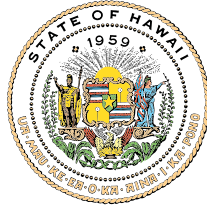


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



THOMAS WILLIAMS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GAIL STROHL
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII
EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM**

TESTIMONY BY THOMAS WILLIAMS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON
LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
AND
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
PROVIDING COMMENTS ON
SENATE BILL NO. 470

February 3, 2025

3:00 P.M.

Conference Room 224 and VIA Videoconference

RELATING TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE.

Chairs Aquino and Elefante, Vice Chairs Lee and Wakai, and Members of the Committees,

While the ERS Board of Trustees has not had the opportunity to review this legislation, ERS staff believes the Board would have meaningful concerns and respectfully offers the following comments.

S.B. 470, proposes to create a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) into which a police officer may enroll within 12 months of normal retirement eligibility. Upon enrollment, the participant would be considered a retiree and allowed to continue working as a police officer exempt from mandatory ERS membership for up to ten years. The retiree would no longer make employee contributions, and the accrual of retirement benefits would cease. The retirement allowance accrued up to the time of



Employees' Retirement System
of the State of Hawaii

enrollment would be deposited into the DROP account to accrue monthly interest equivalent to the system's actual investment return, net of investment expenses.

While ERS recognizes the difficulties in staffing police officer positions, and the value provided by retaining veteran officers, we have concerns regarding the administrative and financial impact of the proposed DROP to the system.

The DROP program as currently proposed would increase the cost to the system and does not provide for any employer contributions to offset the increase in liability or expense. By incentivizing what is, for funding purposes, essentially police officer retirement three to four years earlier than currently averaged, the system would payout pensions for a longer relative period while having less time to invest contributions to fund those pensions. Covered payroll would likely decrease due to not replacing these normally eligible positions with active contributing ERS members, but by retirees enrolled in the DROP. Together, this would cause the Unfunded Accrued Actuarial Liability (UAAL) to increase by approximately \$187 million and add eight additional years to the period for the system to reach full funding. At current contribution levels, it would cost an additional \$1.9 billion in extended police employer contributions if the UAAL were to be paid down over what would constitute a now 30-year period.

Act 192 of SLH 2024, lowered the maximum funding period from 30 years to 25 years as of June 30, 2024, with progressive decreases in the funding period to 20 years with the intent to avoid ongoing periods of negative amortization of the UAAL, saving money over the long-term and strengthening the state's bond rating. Meeting a 25-year funding period would necessitate an immediate offsetting increase in employer contributions for police officers of 10.21% effective July 1, 2025. This would bring the total employer contribution of covered police officer payroll to 51.21% (from 41%) and lower the total long-term cost from \$1.9 billion to \$874 million.

The actuarially recommended funding method would be to keep the funding period at the current 22-year projection by increasing employer contributions for police officers from 41% to 55.1% effective July 1, 2025. This would limit the amount of negative amortization, and in doing so, reduce the total cost incurred to \$311 million.

The ERS would also urge the legislature to allow the ERS to petition the IRS for a private letter ruling prior to any DROP implementation to confirm that it would not threaten the beneficial tax status currently enjoyed by the system. Included in that determination would be confirmation that stopping employee contributions does not constitute a Cash or Deferred Arrangement (CODA) prohibited for defined benefit plans. Additional regulatory concerns could involve potential violation of annual benefit limits under section 415 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, should the pension payment and annual return exceed the yearly limit.

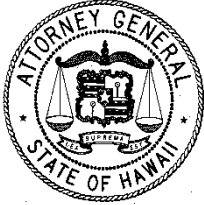
The variable monthly system rate of return under the proposed DROP plan, besides exposing the DROP accounts to market volatility and increasing administrative complexity, could cause it to be considered a defined contribution plan and would

subject the ERS to rules regulating such plans. Deposits made to the DROP account could be included under annual contribution limits pursuant to section 415(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

It is believed that the DROP, as currently proposed, would constitute a benefit enhancement prohibited by the moratorium of such enhancements under section 88-99 HRS until the ERS is 100% fully funded.

Instituting an ERS operated DROP program would result in substantially increased operational and administrative costs. An ERS administered DROP plan would require amendment of our existing rules and redesign of our Pension Administration System which are constructed around our qualification as a Defined Benefit Plan under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.B. 470.



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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 470, RELATING TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY AND ON
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

DATE: Monday, February 3, 2025 **TIME:** 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 224

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Elmira K.L. Tsang, Deputy Attorney General

Chairs Aquino and Elefante, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General opposes this bill.

This bill amends section 88-9, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to require the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) to establish and maintain a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) for police officers. Under the proposed DROP, police officers who reach the service requirement for retirement may elect, within twelve months of normal retirement eligibility, to retire and receive pension payments and benefits from the ERS while continuing employment as a police officer (without termination from service). During participation in the DROP, no further employee or employer contributions would be made to the ERS. Instead, pension payments and benefits would be deposited from the ERS into a DROP account, accruing interest at the rate of the ERS's investment returns, minus investment expenses. Participation in the DROP would be limited to a maximum of 120 months, not to exceed a total tenure of 35 years in the ERS and the program. Additionally, the bill provides that DROP participants shall receive healthcare benefits as retirees.

This bill may have a significant and unpredictable impact on the ERS's status as a qualified governmental plan under section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. To mitigate this risk, we recommend that the Legislature allow the ERS to petition the IRS for a private letter ruling before implementing the proposed

DROP. This would help determine whether the DROP would compromise the ERS's beneficial tax status, which currently benefits the ERS's members, retirees, and employers.

Furthermore, the bill raises concerns about potential violations of section 415 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

Given these risks, we urge the Committees to hold the bill to avoid jeopardizing the ERS's status as a qualified governmental plan under section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
MAYOR

POLICE DEPARTMENT

COUNTY OF MAUI

55 MAHALANI STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
TELEPHONE: (808) 244-6400
FAX: (808) 244-6411



JOHN PELLETIER
CHIEF OF POLICE

WADE M. MAEDA
DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICE

TO: Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Committee on Labor and Technology

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

FROM: John Pelletier, Chief of Police

DATE: January 30, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB470, RELATED TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE**

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 470, which establishes a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) for police officers. This proposed legislation represents a critical first step in addressing the challenges of retaining experienced law enforcement officers in our state.

Law Enforcement agencies across our state (and nation) face significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled officers due to the increasing demands and risks associated with their profession. Senate Bill 470 offers a practical solution by incentivizing experienced officers to continue their service beyond their eligible retirement dates. Through the Deferred Retirement Option Program, officers can remain on the force while earning a deferred retirement benefit, providing both financial security and stability to our law enforcement agencies. This is without addition costs to the current ERS.

Experienced officers are essential to maintaining public safety and ensuring the effective training and mentorship of new recruits. Their institutional knowledge, leadership, and dedication to serving our communities cannot be overstated. By creating a pathway for these seasoned officers to extend their careers, Senate Bill 470 would help bridge the gap between seasoned personnel and new officers, fostering a stronger and more cohesive law enforcement force.

Moreover, investing in programs like DROP is a cost-effective way to addressing the shortage of law enforcement personnel. Retaining experienced officers reduces turnover, minimizes recruitment and training costs, and ensures that our communities continue to benefit from a highly skilled and dedicated police force.

I humbly ask your support Senate Bill 470 and to prioritize the safety and well-being of our communities by ensuring that we retain the skilled and experienced officers who serve and protect us every day.

January 30, 2025

Page | 2

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further input or assistance in advocating for this legislation.

Mahalo for your consideration.



JOHN PELLETIER
Chief of Police

SUGGESTED TESTIMONY POINTS ON CREATING A DROP PROGRAM

Below are some suggested points to make for your testimony supporting SB470. Please feel free to use these in whole form or partially and to provide your own personal experience.

Officer Retention

Our police department faces a staffing crisis. And month after month it is only getting worse.

Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families.

DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

Investment

DROP offers a real, practical solution to our police staffing challenges by incentivizing experienced officers to extend their service.

This program allows us to retain highly trained officers who have the institutional knowledge and expertise we need to continue to protect public safety as well as mentor the new hires we need to rebuild our departments.

I urge to look at DROP as an investment. An investment in the retention of our experienced officers, an investment in the safety and well-being of our communities.

The alternative is to continue to wait for a miracle to solve our staffing crisis. The longer we wait, the worse it gets.

I urge you to support SB 470.

Officer/Community Impact

The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout, stress, and compromised well-being.

SB 470 offers a pathway to lighten that burden.

By enabling experienced officers to participate in DROP, we ensure that our communities continue to benefit from their expertise and dedication.

This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department.

Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

Officer Safety and 911 Response Times

Understaffed police departments pose a direct threat to officer safety. When fewer officers are on patrol, backup can be dangerously delayed, putting officers at increased risk.”

SB 470 addresses this critical safety concern by incentivizing experienced officers to remain on the force, ensuring adequate staffing levels and faster response times.

Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need.

This legislation is essential for safeguarding our officers and maintaining effective 911 response capabilities. I urge you to prioritize officer and community safety by supporting SB 470.”

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:01:25 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RONALD J LOMBARDI	Testifying for Honolulu PD	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass and support this bill. The lives of the loyal Officers depend and need this passage to help and ensure the safety, order and existence of our city and state

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 1:19:17 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jose Gaceta	Testifying for Honolulu PD	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our police department faces a staffing crisis. And month after month it is only getting worse. Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families. DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. Last year there were about 100 officers hired and about 70 retired. The recruitment cannot keep up. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today. Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 2:10:08 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nakia Chinyel Newton	Testifying for Honolulu Police Department	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The program would benefit the officers and the county due to the fact that alot of people. Are not rushing to sign up like when I came into the departmemt. My class started with 64 recruits and most of the classes around then had higher number of recruits.

Since I've been around staffing shortages have been an issue. From having 22 beats with only half the officers at times. Which is a major concern when things go left real quick and having to bring in officers from other districts to help cover. This is just my take on the program that it would keep season officers around to help teach the new in coming recruits.

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:27:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barry Bushaw	Testifying for Honolulu Police Department	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Officer Retention

Our police department faces a staffing crisis. And month after month it is only getting worse. Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families.

DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

Investment

DROP offers a real, practical solution to our police staffing challenges by incentivizing experienced officers to extend their service.

This program allows us to retain highly trained officers who have the institutional knowledge and expertise we need to continue to protect public safety as well as mentor the new hires we need to rebuild our departments.

I urge to look at DROP as an investment. An investment in the retention of our experienced officers, an investment in the safety and well-being of our communities.

The alternative is to continue to wait for a miracle to solve our staffing crisis. The longer we wait, the worse it gets.

I urge you to support SB 470.

Officer/Community Impact

The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout, stress, and compromised well-being.

SB 470 offers a pathway to lighten that burden.

By enabling experienced officers to participate in DROP, we ensure that our communities continue to benefit from their expertise and dedication.

This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department.

Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

Officer Safety and 911 Response Times

Understaffed police departments pose a direct threat to officer safety. When fewer officers are on patrol, backup can be dangerously delayed, putting officers at increased risk."

SB 470 addresses this critical safety concern by incentivizing experienced officers to remain on

the force, ensuring adequate staffing levels and faster response times.

Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need.

This legislation is essential for safeguarding our officers and maintaining effective 911 response capabilities. I urge you to prioritize officer and community safety by supporting SB 470

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 1:11:19 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tyler Henshaw	Testifying for Kauai Police Department	Support	Written Testimony Only

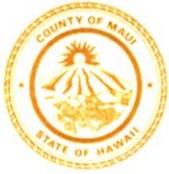
Comments:

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Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families.

DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.



RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
MAYOR

POLICE DEPARTMENT

COUNTY OF MAUI

55 MAHALANI STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
TELEPHONE: (808) 244-6400
FAX: (808) 244-6411



JOHN PELLETIER
CHIEF OF POLICE

WADE M. MAEDA
DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICE

TO: Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Committee on Labor and Technology

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

FROM: John Pelletier, Chief of Police

DATE: January 28, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB470, RELATED TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE**

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 470, which establishes a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) for police officers. This proposed legislation represents a critical first step in addressing the challenges of retaining experienced law enforcement officers in our state.

Law Enforcement agencies across our state (and nation) face significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled officers due to the increasing demands and risks associated with their profession. Senate Bill 470 offers a practical solution by incentivizing experienced officers to continue their service beyond their eligible retirement dates. Through the Deferred Retirement Option Program, officers can remain on the force while earning a deferred retirement benefit, providing both financial security and stability to our law enforcement agencies. This is without addition costs to the current ERS.

Experienced officers are essential to maintaining public safety and ensuring the effective training and mentorship of new recruits. Their institutional knowledge, leadership, and dedication to serving our communities cannot be overstated. By creating a pathway for these seasoned officers to extend their careers, Senate Bill 470 would help bridge the gap between seasoned personnel and new officers, fostering a stronger and more cohesive law enforcement force.

Moreover, investing in programs like DROP is a cost-effective way to addressing the shortage of law enforcement personnel. Retaining experienced officers reduces turnover, minimizes recruitment and training costs, and ensures that our communities continue to benefit from a highly skilled and dedicated police force.


I humbly ask your support Senate Bill 470 and to prioritize the safety and well-being of our communities by ensuring that we retain the skilled and experienced officers who serve and protect us every day.

January 28, 2025

Page | 2

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further input or assistance in advocating for this legislation.

Mahalo for your consideration.



For JOHN PELLETIER
Chief of Police

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
Lyndon M. Yoshioka, Deputy County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4188
Facsimile: (808) 241-6349
Email: cokcouncil@kauai.gov

Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawaii 96766

January 29, 2025

TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
SB 470, RELATING TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Monday, February 3, 2025
3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224
Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Aquino, Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of SB 470, Relating to Deferred Retirement for Police. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of SB 470, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 470. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:ss

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii 96766

January 29, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF BERNARD P. CARVALHO, JR.
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL**

ON

SB 470, RELATING TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE

Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Monday, February 3, 2025

3:00 p.m.

Conference Room 224

Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Aquino, Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of SB 470, Relating to Deferred Retirement for Police. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kauai County Council and as Secretary of the Hawaii State Association of Counties.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of SB 470, which establishes a deferred retirement option program for police and to provide a retention tool for County police departments to incentivize qualified officers who are eligible for retirement to continue working. This measure provides a valuable retention tool that will help county police departments address the ongoing challenges of recruiting and retaining experienced officers.

Further, SB 470 addresses police shortages by allowing qualified officers to continue working while deferring retirement benefits; improves public safety by retaining seasoned officers ensures continuity in leadership, mentorship for younger recruits, and the maintenance of institutional knowledge critical to effective policing; follows proven models in which their effectiveness in strengthening law enforcement retention; and provides financial stability for officers by offering officers an option to secure their financial future while continuing to serve their communities.

SB 470 is a practical and necessary step to support our police force, enhance public safety, and ensure that communities across Hawaii continue to benefit from experienced law enforcement personnel.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 470. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

BERNARD P. CARVALHO, JR.
Councilmember, Kauai County Council

AAO:mn

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

January 30, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF FELICIA COWDEN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
SB 470, RELATING TO DEFERRED RETIREMENT FOR POLICE
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Monday, February 3, 2025
3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Aquino, Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of SB 470, Relating to Deferred Retirement for Police. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council and the Public Safety & Human Services Committee Chair of the Kaua'i County Council.

SB 470 would allow the Kaua'i Police Department to be well assisted in developing upper leadership and effectively retaining our seasoned officers to rise to positions such as Chief and Deputy Chief of Police.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 470. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

FELICIA COWDEN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:mn

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 1:08:07 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Adriance	Testifying for Honolulu Police Department "SHOPO"	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of SB 470.

Officer Retention: Our police department faces a staffing crisis. And month after month it is only getting worse. Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families.

DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today. Please help solve the police staffing crisis. I am in full support of SB 470, and hope the you as the house and senate will consider this option.

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:22:15 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Ako	Testifying for SHOPO	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Support for SB 470 - A Call to Action for Officer Retention and Community Safety

Dear Thomas Ako,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 470, a crucial piece of legislation aimed at addressing the ongoing staffing crisis within our police department and enhancing the safety of both officers and the communities we serve.

As we face a significant staffing crisis, the challenges have become increasingly apparent. Our officers are stretched thin, struggling to secure time off, take vacations, or even get adequate rest between shifts. This relentless pressure is taking a toll not only on our physical health but also on our families, leading to burnout and stress. With a growing number of officers leaving the force, we urgently need solutions to retain experienced personnel.

SB 470, through the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), presents a practical solution to our department's staffing challenges. This program incentivizes seasoned officers to extend their service, allowing us to maintain a wealth of institutional knowledge and expertise. By keeping our experienced officers on duty longer, we can ensure the continued protection of public safety and facilitate the mentorship of new recruits, which is essential for rebuilding our department.

Investing in DROP is not merely an investment in retention; it is an investment in the safety and well-being of our communities. The alternative—waiting for a miraculous turnaround in hiring and recruitment—will only exacerbate our current difficulties. We cannot afford to wait.

The impact of our current staffing shortages is immense. It weighs heavily on our officers, leading to heightened stress and compromised well-being. Supporting SB 470 would alleviate some of these burdens by allowing experienced officers to remain in their roles, thus fostering continuity in community policing and strengthening the relationships we have built with the neighborhoods we serve.

Moreover, as we face understaffing, the safety of our officers comes into question. Fewer officers on patrol delays vital backup responses, exposing our officers to greater risks. By

incentivizing experienced officers to stay on the force, SB 470 addresses this critical concern while enhancing overall public safety. Improved response times are imperative; every second matters in an emergency.

In closing, I urge you to prioritize the safety and well-being of both our dedicated officers and the communities we serve by supporting SB 470. Together, we can turn the tide on our staffing crisis and ensure effective policing for years to come.

Thank you for considering this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Thomas Ako
Honolulu Police Officer
Thomasako@gmail.com

808-590-4822

SHOPO



STATE OF HAWAII ORGANIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS

Robert Cavaco
State Board President

" A Police Organization for Police Officers Only "
Founded 1971

Term of Office
1-2022 to 12-2025

February 1, 2025

The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
The Honorable Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Lee, Chair Elefante and Vice Chair Wakai:

Re: SB 470 – Relating to Deferred Retirement for Police

On behalf of the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (SHOPO), representing the dedicated county police officers across our state, I am writing to express our **strong support** for SB 470, which proposes the establishment of a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) for county police officers in Hawaii.

As you know, the recruitment and retention of qualified police officers has become increasingly challenging for our counties and their respective police departments. In 2024, Honolulu Police Department alone had 425 uniformed or sworn-officer vacancies. This staffing crisis is a concern to our community that we cannot ignore. SB 470 addresses this critical issue by introducing a deferred retirement option program, which serves as a powerful incentive for experienced officers to extend their service beyond the standard retirement period. If established, this program will not only be a strategic tool for retaining skilled law enforcement personnel but also a means to ensure the continued safety and security of our communities.

The implementation a DROP will provide several key benefits:

- Enhanced Retention of Experienced Officers:** By allowing officers to defer their retirement while continuing to accrue benefits, the program encourages our most seasoned officers to remain in active service. This retention of experienced personnel is crucial for maintaining the high standards of law enforcement at the county level across the state.
- A Cost-Effective Tool:** The program offers a cost-effective solution to the challenges of recruitment and training new officers. Retaining experienced officers may reduce the need for extensive training and onboarding of new recruits, thereby saving valuable resources.
- Community Safety and Stability:** With more experienced officers on the force, our community benefits from enhanced safety and stability. Officers who have served for extended periods possess invaluable knowledge and skills that contribute to effective policing as well as community

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4. **Increased Morale and Job Satisfaction:** The option to participate in a deferred retirement program can boost morale and job satisfaction among officers, as it provides them with greater flexibility and control over their retirement planning.

For these reasons, we believe that the passage of SB 470 will significantly strengthen our police force and enhance public safety across Hawaii. SHOPO urges the legislature to support this vital initiative, which aligns with our shared commitment to protecting and serving the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important matter. We look forward to your favorable action on SB 470.

Respectfully submitted,
ROBERT CAVACO
SHOPO President

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 9:33:23 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Romar Lagamo	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I support our DROP program to retain veteran officers. The police experience retain from years of police exposure has far more value than any monetary payout that will result in a savings in property, safety and lives.

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:13:55 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Walter D Gouveia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in full support of bill SB470, this will help greatly in attracting new officers and retaining current officers.

Thank you for your support.

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:28:46 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wendy Watanabe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a veteran Officer of 23 years, I have experienced and witnessed the changes within the department, staffing, retirement system and benefits.

in our department, the risks of the job outweighs experienced officers wants to continue employment after the minimum years required for retirement.

Although I am a couple years to retirement, I see the need for veteran officers and continue to be a part of the FTO program (without incentives for someone in my position) in hopes that the newer officers will learn as much as possible. I already have the mindset that on my 25th anniversary, I will retire, as there are no incentives to continue putting my life at risk as a police officer. If DROP is accepted, I would be one to change my viewpoint that our state and county actually cares about the first responders and is willing to provide extra incentives to those that wish to continue serving the public. Additional points are listed below.

Officer Retention

Our police department faces a staffing crisis. And month after month it is only getting worse. Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families.

DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

Investment

DROP offers a real, practical solution to our police staffing challenges by incentivizing experienced officers to extend their service.

This program allows us to retain highly trained officers who have the institutional knowledge and expertise we need to continue to protect public safety as well as mentor the new hires we need to rebuild our departments.

I urge to look at DROP as an investment. An investment in the retention of our experienced officers, an investment in the safety and well-being of our communities.

The alternative is to continue to wait for a miracle to solve our staffing crisis. The longer we wait, the worse it gets.

I urge you to support SB 470.

Officer/Community Impact

The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout,

stress, and compromised well-being.

SB 470 offers a pathway to lighten that burden.

By enabling experienced officers to participate in DROP, we ensure that our communities continue to benefit from their expertise and dedication.

This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department.

Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

Officer Safety and 911 Response Times

Understaffed police departments pose a direct threat to officer safety. When fewer officers are on patrol, backup can be dangerously delayed, putting officers at increased risk.”

SB 470 addresses this critical safety concern by incentivizing experienced officers to remain on the force, ensuring adequate staffing levels and faster response times.

Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need.

This legislation is essential for safeguarding our officers and maintaining effective 911 response capabilities. I urge you to prioritize officer and community safety by supporting SB 470.”

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 12:58:19 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Police Officers already have the option to stay well beyond their respective 25/30 year retirement dates.

As a retired police officers, I can tell you first hand that the moment a person joins the ranks of the "thin blue line" said person has taken his/her first steps on a 25/30 year journey (in a profession) of "chronic stress" and all the health issues (physical and mental) that comes with it. And, finally when said officer turns in his/her shield and retires, God willing, they can heal and live in peace.

Barring any national or statewide emergency, this proposal will have little influence in retaining experienced officers.

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 4:57:02 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stanley Wilson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With the current shortage of hundreds of officers the DROP program is essential to have seasoned officers to fill in, until the ranks can be properly filled. Also with these experienced officers still on duty, the department will have time to find qualified recruits and not rush the process

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 6:13:58 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ross Alberts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Officer Retention

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DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

Investment

DROP offers a real, practical solution to our police staffing challenges by incentivizing experienced officers to extend their service.

This program allows us to retain highly trained officers who have the institutional knowledge and expertise we need to continue to protect public safety as well as mentor the new hires we need to rebuild our departments.

I urge to look at DROP as an investment. An investment in the retention of our experienced officers, an investment in the safety and well-being of our communities.

The alternative is to continue to wait for a miracle to solve our staffing crisis. The longer we wait, the worse it gets.

I urge you to support SB 470.

Officer/Community Impact

The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout, stress, and compromised well-being.

SB 470 offers a pathway to lighten that burden.

By enabling experienced officers to participate in DROP, we ensure that our communities continue to benefit from their expertise and dedication.

This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department.

Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

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Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need.

This legislation is essential for safeguarding our officers and maintaining effective 911 response capabilities. I urge you to prioritize officer and community safety by supporting SB 470.”

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 8:55:28 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kupono mata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support SB470 and improve officer retention

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:37:18 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Levon Freeman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

DROP offers a practical solution to the current police staffing crisis. It will allow trained and experienced officers to remain on the job and extend their service to the community.

I urge you to look at the DROP as an investment in our police departments and an investment in the safety of our communities.

Please support SB 470

SB-470

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 11:20:25 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Llacuna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am currently a police officer with HPD. HPD has a staffing shortage and every year we have less officers doing the same job. Less people are applying to be police. Policing is no longer considered an honorable profession.

This new retention program will work. I am due for retirement. I have been a bomb tech for 18 years. The next tech has 6 years experience. The other three have less than 3 years. When older officer retire a wealth of experience is lost forever.

If this retention program is enacted I will stay on for another 5 years. I love my job, and this program is a huge incentive to stay.

Please pass SB470!

Jeffrey Llacuna

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:16:10 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Acquavella	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB470 will help reduce the number of police officers leaving the department at minimum retirement age. This will also help retain a workforce of experienced officers and benefit officer safety. Please support SB470!

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 2:03:57 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Timme	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please allow this measure to pass as it will be crucial to retaining qualified and experienced Officers at all ranks. This measure will help to provide continued safety for the public during times where both recruitment and retention are at an all time low.

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 12:22:38 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Yang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a program that makes sense that other departments are already using. It make absolutely NO sense to not approve this for city and county workers and will help retention greatly, which is a huge problem for HPD.

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 12:20:01 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deuel Meredith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

Investment

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I urge to look at DROP as an investment. An investment in the retention of our experienced officers, an investment in the safety and well-being of our communities.

The alternative is to continue to wait for a miracle to solve our staffing crisis. The longer we wait, the worse it gets.

I urge you to support SB 470.

Officer/Community Impact

The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout, stress, and compromised well-being.

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This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department.

Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

Officer Safety and 911 Response Times

Understaffed police departments pose a direct threat to officer safety. When fewer officers are on patrol, backup can be dangerously delayed, putting officers at increased risk."

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Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need.

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SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:51:26 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Iwasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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SUGGESTED TESTIMONY POINTS ON CREATING A DROP PROGRAM

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SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 5:27:00 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ernest Robello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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SB-470

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 8:30:12 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nathan PK Osullivan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Officer/Community

Impact The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout, stress, and compromised well-being. SB 470 offers a pathway to lighten that burden. By enabling experienced officers to participate in DROP, we ensure that our communities continue to benefit from their expertise and dedication. This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department. Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

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SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 11:17:55 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grant Hashimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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The current staffing shortage places an immense burden on our officers, leading to burnout, stress, and compromised well-being.

SB 470 offers a pathway to lighten that burden.

By enabling experienced officers to participate in DROP, we ensure that our communities continue to benefit from their expertise and dedication.

This program promotes continuity in community policing, fostering stronger relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they serve because they will stay in those neighborhoods instead of leaving the department.

Supporting SB 470 is supporting both the well-being of our dedicated police officers and the safety of our communities. I urge you to vote 'yes' on SB470

Officer Safety and 911 Response Times

Understaffed police departments pose a direct threat to officer safety. When fewer officers are on patrol, backup can be dangerously delayed, putting officers at increased risk.”

SB 470 addresses this critical safety concern by incentivizing experienced officers to remain on the force, ensuring adequate staffing levels and faster response times.

Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need.

This legislation is essential for safeguarding our officers and maintaining effective 911 response capabilities. I urge you to prioritize officer and community safety by supporting SB 470.”

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:50:34 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ka Ena Brown	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support SB470.

The fact is, DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. This industry desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers at a rapid rate in our State. DROP offers a real, practical solution to our police staffing challenges by incentivizing experienced officers to extend their service.

Please help solve the police staffing crisis. Please support SB 470.

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:33:08 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rommel Baysa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am expressing my strong support for the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) program. This initiative is crucial not only for the financial well-being of our officers but also for the retention of experienced personnel, such as myself, within our law enforcement agencies.

As we know, the decision to retire is a significant one for any officer. Many dedicated individuals reach a point where they are prepared to retire but are also deeply invested in their roles and communities. The DROP program offers these officers a valuable bridge between their years of service and their transition into retirement. By allowing us to continue working while deferring our retirement benefits, it provides financial stability that encourages us to remain on the job longer. This is particularly important in a time when we face challenges in recruitment and retention within our law enforcement ranks.

Investing in the DROP program is an investment in our communities. Experienced officers possess invaluable knowledge and skills that are essential for maintaining public safety. Their ability to mentor younger officers, handle complex situations, and foster community relations cannot be overstated. By implementing and supporting the DROP program, we can ensure that these seasoned professionals continue to contribute positively to our communities while also planning for our own futures.

Moreover, the DROP program serves as a powerful incentive for officers to stay with their departments. It reduces turnover rates and helps maintain a stable workforce, which ultimately enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies. This stability not only benefits the officers but also ensures that the public receives consistent and reliable service.

In conclusion, the DROP program is a win-win for both our officers and the communities we serve. I urge you to support this initiative and recognize the profound impact it can have on officer retention and community safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-470

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:33:36 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/3/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wade Anthony Souza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Officer Retention Our police department faces a staffing crisis. And month after month it is only getting worse. Its harder to get days off, to take vacations. We're working more hours, longer days, sometimes without proper rest in between. The impact on us is taking its toll on our bodies and on our families. DROP will keep more officers on the job longer. It's a fact. And we desperately need those officers. We all are hopeful that hiring and recruitment will pick up, but we can't wait for that to occur. We're losing officers today. Please help solve the police staffing crisis.

Understaffed police departments pose a direct threat to officer safety. When fewer officers are on patrol, backup can be dangerously delayed, putting officers at increased risk.” SB 470 addresses this critical safety concern by incentivizing experienced officers to remain on the force, ensuring adequate staffing levels and faster response times. Improved response times not only protect officers but also enhance public safety. Every second counts in an emergency, and SB 470 helps ensure timely assistance for those in need. This legislation is essential for safeguarding our officers and maintaining effective 911 response capabilities. I urge you to prioritize officer and community safety by supporting SB 470



LATE

Testimony of the Hawai'i State Association of Counties

S.B. No. 470 - Support

Relating to Deferred Retirement for Police

Committee on Labor & Technology and Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs
Monday, February 3, 2025, 3 p.m.

The Hawai'i State Association of Counties (HSAC) is a non-profit organization that represents the collective interests of Hawai'i's four counties: Kaua'i County, Maui County, County of Hawai'i, and the City and County of Honolulu. HSAC's membership includes the elected members of each county council, who work collaboratively to advocate for policies and programs that enhance the quality of life for our residents.

HSAC **supports** S.B. No. 470, which seeks to establish a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) to incentivize experienced police officers to extend their service.

We offer our support for S.B. 470 for the following reasons:

1. **Recruitment and Retention Challenges:** The recruitment and retention of police officers remain significant concerns for police departments across Hawai'i's counties.
2. **Vacancy Rates and Mentorship:** High vacancy rates are a shared challenge across all counties. For example, the Maui Police Department has reported a vacancy rate of 25 percent. A DROP program would encourage experienced officers to delay retirement, offering stability in staffing levels while providing mentorship to new recruits.
3. **Proven Success in Other Jurisdictions:** DROP programs have been widely adopted in other states and municipalities, leading to tangible improvements in retention rates and department morale.

As stated in the bill's preamble, the deferred retirement option program would provide an invaluable retention tool for Hawai'i's county police departments and support the continued protection of our communities. While we acknowledge ERS's concerns regarding pension cost predictability, we urge the Legislature to consider commissioning a study to examine the broader implications of this proposal.

HSAC is committed to supporting legislation that strengthens public safety and enables counties to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. For these reasons, the Hawai'i State Association of Counties supports S.B. No. 470, and requests your favorable consideration of this measure.