



HAWAII STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

Komikina Ho'opono Kulekele o Hawai'i Moku'aina

Committee: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Bill Number: HB 1885
Hearing Date/Time: February 3, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
Re: Testimony in Support of HB 1885 **with a Proposed Amendment**

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **HB 1885**, which strengthens public trust by prohibiting state agencies from entering into contracts with businesses owned or controlled by relatives or household members of department directors or deputy directors. This measure appropriately reduces the risk and appearance of favoritism in state contracting.

Because Hawai'i's Ethics Code is grounded in **individual responsibility**, it may be worthwhile to clarify that **each state employee involved in the contracting process—including contracting officers, evaluators, and approving officials—has an independent obligation to comply with this prohibition**. Ethics compliance does not rest solely at the agency level; it depends on the judgment and conduct of the individuals who take official action in procurement decisions. An express acknowledgment of individual responsibility would promote consistent, practical enforcement of this restriction and complement the bill's agency-level safeguard.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

(c) Each state employee who takes official action on a contract subject to this section shall comply with this section and take reasonable steps to ensure that the contract does not violate this prohibition.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Very truly yours,

/S/ Robert D. Harris
Robert D. Harris
Executive Director and General Counsel

Feb. 3, 2026, 2 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 325 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice-Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1885 — RELATING TO STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Aloha chair, vice-chair and other committee members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to offer its **support** for [HB1885](#), which would prohibit state agencies from entering into contracts for goods or services (including construction) with a business that is owned or operated — or in which a controlling interest is held — by a relative or household member of a director or deputy director of a principal state department.

By prohibiting contracts that could benefit the relative or household member of a state department head, this bill would help prevent financial conflicts of interest as well as issues of impartiality in contracting, an essential practice in government procurement.¹

In order to improve public trust in government and root out corruption, state agencies must avoid improper influence in contracting and even the appearance of impropriety. We applaud the committee for addressing this important issue and urge you to pass HB1885.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ ["Ethics and Procurement Integrity,"](#) U.S. Office of Government Ethics, July 2007.

HB-1885

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:04:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Ross Isokane | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this bill. I'm so deflated by the appearance of conflicts of interest that can lead to graft of taxpayer funds.

In lieu of a prohibition (i.e., if there's only a limited number of vendors), I'd be open to having the director or deputy director disclose the conflict of interest (as long as those disclosures are transparent and easily accessible).