



**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. 1980, RELATING TO ANIMAL CRUELTY.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

DATE: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325 and Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Tricia M. Nakamatsu, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Tarnas and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) submits the following comments and suggested amendments regarding this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to strengthen existing laws relating to the fighting of birds to more closely mirror those of existing dogfighting laws by creating offenses of cruelty to animals by fighting birds in the first degree and in the second degree.

The Department notes that the bill appears to more clearly and comprehensively address the offense of cockfighting in lieu of the current offense found under section 711-1109(1)(d), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), animal cruelty in the second degree. That said, the proposed offenses of cruelty to animals by fighting birds in the first degree and second degree appear to contain "mixed" states of mind, and thus may present a potential challenge for prosecution. As currently written, the definition of the phrase "fight between birds" (page 3, lines 14-17, and page 5, lines 8-10) contains an "intentional" state of mind, whereas the proposed offenses that would utilize this phrase only require a "knowing" (page 2, line 18, and page 4, line 20) or "reckless" (page 3, line 7) state of mind.

To resolve this issue, the Department suggests amending the definition for "fight between birds" on page 3, lines 14-17, and page 5, lines 8-10, to read as follows:

"Fight between birds" means a bird or birds pitted against another bird or birds [~~with the intent that the encounter will result~~] that results in

injury to one or more of the birds[-] or creates a substantial risk of causing injury to one or more of the birds.

Additionally, the Department recommends deleting "other" on page 3, line 3, between "a fight between" and "birds" as it appears that the term has been inadvertently added.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



JORDAN LOWE
DIRECTOR

MICHAEL VINCENT
Deputy Director
Administration

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1980
RELATING TO ANIMAL CRUELTY

Before the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Wednesday, February 21, 2024; 2:00 p.m.

State Capitol Conference Room 325, Via Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) **supports** House Bill 1980.

This bill establishes criminal penalties relating to the fighting birds to closely mirror laws relating to the illegal fighting of dogs.

This bill strengthens the criminal penalties for participating in illegal bird fighting as well as allowing a minor to attend these types of fights. Events involving the illegal fighting of animals not only involve the cruelty to the animals pressed into fighting, but typically involve a host of other illegal activities including gambling, promotion of various categories of drugs, and acts of violence. Compounding the problem is the fact that these illegal activities regularly involve various levels and bodies of organized crime thereby further endangering our community and those present.

While some will disregard the penalties of the illegal behavior, this bill will help defer participation in these events by many.

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

JON N. IKENAGA
STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER

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SUITE A-254
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96817

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H.B. No. 1980: RELATING TO ANIMAL CRUELTY

Chair David Tarnas
Vice Chair Gregg Takayama
Honorable Committee Members

The Office of the Public Defender **opposes** this bill.

Cockfighting in Hawai'i is a deeply engrained part of the community that traces its roots to immigrants who came to work on sugar and pineapple plantations more than a century ago. What to do about it has been a recurring discussion among generations of local lawmakers. This bill is a reaction to the terrible violence that erupted from a cockfight on Oahu last spring. The violence is indeed abhorrent and troubling, but it was made possible because the event itself was driven underground by making the cockfight a crime in the first place.

Criminalizing cockfighting—like possessing fireworks, using drugs, gambling, or even riding in the back of a pickup truck—does little to stop the activity itself. Making it against the law removes the activity from the normal regulations and protections of the law. That attracts more unlawful activity. If it was tolerated and lawfully permitted, the presence of police officers could ensure safety at these events. Making it a more severe criminal offense will only drive it further underground, make the events even more clandestine, and will only make it more conducive to unwanted criminal activity.

Parts of the bill are also unconstitutional. Long ago, the City and County of Honolulu criminalized going to cockfights and the Hawai'i Supreme Court held that unconstitutional because "[a]n ordinance or statute proscribing presence, whether at a cockfight, a gambling game, or a house of prostitution, is too vague to satisfy the

requirements of due process.” *State v. Abellano*, 50 Haw. 384, 386, 441 P.2d 333, 334 (1968).

While the Legislature should be and remain committed to ending violence, disrupting organized crime, and ensuring safety in the community, criminalizing a deeply engrained part of local culture has not worked in the past and is not likely to work in the future. This is not an ideal way to reduce crime.

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

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HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE **ML-HR**

February 21, 2024

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary
and Hawaiian Affairs
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 325
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Tarnas and Members:

SUBJECT: House Bill No. 1980, Relating to Animal Cruelty

I am Mike Lambert, Major of the Narcotics/Vice Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

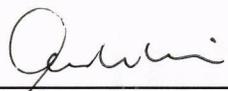
The HPD supports House Bill 1980, Relating to Animal Cruelty.

This bill creates penalties relating to the fighting of birds.

Illegal cock fighting is directly associated with a plethora of other criminal activities such as illegal gambling, illegal drug distribution, illegal firearms possession, endangerment of minors, and crimes of violence. The HPD believes that strengthening existing laws relating to the fighting of birds deters associated crimes. This bill helps create a safer community for everyone.

The HPD urges you to support House Bill 1980, Relating to Animal Cruelty. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

For 

Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police

Sincerely,


Mike Lambert
Narcotics/Vice Division

Rebecca V. Like
Prosecuting Attorney



Keola Siu
First Deputy
Prosecuting Attorney

OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

County of Kaua'i, State of Hawai'i

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808-241-1888 ~ FAX 808-241-1758
Victim/Witness Program 808-241-1898 or 800-668-5734

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Thirty-third State Legislature
Regular session of 2024
State of Hawai'i
Hearing date: February 21, 2024

RE: HB 1980, Relating to Animal Cruelty

Dear Chair Tarnas:

I write in support of this bill. The secondary impacts of this activity are especially concerning to law enforcement. The derbies are gambling operations, where controlled substances are frequently used and trafficked. Derbies bring criminal activities and enterprises into communities. This secondary impact is clearly apparent in the double homicide that took place at the derby in Maili in April of last year. With increased access to firearms in Hawai'i, these violent incidents are bound to reoccur.

I also support the suggested amendment to specify that "property" (section 5 of the proposed offense of Cruelty to Animals by Fighting Birds in the First Degree) is defined as in HRS section 712A-1. This will make it clear that real property is subject to civil forfeiture, pursuant to HRS Chapter 712A [Forfeiture], when used to facilitate the commission of Cruelty to Animals by Fighting Birds in the First Degree.

We respectfully request that action be taken to prevent the negative impacts of chicken fighting. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

/s/ Rebecca V. Like
Prosecuting Attorney
County of Kaua'i

Rebecca V. Like
Prosecuting Attorney



Keola Siu
First Deputy
Prosecuting Attorney

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The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Thirty-third State Legislature
Regular session of 2024
State of Hawai'i
Hearing date: February 21, 2024

RE: HB 1980, Relating to Animal Cruelty

Dear Chair Tarnas:

I respectfully submit this *supplemental testimony* in support of this bill.

I write to suggest a modified version of the proposed definition of "fight between birds." The current proposed definition requires actual injury to at least one bird, before an event can be deemed a "fight between birds." I suggest this definition (section (2) of the proposed offense of Cruelty to Animals by Fighting Birds in the First Degree), so that a bird-fighting event (such as one encountered by the police before any birds suffer actual injury) may be deemed a fight between birds:

"Fight between birds" means a bird or birds pitted against another bird or birds that results in injury to one or more of the birds or creates a substantial risk of causing injury to one or more of the birds.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

/s/ Rebecca V. Like
Prosecuting Attorney
County of Kaua'i

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 7:00:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chantell Moniz	HINA'S LEGACY RESCUE FOUNDATION	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Chantell Moniz, founder and President of Hina's Legacy Rescue Foundation. I support this bill because of the cruelty these animals endure to satisfy peoples hunger for money. The literally watch animals kill eachother for a big price. Imagine being in the animals place and fighting for ots life, while getting sliced up. Animals verses humans, we all bleed, we all hurt, we all have feelings, we all cry. They are like babies, we are responsible for their well being, yet the laws allow us the right to fail them each time. Please pass this bill. People are now dieing at these places over money, birds, and drugs. We need to weed them out.



Hawaiian Humane Society
People for animals. Animals for people.

2700 Waiialae Avenue Honolulu, Hawaii 96826
808.356.2200 • HawaiianHumane.org

Date: Feb. 20, 2024

To: Chair Rep. David A. Tarnas
Vice Chair Gregg Takayama
and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of HB 1980: Relating to Animal Cruelty
Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024, 2 p.m., Room 325 and Via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for House Bill 1980, which creates penalties relating to the fighting of birds.

On April 14, Gary Rabellizsa Jr., 34, and Cathy Rabellizsa, 59, were shot to death at a Maili cockfight. Three other men were wounded. According to news reports, the mass shooting may have been the result of rival factions warring over who tipped off the U.S. Department of Justice about an ongoing federal drug case.

Efforts to crack down on cockfighting have failed repeatedly over the years due to strong opposition from those who are making money from these vicious contests. It shouldn't be a surprise that people who are entertained by watching animals slash each other to pieces are also violent toward other human beings. Yet we still have a misdemeanor penalty for cockfighting.

It is time for a change. These animals are drugged and armed to make the fights as violent and bloody as possible for the entertainment of the crowd. The associated gambling, drug dealing and illegal weapons are a danger to the entire community. This is not a quaint cultural practice deserving of respect, it is a violent and lucrative criminal enterprise. The state has an urgent interest in shutting it down.

This measure is the result of a collaboration with local law enforcement – including police and prosecutors across the state - with the goal of providing them with more impactful tools to curb this threat to animals and people.

We are requesting three amendments based on recommendations from the Attorney General and county prosecutors:

Page 4, line 6, section (5) please add property "as defined in section 712A-1 and"

(5) Any property, ~~as defined in section 712A-1 and~~ including any bird or birds involved in a violation of this section, used, or intended for use in the commission of, attempt to commit, or conspiracy to commit an offense under this section, or that facilitated or assisted the activity, may be subject to forfeiture under chapter 712A, and subject to all costs associated with the care and housing of any live birds.

Page 3, line 16, section (2) strike "with the intent that the encounter will" given the state of mind is already recognized (knowingly, recklessly) and add "that results"

(2) For the purposes of this section, "fight between birds" means a bird or birds pitted against another bird or birds, ~~with the intent that the encounter will that results~~ in injury to one or more of the birds.

Page 5, line 9, section (2) strike "with the intent that the encounter will" given the state of mind is already recognized (knowingly, recklessly) and add "that results"

"Fight between birds" means a bird or birds pitted against another bird or birds ~~with the intent that the encounter will that results~~ in injury to one or more of the birds.

I urge you to pass HB 1980 with these amendments and punish those who profit off this blood sport in our state and endanger our communities.

Mahalo for your consideration.



February 21, 2024, 2pm

JHA Committee

RE: STRONG SUPPORT HB1980; Relating to Cruelty; Fighting Birds

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Takayama and Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee Members,

The Animal Welfare Institute **strongly supports HB1980**; which would create first and second degree penalties for the fighting of birds. We especially thank Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Takayama and House members for their introduction of this long-needed measure.

This measure is the product of months long discussions and input from the Honolulu Police Department VICE unit, County Prosecutors from Honolulu, Kauai, Hawaii Island and Maui, and statewide animal care and control agencies, to ensure effectiveness and enforceability.

A double homicide at a cockfight in Maili in April of 2023, reminds us of the connection between animal fighting and human violence. Unfortunately, this was yet one of many instances of violence that has occurred at these fights over many decades. A cockfight in Kealahou in May of 2023, where an estimated 800 people were in attendance, yielded 3 charges for illegal guns and drugs. Further, the US Attorney, Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) are currently prosecuting a years-long illegal cockfighting operation in Waianae (see media list below).

These cases demonstrate what state and federal law enforcement has long recognized-- animal fighting goes hand in hand with illegal gambling, drug trafficking, illegal firearms possession, organized crime and the endangerment of minors. Further, public health and state veterinarians have long recognized that animal fighting creates public and animal health risks associated with the trafficking of birds between properties, whom often carry zoonotic/transmissible diseases which could impact humans, agriculture and other avian species.

Cockfighting is a crime in every state and 42 states penalize it as a felony. It is illegal to be a spectator at fights in 43 states, possess or sell birds for fighting purposes in 39 states and possess animal fighting paraphernalia in 29 states. Cockfighting is a mere misdemeanor in Hawaii and offers NO penalties for the afore-mentioned offenses, including allowing children to attend such bloody spectacles.

Animal fighting is a federal felony offense under the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act, however, federal law enforcement, is ONLY able to intervene on state level animal fighting where there is a federal nexus, such as when animals or paraphernalia are involved in interstate

or international commerce. When federal agencies become involved, as demonstrated in the current investigation, it is often only after many years of investigation. Strong state laws are thus critically needed and as noted in the attached statements from the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and the National Sheriffs Association.

While Hawaii is one of only 8 states that lacks any felony level penalty for cockfighting, our state anti-dogfighting law has been a felony for more than a decade. Thus, HB1980 was modeled after our existing anti dog-fighting law, upgraded to a felony in 2011, and likewise proposes First degree (Class C felony) penalties for the most egregious offenses—those organizing, hosting or promoting a fight, including buying and selling the animals, or those who allow minors to attend the fights. Second degree (misdemeanor) penalties are proposed for those knowingly attending or gambling on a fight or possessing illegal animal fighting devices, and although *all of these offenses* are felonies under our state anti-dogfighting statute.

We respectfully request the below amendments as identified by the Attorney General's office and county prosecutors to further ensure enforcement of this important measure:

On Page 4, line 6, section (5) please add property "as defined in section 712A-1 and"

(5) Any property, as defined in section 712A-1 and including any bird or birds involved in a violation of this section, used, or intended for use in the commission of, attempt to commit, or conspiracy to commit an offense under this section, or that facilitated or assisted the activity, may be subject to forfeiture under chapter 712A, and subject to all costs associated with the care and housing of any live birds.

Page 3, line 16, section (2) strike "with the intent that the encounter will" given the state of mind is already recognized (knowingly, recklessly) and add "that may result in injury..."

(2) For the purposes of this section, "fight between birds" means a bird or birds pitted against another bird or birds, ~~with the intent that the encounter will~~ that may result in injury to one or more of the birds.

Page 5, line 9, section (2) strike "with the intent that the encounter will" given the state of mind is already recognized (knowingly, recklessly) and add "that may result in injury..."

"Fight between birds" means a bird or birds pitted against another bird or birds ~~with the intent that the encounter will~~ that may result in injury to one or more of the birds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill to protect the safety, health and welfare of our entire community.

Inga Gibson

On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute

Media sampling of recent cases:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-hi/pr/six-arrested-conspiracy-and-operation-illegal-cockfighting-gambling-business>

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2023/11/23/federal-judge-denies-bail-accused-west-oahu-gang-leader/>

<https://apnews.com/article/hawaii-cockfighting-shooting-death-7cfeda7617dabf9e1e1907d3b76cf132>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/04/21/hawaii-cockfight-shooting/11711529002/>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2023/04/the-battle-against-cockfighting-in-hawaii-lax-enforcement-helps-foster-an-attitude-of-whats-wrong-with-it/>

<https://bigislandnow.com/2023/03/06/800-attend-big-island-cockfight-four-men-charged-with-firearms-drug-offenses/>

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2023/04/hawaiis-cockfight-economy-is-worth-millions-of-dollars-a-year/>



ASSOCIATION OF
PROSECUTING
ATTORNEYS

Statement of Principles on Animal Fighting

As a national association dedicated to supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of prosecutors in their efforts to create safer communities, ensure justice, and uphold public safety, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA) hereby submits this statement of principles regarding the prosecution of animal fighting crimes.

Recognizing animals' capacity to suffer, every state's criminal code and the federal government punish animal fighting at the felony level.

There is a direct link between the criminal acts of animal fighting and other serious felonies, such as illegal firearms and gambling, drug distribution, money laundering, aggravated assaults, child pornography, human trafficking, and gang activity. Experts recognize the need for higher penalties for animal fighting and its associated activities, including the trafficking of animals and being a spectator to a fight. Holding those perpetrators to felony-level penalties would assign more accountability for the damage they have caused to their communities.

Animal fighting is a crime of violence, injuring and killing thousands of animals per year. It is a crime that warrants felony accountability. Animal fighting perpetuates a climate of violence, fear, and intimidation to both those involved as well as witnesses and the larger community.



2021-08

THE NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS THE CHILD AND ANIMAL ABUSE DETECTION AND REPORTING ACT

WHEREAS, the nation's sheriffs, as the highest constitutional law enforcement officers in many counties, cities, and parishes throughout the country, are often called out to cases of intimate partner violence (IPV)¹, defined as a "pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner²;"

WHEREAS, between 3.3 million and 10 million American children were exposed to IPV³, and one-third of children who witness IPV are victims themselves⁴;

WHEREAS, multiple studies have shown that IPV and animal abuse are often co-occurring, with between 49% to 71% of domestic violence victims reporting pets were threatened, harmed, or killed by the perpetrator⁵, while one 2017 study noted 89% of victims reported some form of animal abuse by a domestic violence perpetrator⁶;

WHEREAS, animal abuse is linked to numerous Adverse Childhood Experiences/Events (ACEs), the exposure to which causes biomedical, emotional, and social problems in children, including mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, and diseases like pulmonary lung disease and hepatitis⁷;

¹ A 2009 report by Andrew Klein estimates that between 15% and 50% of calls to law enforcement are domestic violence-related. Practical Implications of Current Domestic Violence Research: For Law Enforcement, Prosecutors and Judges," National Institute of Justice, June 2009, pg. 1, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/225722.pdf>

² What is the Definition of Domestic Violence?, FindLaw.com, Oct. 3, 2018, available at <https://www.findlaw.com/family/domestic-violence/what-is-domestic-violence.html>

³ Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, *Rates of Child Abuse and Child Exposure to Domestic Violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.rcdvcpc.org>.

⁴ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2015), *Domestic violence and children*. Retrieved from [ncadv.org](https://www.ncadv.org).

⁵ Facts and Myths about Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse, Animal Welfare Institute, <https://awionline.org/content/facts-and-myths-about-domestic-violence-and-animal-abuse>

⁶ The Link Between Cruelty to Animals and Violence Toward Humans, Animal Legal Defense Fund, <https://aldf.org/article/the-link-between-cruelty-to-animals-and-violence-toward-humans-2/>

⁷ Barbara W. Boat, *Connections among adverse childhood experiences, exposure to animal cruelty and toxic stress: what do professionals need to consider?* Retrieved from <https://www.ashlandmhrb.org/>.

Additionally, exposure to animal cruelty at a young age has been shown to increase the likelihood of acts of animal cruelty from adolescence into adulthood, which is a “sentinel indicator and predictor” linked to a higher likelihood of violence towards humans⁸;

WHEREAS, information from child protection agencies may assist law enforcement in detecting cases of child abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence, allowing for a more effective, coordinated response to these threats to public safety; and

WHEREAS, information on exposure to animal abuse by children and adolescents could lead to early intervention and prevention of later acts of animal cruelty and human violence;

WHEREAS, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) does not currently include statistics on animal cruelty cases in the national clearinghouse of information on child abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 763, the “Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act”⁹ would amend CAPTA to include animal abuse incidences in the information collected by the national clearinghouse.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Sheriffs’ Association recognizes the association between child and animal abuse and supports the passage of H.R. 763, the “Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act” to improve public safety measures by curtailing domestic violence.

⁸ National Link Coalition, *What is the link?* Retrieved from <https://nationallinkcoalition.org>.

⁹ GovTrack.us. (2021). H.R. 763 — 117th Congress: Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act. Retrieved from <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/117/hr763>



PRESS RELEASE

Six Arrested for Conspiracy and Operation of An Illegal Cockfighting Gambling Business

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Hawaii

HONOLULU – Edward Caspino, 46, of Waianae, William Caspino, 48, of Waianae, Lavern Joseph, 71, of Waianae, and Kerilyn Keliinoi, 31, of Waianae were arraigned today on a four-count Indictment returned by a federal grand jury on October 26, 2023. All four pled not guilty, and trial was set for January 17, 2024. Two other defendants, Fauston Aragon, Jr., 65, of Pearl City, and Howard Unebasami, 80, of Waianae, are expected to appear later this week.

Counts 1 and 2 of the Indictment charge all six defendants with conspiracy and the operation of an illegal gambling business. According to the Indictment, the defendants conducted, financed, managed, supervised, directed or owned an illegal gambling business at a property in Waianae. The group allegedly hosted multiple, large-scale chicken fights, called “derbies,” at the property between June 2020 and March 2023, that involved gambling on the fights, as well as other unlawful games of chance. Count 3 charges Edward Caspino with the operation of illegal game rooms.

If convicted, each defendant faces a term of imprisonment of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, and supervised release of up to three years on each of Counts 1, 2, and 3.

Edward Caspino also made an initial appearance today on a separate Criminal Complaint in

which he is charged with three counts of distribution of 50 grams or more of methamphetamine. According to the Criminal Complaint, on three occasions in July 2021, Edward Caspino distributed approximately one pound of methamphetamine to an individual working with federal law enforcement. Each of these counts carries a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years incarceration, a maximum sentence of life in prison, and a fine of up to \$10,000,000.

The charges in the Indictment and Criminal Complaint are merely accusations, and each of the charged individuals is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. In the case of conviction, any sentence would be imposed by a United States District Judge based on the statutory sentencing factors and the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The charges are the result of a joint investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Homeland Security – Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Coast Guard Investigative Service. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael F. Albanese.

Contact

Elliot Enoki

Elliot.Enoki@usdoj.gov

Updated November 15, 2023

Component

[USAO -Hawaii](#)

Related Content

PRESS RELEASE



2023-05

**NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION ACKNOWLEDGES
THAT ANIMAL CRUELTY IS A CRIME OF VIOLENCE**

WHEREAS, the National Sheriffs' Association has long recognized the seriousness of animal cruelty crimes, and petitioned the FBI to add these crimes as a separate category to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS); and

WHEREAS, in response to the National Sheriffs' Association, as well as organizations such as the Animal Welfare Institute, the FBI approved adding animal cruelty offenses to NIBRS in 2014, and began collecting data on these crimes in 2016; and

WHEREAS, the FBI defines animal cruelty as “intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly taking an action that mistreats or kills any animal without just cause, such as torturing, mutilation, maiming, poisoning, or abandonment; and

WHEREAS, all 50 states and four territories have enacted felony animal cruelty statutes for first time offenders; and

WHEREAS, the National Sheriff's Association has been working since 2015 to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies to recognize that animal cruelty crimes can serve as a precursor to more violent crimes, as a co-occurring crime to other types of offenses, and as an interrelated crime to offenses such as domestic violence and elder abuse; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team recognized that animal cruelty, particularly when premeditated in nature, is a novel aggression warning behavior, and that the reporting, investigating, and prosecuting of animal cruelty cases may help minimize violent acts toward humans, including terrorism;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Sheriffs' Association recognizes that animal cruelty is a novel aggression warning behavior and that designating animal cruelty as a “violent crime” or “crime of violence” would improve public safety.

FEATURES THAT RAISE THE INDEX OF SUSPICION OF ORGANIZED COCKFIGHTING

Cockfighting season usually runs from late November through the beginning of July as birds are not fought during molting, which occurs between late July and mid-November.

Veterinarians may encounter organized cockfighting in one of two ways:

1. Rooster(s) presenting for medical care with medical history findings or physical exam findings suspicious of organized cockfighting that prompts a good faith report to law enforcement.
2. Request from an investigating agency to participate in a scene investigation and/or to render an opinion regarding alterations and/or injuries present on a live or deceased rooster(s) suspected to be involved in organized cockfighting.

Basic Terminology

- **Cock:** male chicken, which has completed its first molt, typically 2 years of age or older
- **Hen:** female chicken
- **Rooster:** male chicken
- **Stag:** young male chicken, which has not yet completed its first molt, typically 18 months of age or younger

Birds associated with organized cockfighting may fall into one of two categories:

1. Breeding
 2. Conditioning/Fighting
- A fighting operation may include only one or any combination of these categories
 - The medical findings (i.e., sex, age, injuries) will vary based on the type of operation

Styles of Cockfighting

- **Knives:** roosters are fought with only one knife, typically attached to the left leg
 - Long knives (may be referred to as Filipino slashers)
 - Short knives (may be referred to as Mexican slashers)
- **Gaffs:** roosters are fought with a pair of gaffs, one on each leg
 - Metal gaff (curved metal blade)
 - Acrylic gaff (about the size of a slightly curved golf tee)
- **Naked heeled:** roosters fought with their natural spurs, which may be sharpened

Scene Investigation

- **Housing**
 - Sexually mature male birds maintained in isolation from other sexually mature male birds
 - May be tethered or housed in an individual enclosure
 - May be housed with hen(s) for breeding purposes
- **More roosters than hens in the population**
- **Paraphernalia associated with organized cockfighting**
 - Pharmaceuticals and nutritional supplements
 - Training and fighting- Sparing muffs, fighting pit (may be disassembled), knives, gaffs, etc.

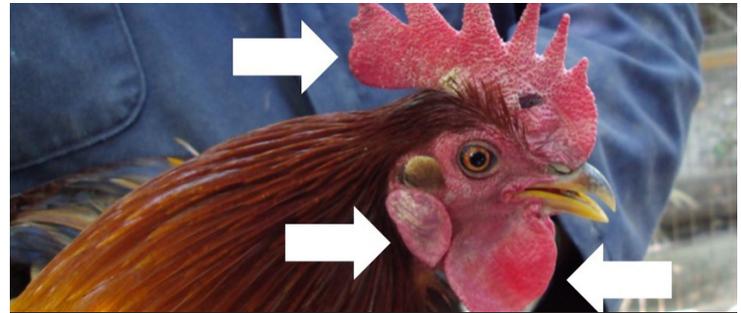


Image 1 – Comb, wattles and earlobes intact



Image 2 – Comb, wattles and earlobes removed



Image 3 – Natural spur



Image 4 – Spur cut down to approx. 1 cm in length



Image 5 – One spur cut down to approx. 1 cm in length (top)

FEATURES THAT RAISE THE INDEX OF SUSPICION OF ORGANIZED COCKFIGHTING

Signalment

- Hybrid strains related to Old English Game, in addition to Oriental Game fowl, such as the American Game are the predominant breed of fighting birds in the U.S.
- Only roosters that have reached sexual maturity are fought
- Roosters will typically begin training/conditioning around 1 year of age or older
- Cocks are typically 4-6 lbs. and well-conditioned (BCS 2-3/3)

Physical Exam Findings

- Removal of all or a portion of the comb, wattles, and ear lobes
- One or both spurs cut down to approximately 1 cm in length (to attach a knife or gaff) or natural spurs may be sharpened
- Dermal Injuries in Roosters that have been fought
 - Primarily located on the head
 - Injured tissue can be edematous and contused, especially peri-orbitally
 - Wounds can also be present on the lateral and ventral aspects of the body, and the legs
 - » Wounds are due to either blunt trauma or sharp trauma
 - » Blunt force injury can be caused by a bird's beak, as it pecks and pulls. Such injuries have been reported to create "hour-glass-like" lesion
 - » Abrasions, also a blunt force injury, can be caused by the bird's claws, natural spurs or acrylic gaff
 - » Sharp force injuries, such as stab or incised wounds can be caused by gaffs or knives
 - Occasionally, if a bird survives a fight, healing wounds or scarring may be observed. This is dependent on the style of fighting, as the use of steel gaffs or knives increases the lethality of the fight
- Bird aggressive and human aggressive behavior
- Permanent or temporary identification (may be used in isolation or in combination):
 - Leg band- Metal band or plastic band placed around one leg of various colors. May contain identifying information, such as a name, identification number, address or phone number. Bird may have more than one leg band present
 - Wing band- Metal band placed through the craniomedial skin of the wing (featherless area). Bands can be various colors and may contain identifying information on one or both sides. Bird may have one or two wing bands present
 - Toe punch- Typically around 5mm in diameter circular skin defect in the interdigital webbing between two toes. One or both feet may be affected, and one or two punches may be present on a single foot. Typically, there is a record of what the toe punches indicate, similar to ear notching in pigs
 - Removal of interdigital webbing- Similar to toe punches, the interdigital skin may also be removed. One or both feet may be affected, and one or two interdigital webbings may be present on a single foot.
 - Tattoo- May occasionally observe a tattoo, typically placed the craniomedial skin of the wing (featherless area), on either the lateral or medial aspect of the wing

Diagnostic Findings

- Anabolic steroids (cocks in training or recently fought)
 - Consider testing if suspected to have been recently fought or being prepared to fight
- Birds maintained for fighting purposes are often infected with a variety of respiratory diseases, some of which may be reportable, including but not limited to:
 - Mycoplasmosis
 - Infectious laryngotracheitis
 - Infectious bronchitis virus
 - Pox virus
- Testing for these and other disease processes, such as Pullorum and Avian Influenza, should be considered and discussed with the State Veterinarian

These are features that may raise your index of suspicion. No one item is indicative of involvement in organized cockfighting, but a closer look into a situation maybe warranted when these findings appear repeatedly or in combination.

References

- Christiansen S, Dantzler F, Goodwin J, et al. The Final Round, A Law Enforcement Primer for the Investigation of Cockfighting and Dogfighting: The Humane Society of the United States.
- Touroo R, Reisman R. Animal Fighting. Veterinary Forensic Pathology, Volume 2: Springer, 2018;97-119.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/17/2024 9:04:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marian Hussenbux	Animal Interfaith Alliance in Britain	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaiian Humane Society has worked for years to stop this cruelty but there has been strong opposition from those making money from these vicious contests and the associated gambling.

Given the string of murders associated with cockfights, now could be the best time to punish those who profit off this blood sport in your state and endanger your communities.

We understand that this measure is the result of a collaboration with local law enforcement – including police and prosecutors across the state - with the goal of providing them with more impactful tools to curb this threat to animals and people.

We give our strong support for this measure which would bring Hawai'i into line with almost all US states.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 3:52:34 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Rabb	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members:

I am writing in strong support of HB1980 by Rep. Tarnas which increase penalties for cockfighting. The provision which prohibits minors from attending cockfights is of extreme importance. Children who witness and/or participate in animal cruelty are more likely to perpetrate violence against other animals and against humans. Adults should be held accountable for endangering children by taking them to occurrences like this. Police officers continue to report gambling, firearms, and drug distribution at these dangerous events. We are all aware of the murders associated with cockfights last year. This just must stop.

People might argue that cockfighting has particular cultural significance. I used to live in the American South. People there claim that cockfighting is part of their heritage and culture. Some things just do not need to be passed along from generation to generation.

Mahalo for allowing me to express my very deep feelings against torture of animals. Please pass HB1980.

Renee Rabb

Hawaiian Paradise Park

Keaau, HI 96749

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 6:43:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Animal Rights Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Animal Fighting Contests are cruel, demeaning and should be banned in Hawai'i. In the 50 plus years I have lived here, there have been multiple attempts by this Body to stop barbaric animal contests, and it is beyond time to recognize that animal fights are cruel; they are usually held in secret locations and are accompanied by drugs, prostitution and illegal gambling. A wink and a nod are not acceptable in 2024. Please do the right thing and pass this bill. Mahalo!



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

1255 23rd St. NW
Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
P 202-452-1100
F 202-778-6132
humanesociety.org

Date: February 20, 2024

To: Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama and Honorable Members of the Committee

Submitted by: Susan Rhee, Hawaii State Director, The Humane Society of the United States

RE: Testimony in support of HB 1980: Relating to Animal Cruelty
Wednesday, February 21, 2021, 2:00 pm, Capitol Room 325

Susan Atherton
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Erin Frackleton
Chief Operating Officer

Nicole Paquette
Chief Programs
and Policy Officer

Alexa Herndon
Chief People Officer

Miguel Abi-Hassan
Chief Animal Rescue,
Care and Sanctuary Officer

Johanie V. Parra
Secretary

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and our members, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1980 to establish strong penalties against cockfighting in Hawaii. Cockfighting is a cruel and barbaric practice that has no place in a civilized society. It not only inflicts immense suffering on the animals involved but also fosters a culture of violence and disregard for the law.

Like dog fighting, cockfighting exists for the purpose of gambling and entertainment. It is a cruel and inexcusable criminal industry that profits from violent cruelty to animals. It involves pitting two animals against each other with sharp metal weapons affixed to their legs to increase suffering while people who pay to attend the fight wager on which bird will live and which one will die.

Cockfighting perpetuates and normalizes violence, and desensitizes individuals, especially children, to the suffering of living beings. If we tolerate or ignore this cruel practice, we send the message that animal abuse is acceptable, undermining efforts to promote compassion and empathy in our society.

Beyond the inherent cruelty inflicted upon the animals, cockfighting also poses significant risks to public safety. Cockfighting events often attract criminal elements, including illegal gambling, drug trafficking and money laundering. These gatherings can become breeding grounds for violence and organized crime, threatening the safety and well-being of our communities. In 2023, [Big Island Police Chief Ben Moszkowicz said in an interview](#), “Almost every single major player on the chicken fighting scene here is also a major player in terms of illegal narcotic distribution here in this county”.

Cockfighting may also pose risks to public health and the food supply, as it can facilitate the spread of diseases among birds and potentially to humans. Close proximity between birds in crowded conditions increases the likelihood of transmitting diseases such as Avian Influenza and virulent New Castle Disease which could devastate the island’s poultry and egg production and wild bird population.

While cockfighting may have cultural significance in some communities, societal norms evolve, and practices that inflict harm on animals are increasingly seen as unacceptable. Outlawing cockfighting, just as we’ve done with dog fighting, reflects a growing recognition of the need to protect animals.

It is imperative that we take decisive action to combat cockfighting and send a clear message that such behavior will not be tolerated in Hawaii. I urge you to support penalties for cockfighting that include strong penalties, a prohibition on trafficking birds for fighting and forfeiture of animals and assets involved in this illegal activity.

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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Together, we have the power to end the senseless suffering inflicted upon countless animals and uphold the values of compassion, justice, and respect for all living beings. Thank you for considering my testimony and for protecting the welfare of animals in our state.

Sincerely,

Susan Rhee, HSUS

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 9:55:04 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ilene Cohen Harrington	Domestic Violence Hurts Animals and People	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We support stopping cock fights.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 12:37:37 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gary Yabuta	Hawaii High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Gary Yabuta, and I am the Executive Director of the Hawaii High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)--a grant-funded program of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Executive Office of the President. The Hawaii HIDTA supports drug interdiction and demand reduction strategies by developing collaborative federal, state, and local enforcement task forces and prevention programs throughout the Hawaii, including the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii County, Maui County, and Kauai County. I was also the Chief of Police for the Maui Police Department and I have 45 years in law enforcement experience.

I support HB 1980 as this act is a pioneer attempt to criminalize cockfighting in Hawaii, which I know is linked to violent organized crime, gambling abuse, and narcotic trafficking. Local law enforcement cannot curtail cockfighting activity without meaningful laws and authority. This heinous form of inhumane sport will continue under current law.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/16/2024 12:19:40 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patty Kahanamoku-Teruya	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives, my name is Patty Kahanamoku-Teruya, resident of Nanakuli Hawaiian Homestead, a 29 year former Chair of the Wai'anae and Nanakuli Neighborhood Board, and former Department of Hawaiian Homestead Commissioner for O'ahu. I'm submitting testimony in support to the HB1980 relating to animal cruelty and support tougher penalties for the illegal animal fighting birds called "cock fighting"! Through the years of my leadership on the Neighborhood Board, and DHHL Commission, I have heard many years of concerns in my community of the Wai'anae Coast, and the fear that residents have had of even speaking up of the numerous activities near their homes, being threatened and locked in their homes. These illegal cock fighting derby bringings numerous outsiders from all over the island, a lot of drinking, loud music after 10 pm, side bar gambling, the smell of meth, marijuana and coke distribution in the arena. You have huge guys watching the road ways and who enters and out from the site with weapons. A flying drone also oversees the sky to alarm any vehicle of HPD near the premises and vehicles blocking the roadway to slow down HPD's presents. I know this off hand, because I drove and witness several sites where I was also invited in the area of Nanakuli Hakimo Road - but also fear my life thinking I would not make it out safe. Further some of our D-8 HPD officers are called by 911 complaints to the site but either show up so late or show up at the site shaking hands to the security guy at the arena, without any investigation or coming out of their vehicle. These are shared by many adjacent neighbors who have witness this by our HPD for some time, this is why these activity gathering never stopped or enforced. **This is a very fearful game for those that reside near these illegal chicken fights activities.**

This is an illegal activity - this is NOT a cultural activity like many would state. This brings so many bad elements to a community, the numerous fights, the late night of unsafe gathering, prostitution, people are high on drugs, gun violence, even kids and teens from ages 09 years to 18 years old attend these fights, neighbors are locked in their homes of fear and most of it leaves the oppression to our people in our community. Should we live so unsafe because our Legislators didn't think this Bill was important to pass and support?

I support HB1980 and find that illegal animal fighting is a criminal activity and needs much more punishable consequences. "Keep our Community Safe and do what is right!"

Mahalo Pumehana, I, Patty Kahanamoku Teruya, approves this message!

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/16/2024 9:27:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie McLaughlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill which will help animals in Hawaii from cruelty by humans.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/17/2024 11:42:49 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane E Arnold	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB1980. Thank youj.

Jane Arnold

1763 Iwi Way, Apt D

Honolulu, HI 96816

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/17/2024 12:14:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Graham-Wood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1980. I live at Sunset Beach, Oahu.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/17/2024 12:31:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carole R. Richelieu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support. About time action be taken regarding this barbaric practice. Provides more impactful tools to curb this threat to animals and people.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/17/2024 2:27:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bonnie Gollero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

At legislative hearings, any self-admitted cock fighter rallying in-person in opposition to a bill to increase punishment for this illegal crime, should be arrested on the spot. Lawmakers should directly ask the pertinent questions. What is your name and resident address, do you cock fight, and where (the address)? Sufficient law enforcement should be present to make immediate arrests. Their admission of guilt will be on video tape, witnessed by the committee of lawmakers, which would be irrefutable evidence for prosecutors.

Any written opposing testimony with sufficient evidence should be treated the same.

Not only is the sadistic mutilations to the roosters the utmost abominable acts of animal cruelty, but the alarming numbers of violent cock fighters are solely responsible for the proliferation of feral chickens that have infested our neighborhoods statewide. There has been repeated testimony from the Hawaiian Humane Society on this.

This shouldn't be happening, at our legislature, in our neighborhoods. There is need for transparency for the public to know what's really going on. No one should be opposing a bill to penalize violators for this horrific crime. Let's get cockfighters off our streets, mandatory one year jail time, \$5,000 fine; conduct repeated raids to permanently end cockfighting; identify areas, homes conducting fights, forfeit these owner's properties; and keep our neighborhoods safe.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/17/2024 7:20:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The people of Hawaii will not accept this. It is against our Culture. Only COMMUNIST go against the people will. We the people will not Stand for this attack on our Culture!!!!

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/18/2024 9:55:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Bishop	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas and Committee members,

Please pass this much needed, humane bill.

Mahalo,
Elizabeth

Oahu, Hawaii

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/18/2024 11:09:20 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen Sam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House Committee,

My name is Eileen Sam, I'm resident of Kaimuki neighborhood, and my district rep is Bertrand Kobayashi. I am in support of HB1980. I know cockfighting has a deep history in Hawaii but it is time that our lawmakers take a stance on specifically making this practice illegal. The animals are indeed suffering in vain for people's gambling habit and also it promote violence amongst communities. How many more shootings do we need to hear before someone takes action? I know so many cases of animal abuse are especially prevalent in our West Oahu communities and we need to do a better job on setting safer boundaries for these communities.

I am in support of passing this bill in order to take a step closer on eliminating animal cruelty.

Mahalo,

Eileen

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/18/2024 1:53:38 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Representative Tarnas, Vice Chair Representative Takayama and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs.

Please support HB 1980 which creates penalties related to the fighting of birds. A segment of Hawaii's population claims that fighting of birds is a part of their culture. Hawaii has its own culture, too. As a state we uphold everyone's right to safety and health, and generally, we have been a leader in animal welfare. The fighting of birds threatens safety and health, and animal welfare. The bill's language clearly states the problems of allowing the fighting of birds, and I absolutely agree with these statements. Please help Hawaii join the other 42 states which, to my understanding, have a felony penalty for fighting of birds and a penalty for attending a bird fight or allowing a minor to attend a bird fight. Furthermore, it's my understanding that law enforcement - police and prosecutors - collaborated on this bill to provide them with more impact in curbing the threat to people and animals. Please support law enforcement who dedicate their lives to our safety, and vote to pass HB 1980.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 8:10:26 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Culbertson	Big Island Reef Keepers hui	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

YES! Please pass HB 1980 now!

R A Culbertson

Honokaa

Member, Big Island Reef Keepers hui

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 8:28:19 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support. Cockfighting is inhumane, is cruelty to animals, is a blood sport, and must be stopped. News reports in recent years have linked some murders to cockfighting.

Please move this bill forward.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 8:30:47 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JOHNNY KELLY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In case you don't know cockfighting AND dog fighting is illegal in ALL 50 states and it is a federal crime. United States Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. Section 2156, AND 2160. So what is the problem law makers? Why is my state allowed to break federal laws and allow horrible, non caring greedy people makes millions ever year and turn their heads to cockfighting and dog fighting? Why are fighting animals allowed a free pass to come into my state from the mainland and other countries for the soul purpose of fighting? Stop this insanity!

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 9:46:16 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Verna Kong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1980. Our laws protecting animals in our community, including birds victimized through cockfighting, must be strengthened through effective penalties to be better enforced.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 1:39:34 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lee Cuccia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support. There should be no reason for animal cruelty to exist. How people can be entertained is beyond my understanding.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 3:51:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Leveen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a rooster. I am a member of the animal kingdom just like you. I experience pain and pleasure just like you. I enjoy my community of friends and family just like you. I value my life and freedom just like you.

Like you, I don't want to be caught, tied up, shackled, caged, and forced to fight, often to the death, against my will.

Like you, I don't want to be used by someone more dominant than myself for their own entertainment, gratification, or profit.

Like you, I don't want my life to be so insignificant and devalued that my pain and death mean nothing to you.

I ask you to see my beauty as a living being. I ask you to see my right as a living being to a natural life free from enslavement. I ask you to imagine yourself living my life, vulnerable and helpless against those more powerful than me.

When you do, I hope your generosity, compassion, and concern for the well-being of your fellow animals will guide you to protect me. You will bring dignity to yourself as well as to me.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 4:09:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sunshine Eckstrom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Fighting birds should absolutely be illegal and to be honest, I can't believe it isn't already. It should be penalized severely in all its forms (conducting bird fights, breeding for bird fights, capturing birds for bird fights, cruelty during training for bird fights, etc.). Nothing good happens to animals or people in situations where bird fighting is happening. And no community should allow this type of backwards animal cruelty to go unpunished.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 4:32:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JOANNE PARKER	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear all considering this bill,

Using animals of any kind, just for sport, is extremely cruel and unjust.

Not only is it inhumane for the animals, it creates an environment of gambling, illegal drugs, guns, knives, just the attitude of "skirting" the law.

If it's not possible to completely outlaw, not just cock fighting, all game fighting, then stiffer penalties must be created and enforced.

Mahalo for supporting this bill,

Joanne Parker

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 7:26:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ginger edmunds	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We NEED to strengthen the penalty for bird fighting to felonies, why is Hawaii only one of 8 states to be so lax?? This is not culture this is cruelty and abuse of animals and the proliferation of criminal activity creating more criminal activity. I support this bill and it is about time that Hawaii get serious about bird fighting.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 9:46:21 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Crozer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hopefully this cruel practice of betting on fighting roosters can be curtailed - at least here in Hawaii.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 11:16:10 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shawna Michelle Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm writing you today to plead with you to increase the penalties for cockfighting, as it's cruel and breeds violence and crime. Even birds who aren't killed during cockfights suffer terribly. Most roosters on a gamefowl farm live tied to a stake, barrel or small wooden hut. They are often injected with steroids and adrenaline boosting drugs and, for two to three weeks prior to a fight, are kept in a small dark box to isolate them from other animals and deprive them of stimuli and natural behavior.

Regardless of how exhausted or injured they become during a fight, the birds cannot escape from the fighting pit. Common injuries include punctured lungs, broken bones and pierced eyes, yet they are forced to continue to fight. The razor-sharp steel blades/gaffs tied to the birds' legs are so sharp and dangerous that cockfighters themselves have been killed when accidentally slashed by their own birds.

As federal and state law enforcement can attest, cockfights are often associated with other criminal activities such as illegal gambling, drug trafficking, gang activity and illegal weapon sales. Federal investigations have uncovered international drug cartels running sophisticated cockfighting operations as a means to distribute heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and opioids.

Because of the large sums of money involved, cockfight-related assaults, home invasions and even murders are not uncommon. Cockfight derbies often attract hundreds of people engaging in a range of criminal activity which creates a dangerous situation for all involved.

The presence of children at these events is particularly disturbing and normalizes violence and teaches children to tolerate, and even celebrate, the suffering of animals. Heritage cannot be a defense for inexcusable, intentional abuse for the sake of entertainment. Cockfights are centered on animal suffering and apologists try to dress it up as tradition to disguise and excuse the egregious cruelty they inflict. By passing strong laws against animal fighting, we can not only prevent animals from suffering, but also make our community a safer place.

Thank you,

Shawna Michelle Davis

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/19/2024 11:28:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Nandoskar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support!

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 12:16:59 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

H.B.1980 is a critical measure that I strongly recommend legislators vote to approve. Cockfighting is a genuinely tragic practice that results in suffering for all involved. Increasing the punishment to match other animal fighting crimes is wholly appropriate, and matches what nearly every other state in the country has already done. If the legislature believes that this practice should be deterred, as it evidently does by the existing statute, then there's no reason that punishment for participation should be a trivial misdemeanor - that is not a significant deterrent, particularly for a statute that is already not stringently or proactively enforced. The risk of a felony conviction might finally provide a sufficient deterrent, and reduce the number of birds harmed in particularly gruesome ways. Please consider supporting this measure and advancing the safety of both the birds and the community. Thank you.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 6:47:46 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rene Umberger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Urging your **STRONG SUPPORT** for this bill, which as explained in the preamble, is needed because "illegal animal fighting is directly associated with other criminal activities such as illegal gambling, illegal firearms possession, illegal drug distribution, endangerment of minors, and human violence, as evidenced by a double homicide that occurred at an illegal bird fighting operation in Maili, Oahu, in April of 2023."

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 8:24:51 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kinsley McEachern	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e House Members,

My name is Kinsley McEachern and I am resident of Kailua on the island of O‘ahu. I am deeply in support of this proposed bill HB 1980. The state of Hawai'i desperately needs stronger animal cruelty laws and bills to ensure protection and humane treatment of non human animals. This bill is necessary to protect birds like roosters who suffer greatly in cock fighting throughout the islands. Coming from Florida to work in the conservation field first on Hawai'i island and now on O'ahu, I have seen unreal numbers of cock breeding operations in individuals' backyards and was shocked and appalled to learn that this inhumane and cruel practice of cockfighting is not regulated by local government or the activities enforced by law enforcement .

The state of Hawai'i needs to strengthen the law to have stronger protections for living beings like these roosters who are incarcerated, mutilated, and often killed to fight, and implement provisions for holding those who are involved in such deleterious and harmful practices accountable and also to help prevent those individuals from taking part in this. We need a stronger law to make the charges of being found complicit in these activities something that deters residents from getting involved in these activities. And so that local government and law enforcement will be encouraged to make this a priority issue in the community and will be forced to take policy and enforcement action on these harmful activities.

The way the community treats its animals is a direct reflection of how the community functions psychologically. Dangerous actions and cruelty towards animals is not just limited to animals who suffer but always mirrors how the individuals will act toward other humans and the community. By promoting and endorsing dangerous practices like cockfighting our state is sacrificing the wellbeing and social evolution of the community and instilling ethics of harm and use and abuse of other beings. In order to ensure a community is safe, well and can be equitable and thrive for all , we must uphold and support practices of well being for all of our community members , non human animals alike.

I understand that there is a lot of livelihood coming from cockfighting to support individuals and their families , so I suggest our state allocate more funds to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of local residents and prioritize residents' wellbeing over tourists. A state minimum wage increase to more accurately mirror the cost of living in Hawai'i, subsidizing local agricultural systems to help ensure healthy food necessary to survive and can be afforded by residents, and much more affordable housing situations and rental options are more to the root of the issue than

endorsing a harmful and dangerous activity like cockfighting.

In the words of Mahatma Ghandi, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Please endorse humane treatment of animals in our community , which in turn helps enhance the wellbeing and safety of our individuals in the communities and state, please support HB 1980.

Mahalo Nui,

Kinsley McEachern

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 9:02:56 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill needs to become law for many reasons. Birds used in cockfights suffer terribly. They are kept tied to stakes, and in small, dark enclosures. They are deprived of stimuli and natural behaviors. When forced to fight, their eyes are gouged out, their bodies and organs get sliced open by the 3inch long razors tied to their legs, and at least one of the birds is routinely expected to die from this torture. (Please don't let opponents of this bill argue that this is "natural behavior". Roosters in nature quickly establish pecking orders, to keep the peace and establish territories, and severe physical violence or injury is very rare.)

Humans also suffer many ill effects from cockfighting, which promotes illegal gambling, illegal weapon sales, illegal drug trafficking, and illegal gang activity. Also, the fact that children are exposed to these "family" events is very upsetting. Children then learn that these activities are "normal", and that it's okay to condone the torture of animals.

In my personal experience, I live in Palolo, and while taking a walk near a schoolyard in my neighborhood, saw 5 boys in their early teens stuffing a young rooster into a backpack. When I asked them what they were doing to the animal, they yelled and swore at me to mind my own business, and ran away. This is not behavior that we want to see in 12 and 13 year olds, and I fear that poor animal was fodder for a training fight.

I am Filipina American. I know that forcing animals to fight each other was part of Filipino culture in the past. But many Pinoys in my community, both young and old, don't hold with cockfighting. Our cultures and traditions can grow, improve and become more humane to others. Just because previous generations did something doesn't mean we should let violent, harmful behavior continue unexamined. "Traditional" does not necessarily mean "right".

Please pass this important bill.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 9:51:11 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT! This is a crime issue with violence around gambling as well as an animal cruelty issue.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 10:11:48 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia F Tucker PsyD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Honorable Senate and Representatives,

My name is Cynthia Tucker, PsyD, and I am a practicing Psychologist in Kailua, O'ahu.

I urge strong Support for HB1980 against animal cruelty with regard to birds

I would cite the Bill for an Act 1980 in terms of not only cruelty to animals which should be a federal offense, but the associated violence and crimes that often accompanies such animal cruelty.

Research in the field of psychology also reflects that animal cruelty is very highly correlated with crime, domestic violence, family and child abuse, and can also be associated with murders.

In fact, the FBI behavioral task force has also now listed animal cruelty as a Class A Felony along with arson, rape and murder and also states on its website that animal cruelty is a 'crime against society'.

And therefore I highly urge the passing of this Bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cynthia F. Tucker, PsyD

Aloha,

We are writing in support of HB1980 Relating to Animal Cruelty. The purpose of this Act is to strengthen existing laws relating to the fighting of birds to more closely mirror those of existing state dogfighting laws, and to deter such illegal activity and its associated crimes, for the protection of human and animal health, welfare, and public safety.

I am writing this testimony with my 11 year old son who has found great comfort in raising chickens on Oahu. He has Autism and often has trouble making human friends. When he discovered chickens made useful pets, he began to learn more about how to raise and protect them. We are part of a local group, Hawaii Chicken Rescue, who rescue, treat, and rehabilitate chickens and roosters across the state. My son has learned how to treat and triage wounds on chickens from animal attacks and even dumped roosters from game fighting. People who fight roosters often dump the "loser" rooster on the road in poor health and bleeding from wounds. Their combs are cut off, they often have knives attached to their spurs, and strings around their feet. If we are lucky to catch the rooster in time, we help rehabilitate them to the best of our abilities. Fighting roosters causes much suffering to these animals. We often see children baiting and catching roosters to fight in neighborhoods because they are taught that this violent behavior is okay. Animal cruelty must stop, and we must teach our keiki to respect all living things.

Not only do we rescue chickens, but we have formed bonds with our local neighborhood flock. My son raised an abandoned chick named Nugget. Nugget was a beautiful rooster at 8 months old, fat and happy often coming indoors to learn to play piano with my son. Yes, my son was trying to teach Nugget to play. One day, a neighbor's camera caught two men with a pickup truck and cages in the back with roosters. They stole our Nugget from the front yard, probably to go fight in illegal rooster fighting. My son was heartbroken his pet was stolen from him. Chickens are important to our Hawaiian culture. We have mo'olelo and stories of our Moa (chicken) who came here on canoes with other native plants and species, providing sustenance and companionship to our people. It is our kuleana to mālama and care for our moa.

As a former educator, I have learned of the various research publications linking animal cruelty to other forms domestic abuse, neglect, and trauma in a [household](#). Animal abuse can lead to other forms of antisocial behavior in [children](#), and children who watch [animal cruelty](#) may suffer from compromised social emotional well-being.

Please harshen the laws and provide education and enforcement to officers who cite these violations. Once offenders see that officers will cite illegal activity and that the city will prosecute, we may have less incidences of illegal rooster fighting. Animal cruelty is wrong. Once we enforce illegal activities, adults will hopefully teach their children to treat animals with respect. Our keiki are watching us and are learning from our behavior. What shall we teach them? Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mai Hall, M.Ed.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 11:41:11 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sirena Gentry-Balding	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm writing to support the bill "Relating to Animal Cruelty" in Hawaii. This bill is important for addressing illegal animal fighting, which leads to other crimes and risks public safety.

The proposed law will make animal fighting a felony and impose strict penalties, including a ban on owning birds for at least five years after a conviction. It also targets related offenses like gambling on fights and attending fights.

Please prioritize passing this bill to protect animals and our communities from harm.

Sincerely,

Sirena Gentry-Balding

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 11:42:00 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Martines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to ask for your support in banning birdfighting in our community. Birdfighting is cruel and goes against our values of kindness and fairness. Outlawing it will show that we care about treating animals well and promoting compassion.

Birdfighting causes unnecessary harm to the birds and doesn't reflect the way we want to treat living beings. By making it illegal, we send a clear message that we stand against activities that hurt animals.

I hope you'll think about the positive impact this law can have on our community. Let's work together to make sure our town is known for kindness and respect.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 12:27:00 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
S. Iha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please help to prevent cruelty and protect the rights of animals. I support HB1980. Mahalo.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 1:15:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mara Hanson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice-Chair Matayoshi, and members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee!

I am writing as a resident of Oahu, a parent, and an animal rights activist. I am writing in strong support of HB1980. This bill is decades overdue. As the bill itself mentions, committing animal cruelty or even witnessing it being committed by others increases the likelihood that an individual will engage in violence in the future. The idea that animal cruelty, such as cock fighting and dog fighting, are cultural practices that must be tolerated is about as rational as saying foot binding was once a cultural practice and so we must allow that child abuse to continue despite the decades and centuries of legal changes and cultural growth that have occurred in human history.

Again, I am writing in full support of this bill. I look forward to further progress on our animal welfare laws in the future.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 1:53:00 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vivi franson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Members,

I'm writing in reference to bill HB1980 cockfighting in **HONOLULU** and the state of Hawaii. I firmly support the hardening enforcement of the punishment to all participants at a animal cruelty sacrifice Ceremony also known as a "chicken fight" and or Dog fighting in Our state.

Born and raised in Hawaii I am well aware of the cultural aspect of the "sport" and I have personally witnessed chicken fighting in my youth. I can honestly testify that it is barbaric and demonic.

mahalo for your time,

vivi franson

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/20/2024 2:08:44 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Bellisle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of this bill. With increased penalites, more animals can be saved from these terrible acts of cruelty.

HB-1980

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:49:06 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ginny tiu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dogfighting and chicken fighting causes extreme suffering. We need to be better than this. No culture or greed should be allowed to inflict such suffering on another living creature who feels pain the way we do. Is this the legacy we want to leave- that we didn't do more when we could, to help our most vulnerable?

Mahalo nui loa for your kind consideration.

Aloha, Ginny Tiu