



LATE

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO SENATE BILL 292
RELATING TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 6, 2025

9:15AM

Room 016

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony **SUPPORT** of SB292 which establishes safe harbor protections for survivors of sexual exploitation who seek medical or law enforcement assistance. This crucial initiative represents a significant step towards combating the heinous crime of sex trafficking and providing justice for victims, particularly Native Hawaiians who are disproportionately impacted by this form of exploitation.

Sex trafficking is a pervasive and devastating crime that preys on the most vulnerable members of our society, including minors. By ensuring victims of sex trafficking are not criminalized for their own exploitation, we can advance the delivery of social services and trauma-informed care for those in need. This measure would also advance prosecution efforts by empowering trafficking victims to pursue legal persons and entities that profit from exploitation, and to obtain financial security for the harm they have endured.

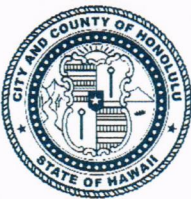
Establishing safe harbor protections for survivors of sexual exploitation sends a clear message that our state is committed to protecting the rights and well-being of all individuals, especially our most vulnerable populations. Native Hawaiians are disproportionately affected by sex trafficking due to a combination of factors including socioeconomic disparities and historical trauma. Studies have shown Native Hawaiian women are especially vulnerable to trafficking, and that the majority (43%) of sex trafficking cases are k  naka maoli girls trafficked in Waik  k  i, O  ahu.¹ Notably, 57% of participants served through the Mana  olana Program at Child & Family Services are Native Hawaiian females who have experienced human trafficking. Therefore, enacting legislation to strengthen sex trafficking laws is especially critical for protecting Native Hawaiian communities and ensuring that they receive the support and resources they need to combat this issue.

¹ Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Commission on the Status of Women, Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls Task Force Report p.5 (2022)

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges this committee to **PASS SB 292** to strengthen protections for victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide much-needed support to Native Hawaiian communities who are disproportionately affected by this crime. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

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

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OUR REFERENCE JP-HR

February 6, 2025

LATE

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary
State Senate
415 South Beretania Street, Room 016
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members:

SUBJECT: Senate Bill No. 292, Relating to Sexual Exploitation

I am Jerome Pacarro, Captain of the Narcotics/Vice Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.


The HPD supports Senate Bill No. 292, Relating to Sexual Exploitation.

Victims of sexual exploitation often endure repeated traumatic events over time, leading to prolonged negative impacts. The effects of trauma from sexual exploitation can manifest as both physical and emotional distress, which can be persistent and devastating. Addressing this trauma by seeking help is critical for removing victims from exploitative situations and providing the services they need to escape. Often, victims may be afraid to seek assistance or cooperate with law enforcement due to the trauma they have experienced or the fear of being prosecuted for sexual acts they may have committed. Establishing laws such as safe harbor protections for survivors of sexual exploitation will assure victims that they will not face prosecution from law enforcement. Accessing professional help for sexual trauma can be transformative and life-changing for these individuals.

The HPD urges you to support Senate Bill No. 292, Relating to Sexual Exploitation.


Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:



Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police

Sincerely,


Jerome Pacarro, Captain
Narcotics/Vice Division



SB 292, RELATING TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

FEBRUARY 6, 2025 · JDC HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: Imua Alliance supports SB 292, relating to sexual exploitation, which establishes safe harbor protections for survivors of sexual exploitation who seek medical or law enforcement assistance.

Imua Alliance is a victim service provider for survivors of sex trafficking. Over the past 15 years, we have provided comprehensive direct intervention (victim rescue) services to over 200 victims, successfully emancipating them from slavery and assisting in their restoration, while providing a range of targeted services to over 1,000 victims and individuals at risk of sexual exploitation. **During the pandemic, demand for victim services to our organization has skyrocketed by 330 percent, driven in part by a fivefold increase in direct crisis calls from potential trafficking victims.**

Each of the victims we have assisted has suffered from complex and overlapping trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, dissociation, parasuicidal behavior, and substance abuse. Trafficking-related trauma can lead to a complete loss of identity. A victim we cared for in 2016, for example, had become so heavily trauma bonded to her pimp that while under his grasp, she couldn't remember her own name. Yet, sadly, many of the victims with whom we work are misidentified as so-called "voluntary prostitutes" and are subsequently arrested and incarcerated, with no financial resources from which to pay for their release.

Sex trafficking is a profoundly violent crime. At least 23 percent of trafficking victims in Hawai'i report being first exploited before turning 18, according to a recent report, with the average age of trafficked keiki's initial exposure to exploitation being 11. Based on regular outreach and monitoring, we estimate that approximately 150 high-risk sex trafficking establishments operate in Hawai'i. In a recent report conducted by the State Commission on the Status of Women, researchers from Arizona State University found that 1 in every 11 adult males living in our state buys sex online. When visitors are also counted, that number worsens to 1 in every 7 men walking the streets of our island home and a daily online sex buyer market of 18,614 for O'ahu and a total sex buyer population for the island of 74,362, including both tourists and residents.

ASU's findings are grim, but not surprising to local organizations that provide services to survivors of sex trafficking. Imua Alliance, for example, has trained volunteers to perform outreach to victims in high-risk locations, like strip clubs, massage parlors, and hostess bars. More than 80 percent of runaway youth report being approached for sexual exploitation while on the run, over 30 percent of whom are targeted within the first 48 hours of leaving home. With regard to mental health, sex trafficking victims are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD as a soldier in a war zone.

Greater than 80 percent of victims report being repeatedly raped and 95 percent report being physically assaulted, numbers that are underreported, according to the United States Department of State and numerous trauma specialists, because of the inability of many victims to recognize sexual violence. As one underage survivor told Imua Alliance prior to being rescued, "I can't be raped. Only good girls can be raped. I'm a bad girl. If I *want* to be raped, I have to *earn* it."

Accordingly, we support measures to advance our state's fight against sexual servitude, including this bill's extension of safe harbor protections for survivors of sexual exploitation who seek medical or law enforcement assistance. Survivors of sex trafficking should not be held legally responsible for the trauma they have endured. **Over 30 states have enacted safe harbor protections for sex trafficking victims. Hawai'i should join that list.**

Contact us at imuaalliance.org/contact.

SB-292

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 1:43:33 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB292.

SB-292

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 4:33:13 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Stand in strong support