

JAN 25 2023

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EVIDENCE.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Act 210, Session  
2 Laws of Hawaii 2008, temporarily established a limited news  
3 media privilege against the compelled disclosure of sources and  
4 unpublished information to a legislative, executive, or judicial  
5 officer or body, or to any other person who may compel  
6 testimony. Subsequently, Act 113, Session Laws of Hawaii 2011,  
7 extended the repeal date of Act 210, Session Laws of Hawaii  
8 2008, from June 30, 2011, to June 30, 2013, and required the  
9 judiciary, through its standing committee on the rules of  
10 evidence, to report to the legislature and recommend whether to:

- 11           (1) Codify Act 210, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, under  
12           chapter 621, Hawaii Revised Statutes, relating to  
13           evidence and witnesses, generally;
- 14           (2) Codify Act 210, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, under  
15           chapter 626, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Hawaii rules  
16           of evidence; or



1 (3) Allow Act 210, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, to be  
2 repealed.

3 In December 2011, the supreme court standing committee on  
4 the rules of evidence submitted a report to the legislature  
5 recommending that the sunset provision under Act 210, Session  
6 Laws of Hawaii 2008, be repealed and the news media privilege be  
7 codified under chapter 621, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

8 The purpose of this Act is to enact the recommendation made  
9 by the supreme court standing committee on the rules of evidence  
10 by enacting a permanent news media privilege.

11 SECTION 2. Chapter 621, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
12 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
13 and to read as follows:

14 "§621- Limitation on compellable testimony from  
15 journalists and newscasters; exceptions. (a) A journalist or  
16 newscaster presently or previously employed by or otherwise  
17 professionally associated with any newspaper or magazine or any  
18 digital version thereof operated by the same organization, news  
19 agency, press association, wire service, or radio or television  
20 transmission station or network, shall not be required by a  
21 legislative, executive, or judicial officer or body, or any



1 other authority having the power to compel testimony or the  
2 production of evidence, to disclose, by subpoena or otherwise:

3       (1) The source, or information that could reasonably be  
4 expected to lead to the discovery of the identity of  
5 the source, of any published or unpublished  
6 information obtained by the person while so employed  
7 or professionally associated in the course of  
8 gathering, receiving, or processing information for  
9 communication to the public; or

10       (2) Any unpublished information obtained or prepared by  
11 the person while so employed or professionally  
12 associated in the course of gathering, receiving, or  
13 processing information for communication to the  
14 public.

15       (b) The limitation on compellable testimony established by  
16 this section may also be claimed by and afforded to any  
17 individual who can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence  
18 that:

19       (1) The individual has regularly and materially  
20 participated in the reporting or publishing of news or  
21 information of substantial public interest for the



- 1           purpose of dissemination to the general public by  
2           means of tangible or electronic media;
- 3           (2) The position of the individual is materially similar  
4           or identical to that of a journalist or newscaster,  
5           taking into account the method of dissemination;
- 6           (3) The interest of the individual in protecting the  
7           sources and unpublished information under subsection  
8           (a) is materially similar to the interest of the  
9           individuals referenced under subsection (a); and
- 10          (4) The public interest is served by affording the  
11          protections of this section in a specific circumstance  
12          under consideration.
- 13          (c) This section shall not apply if:
- 14          (1) Probable cause exists to believe that the person  
15          claiming the privilege has committed, is committing,  
16          or is about to commit a crime;
- 17          (2) The person claiming the privilege has observed the  
18          alleged commission of a crime; provided that the  
19          privilege granted by this section may be asserted if:



- 1           (A) The interest in maintaining the privilege granted  
2                           by this section outweighs the public interest in  
3                           disclosure; and
- 4           (B) The commission of the crime is the act of  
5                           communicating or providing the information or  
6                           documents at issue;
- 7       (3) There is substantial evidence that the source or  
8                           information sought to be disclosed is material to the  
9                           investigation, prosecution, or defense of a felony, or  
10                          to a civil action for defamation, and the source or  
11                          information sought is:
- 12           (A) Unavailable, despite exhaustion of reasonable  
13                           alternative sources;
- 14           (B) Noncumulative; and
- 15           (C) Necessary and relevant to the charge, claim, or  
16                           defense asserted;
- 17       (4) The information sought to be disclosed is critical to  
18                           prevent serious harm to life or public safety; or
- 19       (5) The source consents to the disclosure of unpublished  
20                           documents or other tangible materials provided by the  
21                           source.



1        (d) No fine or imprisonment shall be imposed against a  
2 person claiming the privilege pursuant to this section for  
3 refusal to disclose information privileged pursuant to this  
4 section."

5        SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

6        SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

7

INTRODUCED BY: 



# S.B. NO. 1451

**Report Title:**

Journalists and Newscasters; Disclosure

**Description:**

Limits compelled disclosure of sources or unpublished information for journalists, newscasters, and persons participating in collection or dissemination of news or information of substantial public interest. Establishes exceptions.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

