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1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO POLICE DEPARTMENTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that domestic violence is 2 an epidemic affecting individuals in every community, regardless 3 of age, economic status, race, religion, nationality, or educational background. According to the National Coalition 4 Against Domestic Violence, one in every four women will 5 6 experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Between 2008 and 7 2012, there was an eighteen per cent increase statewide in 8 arrests relating to abuse of family or household members. 9 During this same time period, there was also an increase in the 10 number of persons served by various statewide agencies who 11 provide services to victims of domestic violence.

12 The legislature further finds that the Honolulu police 13 department has been heavily criticized by lawmakers and the 14 public in the wake of a recent high-profile incident involving 15 an off-duty Honolulu police department sergeant. In September 16 2014, the off-duty sergeant was captured on surveillance video 17 punching his then-girlfriend in a Waipahu restaurant. However,

18 the sergeant was not arrested at the scene and responding HB2133 CD1 HMS 2018-3881

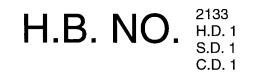
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1 officers failed to file a report. According to news reports, it 2 was only on the following day, after a citizen provided the 3 Honolulu police department and the press with the surveillance 4 video, that the department took action to remove the sergeant of 5 his police powers and began an internal investigation into the 6 incident. An Oahu grand jury later determined there was not 7 enough evidence to indict the sergeant for his actions, although 8 the internal investigation into the sergeant and the responding 9 officers was still ongoing.

10 The sergeant's actions sparked concern about the way police 11 handle domestic violence cases and triggered an informational 12 briefing at the state capitol, where Honolulu's then-police 13 chief and two of his deputies were intensively questioned about 14 the Honolulu police department's policies regarding domestic 15 violence investigations.

Service providers who assist domestic violence victims were also at the informational briefing. Some of these providers expressed concern that the incident involving the Honolulu police department sergeant reflects a larger problem within the department. Between May 2013 and September 2014, the Hawaii state commission on the status of women received approximately



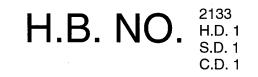


1 thirty-eight separate complaints from women who said officers 2 with the Honolulu police department did not respond 3 appropriately to allegations of abuse. According to the 4 commission, approximately one-third of these instances involved 5 a police officer or a relative of a police officer as the alleged abuser. The commission believes that the September 2014 6 7 incident involving the off-duty sergeant was not an isolated 8 incident, but rather a pattern of inappropriate handling by some 9 police officers in response to allegations of domestic violence.

10 The then-Honolulu police chief and his deputies told
11 lawmakers at the informational briefing that the Honolulu police
12 department has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to domestic
13 violence and other serious offenses. However, the department's
14 record on disciplining officers for domestic violence-related
15 misconduct was called into question by lawmakers at the
16 briefing.

Pursuant to section 52D-3.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the chief of each county police department is required to submit an annual report to the legislature that includes, among other things, a summary of the facts and the nature of the misconduct for incidents which resulted in the suspension or discharge of a

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1 police officer and the disciplinary action imposed for each 2 incident. The Honolulu police department's 2012 annual report 3 to the legislature indicates thirty-five incidents which 4 resulted in discipline against an officer. Of these, three 5 specifically involved domestic-related incidents, including an 6 officer who was involved in a domestic dispute that escalated 7 into a physical altercation causing pain to the complainant, an 8 officer repeatedly contacting an ex-girlfriend after being told 9 the contact was unwanted, and an officer repeatedly contacting 10 an estranged spouse after being told the contact was unwanted. 11 Each of these three incidents resulted in a one-day suspension. 12 In comparison, other non-domestic related incidents in the 13 2013 report resulted in much harsher disciplinary action. For 14 instance, an officer arrested for possession of marijuana and 15 driving under the influence received a twenty-day suspension. 16 Another officer conspired with other officers relating to 17 special duty assignments and received a ten-day suspension. 18 Another officer was discharged for failing a drug urinalysis 19 test. Furthermore, a Honolulu Civil Beat analysis of annual 20 Honolulu police department misconduct summaries turned up 21 twenty-five incidents of domestic violence from 2000 through

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2012. Three officers were discharged but, according to
 information provided to Honolulu Civil Beat by the Honolulu
 police department, their dismissals were not upheld.

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4 This disciplinary disparity leads the legislature to 5 question whether the Honolulu police department is minimizing 6 the problem of domestic violence, particularly when incidents 7 involve a police officer. The legislature also questions 8 whether any potential minimization of alleged incidents of 9 domestic violence involving police officers is based on concern 10 over the Lautenberg Amendment, a federal law that forbids 11 anyone, including a police officer, with a misdemeanor domestic 12 violence conviction from owning or possessing a firearm.

13 The legislature additionally finds that as part of the 14 police union's collective bargaining agreement, all external 15 complaints against a police officer must be in writing and sworn 16 to by the complainant. The legislature is concerned that this 17 requirement may discourage individuals involved in a domestic 18 dispute with a police officer from reporting the abuse. The 19 legislature is also concerned that this requirement revictimizes 20 a complainant, by forcing the complainant to swear to something 21 in writing.

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1 The legislature acknowledges that the majority of police 2 officers enforce the law and act appropriately toward members of 3 the public. However, there are also police officers who do not 4 respond to domestic violence situations appropriately when the 5 perpetrator is a fellow police officer. Such actions lessen the 6 public's trust in the police and bring down the reputation of 7 police departments as a whole. 8 The purpose of this Act is to avoid the revictimization of 9 officer-involved domestic violence victims by ensuring that 10 individuals who wish to report allegations of officer-involved 11 domestic abuse against a family or household member do not have 12 to do so by filing a notarized or sworn written statement. 13 SECTION 2. Chapter 52D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is 14 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated 15 and to read as follows: 16 "§52D- Citizen administrative complaints; officer-17 involved domestic violence. Citizen administrative complaints 18 against a police officer that involve allegations of domestic 19 abuse by the police officer against a family or household member 20 shall not be required to be filed as a notarized or sworn 21 written statement.

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1	For purposes of this section, "family or household member"
2	has the same meaning as in section 709-906."
3	SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.
4	SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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Report Title:

County Police Departments; Police Officers; Citizen Administrative Complaints; Officer-involved Domestic Violence

Description:

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Specifies that citizen administrative complaints against a police officer that involve allegations of domestic abuse by the police officer against a family or household member shall not be required to be filed as a notarized or sworn written statement. (HB2133 CD1)

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