

STAND. COM. REP. NO. **2203**

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 11 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2919

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred S.B. No. 2919 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to appropriate funds to the Office of the Public Defender for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Deputy Public Defender III position.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Office of the Public Defender, Community Alliance on Prisons, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights, The Legal Clinic, ACLU Hawai'i, William S. Richardson School of Law Refugee & Immigration Law Clinic, and three individuals.

Your Committee finds that the Office of the Public Defender (Office) is a statewide agency with branches in all four counties. The Office's mission is to fulfill the State's obligation to provide legal counsel for indigent persons who are charged with a criminal offense or to other persons who have been statutorily afforded counsel. Your Committee further finds that last year, the Office's one hundred two attorneys handled 34,363 cases, averaging three hundred thirty cases per attorney. Many of these cases may have convictions that have constitutional, civil, statutory, or immigration ramifications which must be taken into consideration when resolving the case. Despite the Office being a



statewide office, it currently has no attorneys who are assigned to assist its attorneys statewide in constitutional and legal matters, as all existing attorney positions are necessary to provide representation in trial and appellate matters. The position established and funded by this measure will ensure that the attorneys employed by the Office of the Public Defender are kept up to date with changes to the law to remain capable of providing effective and competent representation statewide.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2919 and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Judiciary,



KARL RHOADS, Chair



The Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
State of Hawai'i

**Record of Votes
Committee on Judiciary
JDC**

***Only one measure per Record of Votes**