. The role of the National Guard, emergency medical workers, and others in this bill is important, but that does not justify their legal status being elevated above that of any other citizen. Treating people differently based on their occupation undermines the universal right to equal protection and sets a dangerous precedent for further division within the legal system.

The law must remain neutral and impartial, ensuring that all individuals—regardless of their job—receive the same level of protection and justice. Equal treatment under the law does not mean that every individual is treated identically in every instance, but rather that no one should be subjected to special legal privileges simply because of their role. The expansion of legal distinctions, especially in the context of National Guard members and other protected groups,

risks creating a system where some individuals enjoy more rights and protections than others, which is fundamentally unjust.

In conclusion, I urge you to reject this bill, as it undermines the principle of equality before the law. Enacting such a policy would set a harmful precedent, enabling further divisions within the legal system and eroding the rights of ordinary citizens. The state must prioritize fairness, treating all individuals equally and ensuring that no citizen's rights are subordinated to another's based on their occupation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicholas Zehr