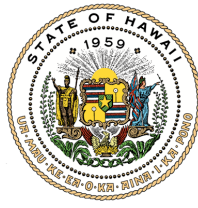


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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 2622

RELATING TO FIREARMS

Before the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Thursday, February 1, 2024; 2:00 p.m.

State Capitol Conference Room 325, Via Videoconference

Testifiers: Michael Vincent or Jared Redulla

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

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) **strongly supports**, House Bill 2622.

This bill appropriates moneys to the DLE to continue with the voluntary firearm buyback program.

The DLE would like to conduct voluntary firearm buyback programs in each county. The requested appropriation would be used to conduct the buybacks, storage and disposal of firearms, costs incurred by supporting agencies and partners, and administrative costs associated with the program.

The DLE recommends \$825,000 for the appropriation.

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



LATE

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
HB2622, RELATING TO FIREARMS.

BEFORE THE:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

DATE: February 1, 2024 **TIME:** 3:00 p.m. **LOCATION:** Conference Room 325

Chair Tarnasi and Members of the Committee

I am writing to provide a comment on behalf of myself and Hawaii Firearms Coalition on HB2622.

Although we are against the concept of buyback programs due to their questionable effectiveness, we acknowledge the importance of providing a means for individuals to safely dispose of unwanted firearms. Therefore, we offer the following comments and suggestions, hoping they will be considered should this bill proceed.

First, I would like to outline the reasons for our opposition to buyback programs:

- **Questionable Effectiveness in Reducing Crime:** Buyback programs have not been proven to significantly impact crime rates, as the firearms typically surrendered are not those commonly used in criminal activities. Many surrendered firearms are old, broken, or otherwise unwanted. Notably, the majority of firearms turned in on Oahu were rifles, which are least likely to be used in crimes.
- **Cost and Resource Allocation:** The organization and funding of buyback programs are costly, diverting funds from potentially more effective uses. Recent buybacks on Oahu required substantial law enforcement resources, as well as expenses related to the purchase and disposal of the firearms.

- **Impact on Law-Abiding Citizens:** Buyback programs tend to attract law-abiding citizens rather than criminals, leaving the firearms most likely to be used in crimes in circulation. Moreover, individuals in lower-income communities, who may rely on firearms for self-defense, are often the ones to surrender their firearms for gift cards.
- **Symbolic Rather Than Substantive Change:** Without addressing deeper issues like illegal gun trafficking, gang violence, and socio-economic disparities, buyback programs serve more as symbolic gestures than real solutions to gun violence.
- **False Sense of Security:** Buyback programs can create a false sense of security by suggesting that a significant step has been taken towards reducing gun violence, while the underlying issues remain unaddressed. A serious examination of organized crime and gang violence in our communities is necessary for any real change to occur

What We Propose

Instead of a buy-back, we feel that a much better option would be an amnesty program that could operate in a similar method but would provide a year-round option for people to dispose of unwanted/needed firearms. We make the following recommendation for the proposed program.

Introduction to the Hawaii Continuous Firearms Amnesty and Accountability Act

In an effort to enhance community safety and reduce the prevalence of unsecured and unwanted firearms, We propose the Continuous Firearms Amnesty and Accountability Act. This pioneering legislation introduces a year-round, no-questions-asked program that allows individuals to surrender firearms in exchange for gift cards, ensuring anonymity and legal immunity for participants. The Act emphasizes not only the collection of firearms but also mandates a robust framework for accountability and transparency through regular reporting to the Attorney General's Office.

By providing a continuous, accessible avenue for firearm surrender, coupled with clear communication about the program's terms and the value of surrendered firearms, the Act aims to foster a safer environment for all Hawaii.

Section 1: Program Details

- The program operates year-round, offering a no-questions-asked, anonymous firearm surrender opportunity.
- All county police chiefs must put in place policies and procedures to accept the surrendering of unwanted firearms at any time during regular business hours.
- Firearms may be surrendered at any county police station or via collection by a police officer being called to a location to do so.
- Information about the program must be displayed at all county police departments and on any website operated by or for the police department.
- Individuals will not be required to provide identification or disclose information about themselves or the firearms but must state that they wish to surrender a firearm.
- Surrendered firearms will be exchanged for gift cards: \$200 for standard firearms and \$500 for short-barreled rifles, short-barreled shotguns, or automatic weapons.
- The program shall be funded through the state budget and potential federal grants.

Section 2: Reporting and Oversight

- Monthly Reporting: Each county's police department must submit a written report to the Attorney General's Office within 15 days of each month's end. This report should detail the number and types of firearms collected and the total cost incurred in the program.
- Annual Reporting: Additionally, a comprehensive annual report, including the same details, must be submitted within 15 days of the year's end.
- These reports aim to maintain transparency and allow for the assessment of the program's effectiveness and financial management.

Section 3: Participant Information and Legal Immunity

- Before accepting the surrender of a firearm, each individual shall receive a leaflet or flyer, which will include the following information:
 - Acknowledgment that the firearm is being turned in voluntarily.
 - Assurance of the program's anonymity and the individual's immunity from criminal prosecution regarding the firearm's previous ownership or use.
 - A statement indicating that the firearm might be of more value than the gift card amount and that other disposal options, potentially yielding more money, are available.

Section 4: Justification and Community Benefits

- The continuous availability of the program offers greater accessibility and flexibility, encouraging more individuals to participate.

- It contributes to public safety by continuously removing unsecured and unwanted firearms from the community and preventing potential misuse.
- The program's anonymity and legal immunity clauses are likely to build community trust and encourage participation.
- Regular reporting ensures accountability and helps in evaluating and improving the program's effectiveness.

Conclusion

We feel that implementing The Hawaii Continuous Firearms Amnesty and Accountability Act will not only reduce the number of unwanted firearms but also to ensure transparency and accountability in its execution. It provides a sustainable approach to enhancing public safety while respecting the rights and concerns of firearm owners.

If you have any questions or comments about our suggestions, I look forward to hearing from you.

Andrew Namiki Roberts
Hawaii Firearms Coalition
info@hifico.org

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:44:14 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael I Rice	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I disagree with the assertion that Gun Buybacks work to reduce gun related crimes, and there has been no evidence to show as such.

Typically a criminal will either dump, or resell their gun after using it in a crime, usually to whoever they bought it from. Though some have used buybacks as a means to dispose of evidence by turning in guns that are ‘too hot’ for them to resell.

There has also been some controversy about buybacks recently, where parts from firearms that were supposedly destroyed after a buyback were found intact after the contractor responsible disassembled the firearms and legally resold parts. This isn’t counting other incidents where contractors and even law enforcement officers have marked such firearms as destroyed, then turned around and sold them on the black market.

In previous testimony on SB2346: In response to the issue of people making cheap homemade firearms in order to take advantage of the turn in, the Department of Law Enforcement has said they would not accept such firearms, which is counterintuitive as such weapons are still deadly and illegal under state law.

The only reason I don’t stand in opposition to this bill is that it does offer a method for those who inherit firearms from a family member or loved one who have no idea what to do with them a means to safely dispose of them. However this often causes guns with historic provenance to be destroyed or be turned in for a petty fraction of what their worth is. Thus, I would like to propose the following changes:

1) Advertise and offer a year round turn in where the public can turn in firearms in their possession to their Police Department’s Headquarters.

2) The Police Department will take custody of the firearms and check to make sure they are legal and not connected to a crime.

a) should the firearm in question be connected to a crime or is otherwise illegal, they will be given whatever the standard payout is for the firearm turn in and the Police will properly dispose of the firearm.

b) should the firearm in question be otherwise legal to sell, Police will maintain custody of the firearm and provide information to the possessor on how to sell the firearm to a Federal Firearms Licensee (Gunstore). Once the Possessor finds a FFL willing to purchase the firearm and is processed, Police will turn over the firearm directly to the FFL and the FFL will pay the Possessor. If the Possessor does not wish to go through with the FFL transaction they will receive the standard payout.

This would not only save taxpayer money, but also allow those to gain more money through private means for their property.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:08:00 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Todd Yukutake	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I offer comments on HB2622

I agree with the intent of this bill to give people an easy way to remove unwanted guns without fear of prosecution or interrogation. **However I disagree with using taxpayer money to fund the program. In the Senate version SB2346, the Dept of Law Enforcement requested \$825,000 to administer this program. Although this is just a drop in the bucket for the State budget, it feels very excessive for a taxpayer such as myself.**

I understand that people want the peace of mind for letting the guns go and I feel that gift cards or other compensation is not necessary. I propose changes that accomplishes all of these things in a better way.

1. Allow gun stores to accept the firearms at anytime. This allows for convenient drop off of the firearms anywhere in the State and people would not being intimidated having to turn them into law enforcement.
2. The gun stores can offer to resell the firearm on consignment or turn them into police. This gives the stores the incentive to participate in the program while offering the person more money for their firearm and prevent destruction of a useful item. Or the person can just drop off the firearm with no questions asked and the gun store can then give the firearm to police.

Please consider my recommendations.

Mahalo

Todd Yukutake
toddykutake@gmail.com
(808) 255-3066

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:32:33 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcus Tanaka	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If the state was serious about this, they would offer \$600 per handgun and \$800 per long gun and it shall be in cash.

Or what you will get is mostly relics turned in by people who are too lazy to drop them off at HPD.

A criminal won't turn in a gun at all knowing they can sell it for much more than \$200 and get cash.

What HPD should do is promote a year round amnesty, no questions asked turn in. And this can be done 24/7. Because it's obvious from the interviews on the news from the last buy back that people didn't know what to do with the guns they didn't want. Also have free parking RSVP for these people available 24/7.

Why this, because the line was a very long one and so was the wait. Due to HI's laws, when one has to use the toilet, they cannot just leave the line and go to find one. They have to go home and use it and wait back in line.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:42:20 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
steven a kumasaka	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

gun buybacks are a waste of time, money, and manpower

please concentrate on catching criminals, putting them in jail, and KEEPING THEM THERE...

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:00:46 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Hechtman	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose HB2622!

Taxpayer funds should not be used for this.

Furthermore the government cannot "buyback" something they never owned in the first place.

Thank you,

Robert Hechtman

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:34:14 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Arakawa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a waste of government resources and our tax dollars. HPD is undermanned and their time is better spent elsewhere

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 3:59:29 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grace Parubrur	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Grace Parubrur and I have lived in Kalihi all my life. Although Kalihi has always been known as a scary neighborhood to outsiders, it wasn't until recently that I've started fearing for my family and I's safety. With all the gun violence occurring on the continental mainland that has gradually trickled down to our state as evidenced by the shooting incidents on the West side, I worry that it will continue to spread and eventually reach our neighborhood. Therefore, I am in favor of this bill as I feel that it is imperative in preventing any future deaths from gun violence in our islands. Thank you.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:02:24 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brendan Ajolo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

oppose this bill because it only for foodland, should be a prepaid credit card to use where ever.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:10:13 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shawnie Campbell	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

oppose this bill

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:58:29 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joel Berg	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Waste of money with no proof of improvement to public safety.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:10:44 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE; “Firearm buyback program” would entail that the Department of Law Enforcement sold the firearms in the first place. Does the Department of Transportation “buyback” vehicles that because they MAY be used in an accident?

I DO NOT approve of my tax paying funds to be used by ANY government department to “buyback” consumer goods.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:11:41 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jordan dinong	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Do not support this bill. I believe that the money being used for these buy backs could be put to better use towards the community such as charity, or perhaps fixing the roads.

HB-2622

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:48:04 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fred Delosantos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

please oppose HB2622. Gun Buy-Backs are a terrible waste of tax-payer money, the state of Hawaii is already darn-near broke, and Gun Buy-Backs do not reduce crime. Not one iota. No criminal in their right mind is going to redeem a functioning gun for money.

this is the classic "lose money" scheme, if ever there was one.

please exercise sound fiscal stewardship of taxpayer money, my money, and everybody else's money.

LATE

HB-2622

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:23:48 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bevin Parker-Evans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Judicial and Hawaiian Affairs Committee Chairman Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members Evslin, Illagan, Kong, Miyake, Souza, Ganaden, Holt and Tachiyama:

I support bill # HB 2622, in order to add more monies, resources, and appropriation for the gun buy-back program initiated in 2023. It was obvious to all who watched the news reports of the first gun buy-back events on Oahu that it was an extremely positive initiative, and highly supported by the community in general. It was a popular measure and many weapons were removed from our streets in the effort to reduce gun violence in Hawaii.

As a member of the Omao, Kaua'i community living on a neighbor island I am looking forward to the day when Kaua'i residents and other neighbor island residents will also be able to participate in the gun buy-back program. I'm sure that these extra funds requested by this particular bill will help that day to occur soon. I know of at least two cases where persons inherited guns from the 1920's and 1930's that are not saleable and they do not wish to give them to their children or friends. Instead these two persons really are hoping for the day when they can get these weapons out of their houses and out of the reach of thieves, children, or causing any harm with a highly regulated gun buy-back program.

I urge you to support HB #2622 and I hope you will continue to fund this important initiative that will help to decrease gun violence in our neighborhoods. Thank you for reading my testimony.

Aloha,

Bevin Parker-Evans

LATE

HB-2622

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:13:42 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mitchell H. Weber	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE HB2622,

Anyone who feels compelled to surrender their property may already do so for free at HPD. I oppose allotting tax dollars to fund something that is already accounted for in the budget.