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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 2230
RELATING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Before the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Thursday, February 1, 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) submits the following comments on House Bill 2230.

This requires the Law Enforcement Standards Board to develop, and each department employing law enforcement officers to implement, a structured health intervention program to support law enforcement officers' physical and mental health.

The DLE is supportive of the health and wellness of law enforcement officer and exploring and implementing measures to improve officer health, wellness, and overall quality of life. As pointed out in the bill, the law enforcement profession sees ". . . high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, heart attacks, and other mental and physical health problems."

The DLE is concerned with the implementation of the goals of this measure. For example, there will be significant costs associated with the program from various sides, the requirement for participation by officers is unclear, there is no provision to address workers compensation related issues or the significant issues that must involve collective bargaining.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this bill.



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

LATE

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Thursday, February 1, 2024
2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
In Support of
H.B. No. 2230, Relating to Law Enforcement

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

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** H.B. No. 2230, Relating to Law Enforcement.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022), the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. One of our priority areas focuses on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. We explore avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support. We aim to start this with our state workforce.

Law enforcement officers are exposed to various stressors that make them more vulnerable to the onset of mental health disorders. Research shows that when law enforcement officers are provided with mental health professionals support and peer support programs, there are decreased mental health symptoms related to depression and trauma symptoms, better coping skills implemented, and overall improvement in wellness.¹ H.B. 2230 provides our state's law enforcement officers supports to increase their mental health literacy and gain skills needed to manage stressors and obligations at work and in other domains of life.

Thank you for considering these comments and for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.

Mahalo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tia L R Hartsock".

Tia L R Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor

¹ Uhl, Alexis, et al. "Mental Health Providers and Peers Help Enhance the Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Mental Health Interventions." *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2023, pp. 774-81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09604-3>



STATE OF HAWAII ORGANIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS
" A Police Organization for Police Officers Only "
Founded 1971

January 30, 2024

Via Online

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawaii State Capitol, Rooms 442, 404
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: **HB 2230 – Development of Structured Health Program**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Takayama, and Honorable Committee members:

I serve as the President of the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (“SHOPO”) and write to you on behalf of our Union in **strong support** of HB 2230 which calls for the development and implementation of a structured health intervention program that supports law enforcement officers’ physical and mental health. This bill will further the public interest by addressing the high levels of occupational stress experienced by our law enforcement officers and the impact that can have on officer performance, morale, turnover and public safety.

As you are aware, our officers are regularly exposed to violence, suffering, death, and disturbing situations, which causes high levels of job-related stress, and in turn contributes to the high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, heart attacks, and other mental and physical health problems that law enforcement officers deal with. Moreover, there is potential stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance that may prevent law enforcement officers from receiving help. The health intervention program proposed by this bill would include:

1. Physical training designed to help equip law enforcement officers to apprehend and arrest suspects and to perform other physical aspects of their duties;
2. Fitness classes, martial arts classes, and other activities, to be made available to law enforcement officers during regular business hours;
3. Training on best practices for safely restraining a suspect, including training on effectively monitoring the suspect’s vital signs; and
4. Mental health support, including confidential, stigma-free, and trauma-informed therapy; mentoring programs; and peer-to-peer support groups.

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The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
January 30, 2024
SHOPO Testimony Page 2
Re: HB 2230 – Development of Structured Health Program

We support this bill as it offers critical physical and mental health support to our officers and in turn, benefits the public. This program, when implemented, should be a voluntary benefit made available to our officers.

For our community, it is imperative that our police officers have access to adequate physical and mental health support. Development of a structured health intervention program such as the one described above is one step in that direction.

We thank you for allowing us to be heard on this very important issue and we hope your committee will unanimously support HB 2230.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT “BOBBY” CAVACO
SHOPO President

RC jmo

HB-2230

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:21:27 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in SUPPORT

LATE

Aloha,

My name is Siena Molina, I am writing in support of HB2230 which requires the Law Enforcement Standards Board to develop, and each department employing law enforcement officers to implement, a structured health intervention program to support law enforcement officers' physical and mental health.

As a niece to quite a few family members who were formerly law enforcement officers, mental health is important to care for and maintain. We see on the news and witness more often than not of our law enforcement officers in situations unforeseeable situations and from that not only are they assisting the people involved, but they help and protect bystanders. It's only fair and connecting that we do the same for them. Also, as a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa with the Masters in Social Work program and a future social worker, mental health is important to maintain. As social workers, we bring forth the unheard population to advocate and support them in all aspects of their lives. We must do the same for our law enforcement officers.

This bill will support our law enforcement officer's mental health greatly. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (2017), they found that approximately 40% of police officers have considered suicide at some point in their careers, and in comparison to firefighters, police officers commit suicide at a rate that is four times greater. Law enforcement reports significantly greater rates of depression, PTSD, burnout, and other anxiety-related mental health issues than the general population. Implementing mental health interventions will allow our law enforcement officers to talk through their feelings and reactions from a call they were on.

Mental health care isn't talked about enough, especially with our law enforcement officers. It's also important that professionals who understand law enforcement culture and are familiar with trauma are hired to assist them. There is a big chance that our law enforcement officers do not seek out mental health care. This bill also supports the physical health of our officers, a healthy body should come with a healthy mind.

The islands of Hawai'i are all our ohana because these law enforcement officers are our mothers, our fathers, our grandmas, our grandpas, our aunties, our uncles, our cousins, and our friends.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify!

Siena Molina