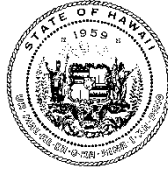


KRISTIN E. IZUMI-NITAO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 2, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director
Campaign Spending Commission

SUBJECT: **Testimony on H.B. No. 2052, Relating to Campaign Contributions.**
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill¹. The Campaign Spending Commission ("Commission") supports this bill (with one amendment) which we believe will prevent the corruption, or at least the appearance of corruption, of elected officials as well as represents a crucial step towards transparency and accountability in government spending. In this respect, this bill will help improve public confidence in government and the electoral process.

This bill amends Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS") §11-355 by extending the ban on contributions from state and county contractors to the officers of the contractor and their immediate family for the duration of a contract of \$100,000 or more for goods and services and \$250,00 or more for a construction contract. The Commission believes that it is common for contractors to get around the ban by having those persons connected to the contractor make political contributions. A few of these situations also involved false name contributions where the contributors were reimbursed for their contributions. The bill also extends the ban to HRS Chapter 42F grantees of the state and grantees of the counties via county charter or code, and the officers of the grantee and their immediate family for the duration of a grant of more than \$100,000. Grantees, similar to contractors, receive state and local funds and thus should be

¹ The companion bill is S.B. No. 2530.

treated similarly in the context of political contributions. After additional review, the Commission recommends changing the threshold for grants from “more than \$100,000” to “\$100,000 or more” to be consistent with Chapter 103D, HRS (Hawaii Procurement Code).

With respect to any constitutional concerns regarding the scope of this bill, the Commission defers to the Department of the Attorney General, but believes that there are other jurisdictions including Connecticut that have extended the campaign contributions ban to state contractors’ principals and family members and withstood challenge on First Amendment grounds.

The Commission respectfully request that this Committee pass this bill.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 2:33:42 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beppie Shapiro	League of Women Voters of Hawaii	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB1519 is a much stronger bill with the same intent.



FEBRUARY 3, 2026

HOUSE BILL 2052

CURRENT REFERRAL: JHA

808-679-7454

kris@imuaalliance.org

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Kris Coffield,
President

David Negaard,
Director

Mireille Ellsworth,
Director

Justin Salisbury,
Director

Eileen Roco,
Director

Beatrice DeRego,
Director

Corey Rosenlee,
Director

Amy Zhao,
*Policy and Partnerships
Strategist*

POSITION: SUPPORT

Imua Alliance supports HB 2052, relating to campaign contributions, which prohibits state or county contractor's officers and any officer's immediate family, with contracts of \$100,000 or more for goods or services or \$250,000 or more for construction, from contributing to candidate or noncandidate committees, candidates, or any person for any political purpose for the duration of the contract; prohibits grantees, grantees' officers and grantees' officer's immediate family, with grants of more than \$100,000, from contributing to candidate or noncandidate committees, candidates, or any person for any political purpose for the duration of the grant; and requires any unlawful contribution to be returned to the contributor or it will escheat to the Hawai'i election campaign fund.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai'i-based organization dedicated to ending all forms of exploitation, including corporate interference in our democracy. **Note: we prefer this measure to HB 1519, since this proposal sets lower contract thresholds and applies to all officers and their immediate family.**

Our democracy belongs to we, the people.

At a time when our nation is experiencing extreme political turmoil and basic civil liberties are under assault, we must take steps in Hawai'i to safeguard democratic participation. In the 2024 primary election, for example, our state experienced its lowest turnout in 65 years, with only 32.1 percent of registered voters filling out a ballot. This is, in part, a reflection of the public's deep cynicism with our electoral processes.

Hawai'i continues to be embroiled in public corruption scandals, following the bribery allegations that were levied against former Senate Majority Leader Kalani English and former State Representative Ty Cullen. Legal clouds surrounding a \$35,000 alleged bribery scandal are swirling around the legislature, to the detriment of public confidence, with the Hawai'i

Attorney General opening an investigation into the potential offenses and the State House adopting a measure to begin this session calling for a thorough and hasty enquiry into the matter.

Other public officials, such as employees at local permitting offices, have also recently been ensnared in bribery scandals, in some cases with connections to Milton Choy, the lobbyist who was responsible for coordinating the bribery scheme that Sen. English and Rep. Cullen became a part of. These cases show that we have a moral crisis in our public institutions and must do all we can to restore integrity to government.

In 2024, a Civil Beat/New York Times investigation unveiled just how deeply pay-to-play culture is ingrained in local politics. After reviewing hundreds of thousands of campaign contributions and more than 70,000 government contracts, reporters found that nearly \$1 out of every \$5 donated to politicians came from people tied to companies doing business with state and local governments.

As Civil Beat reported at the time, when some companies were on the cusp of winning major government contracts, people connected to them donated large amounts of campaign funds to influential public officials who were in positions to sway the awards.

Perhaps the most telling part of the report is encapsulated in the following excerpt from the special investigation: *Even though those contributors generally didn't acknowledge their connections to the companies, they were not violating Hawai'i law, which only prohibits donations directly from the firms. "Everyone gets very upset with pay-to-play, but it's legal," said Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Campaign Spending Commission.*

It might be legal today, but it shouldn't be any longer if we care about our future. Government should work for the public interest, not special interests. It is in that spirit that we support this and other reforms to restore integrity to our state's electoral and governmental processes.

With aloha,

Kris Coffield

President, Imua Alliance



**House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
February 3, 2026 at 2 PM
Room 325**

Testimony with COMMENTS for HB2052

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

The Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO) respectfully submits **comments and concerns on HB2052**, which seeks to prohibit campaign contributions from state or county contractors, grantees, and their officers. HANO supports efforts to strengthen transparency and fairness in campaign financing and recognizes that the intent of this measure is to address “pay-to-play” practices, particularly among large, for-profit contractors with direct financial incentives tied to government awards. Our comments are offered to help ensure this goal is met without unintended consequences for nonprofit organizations and their volunteer leadership.

HANO is a statewide, sector-wide professional association of nonprofits that works to strengthen and unite the nonprofit sector as a collective force to improve the quality of life in Hawai'i. Since 2006, HANO has been a leading voice for the nonprofit sector, leveraging resources, educating and advocating for policies and practices that promote the professionalism, sustainability, and effectiveness of nonprofits and the communities they serve.

Nonprofits Differ Fundamentally from For-Profit Contractors.

Nonprofits that receive government grants do so to deliver public services, not to generate profit. Many nonprofit officers, particularly board officers, are unpaid volunteers with no personal financial interest in the award of grants or contracts. We believe that applying contractor-style campaign contribution restrictions to these individuals extends beyond the bill's underlying rationale of preventing financial influence tied to personal economic gain.

Broad Application to Volunteer Officers and Their Families.

As drafted, HB2052 defines “officer” broadly enough to include nonprofit board chairs, vice chairs, treasurers, and secretaries, regardless of compensation. This would restrict volunteer board members from making campaign contributions solely because of their governance role, and would also extend restrictions to their immediate family members, many of whom have no connection to the nonprofit or the public funding at issue. This raises practical and constitutional concerns when applied to individuals who receive no financial benefit from government grants or contracts.

Existing Safeguards Already Address Pay-to-Play Risks.

Current law already provides meaningful protections. HRS §42F-103(c) requires nonprofits

receiving state grants to have uncompensated governing boards free from material conflicts of interest, and IRC §501(c)(3) strictly prohibits charitable organizations from making political contributions. These guardrails already significantly limit pay-to-play risks within the nonprofit sector.

Risk to Civic Engagement and Nonprofit Sustainability.

Nonprofit leaders already operate under significant limits on political activity and face complex requirements to secure and administer public funding. Additional restrictions may discourage board service and leadership participation, narrowing civic engagement at a time when nonprofit perspectives are critical. This concern is heightened as nonprofits face severe operational strain from federal funding disruptions, rising costs, and increasing demand for services.

Despite HANO's concerns, if this measure is to move forward, we would recommend adopting the more reasonable and balanced framework proposed by HB1519, **which establishes a higher compliance threshold of \$250,000 and limits applicability to compensated officers of organizations receiving government grants or contracts.** This approach would better preserve the bill's intent while reducing unintended harm to nonprofit governance, community leadership, and civic engagement.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:41:42 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary Committee% Hawaiian Affairs Committee,

As former chair of the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct (CISC), I submit this testimony in support of HB 2052 RELATING TO CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS.

CISC proposed a similar bill to "amend the prohibition against contributions to a candidate committee or noncandidate committee by state and county contractors, to include state and county grantees and owners, officers, and immediate family members of a state or county contractor or state or county grantee." CISC December 1, 2022 Report at 33.

Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:46:36 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diann Karin Lynn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this campaign support restriction.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:03:18 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel R Freund	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please to the right thing and advance this good government initiative. - Dan Freund (Kapaa)

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:23:46 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leo Nahe Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support [HB2052](#)

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:52:20 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pamela Elders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of HB2052 because it would close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions. I also support HB 1519, but prefer the limits in HB2052.

The voting public needs to know their vote counts and limiting the influence of big donors is vital to that end.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support.

Mahalo

Pam Elders

Laupahoehoe, HI 96764

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:56:25 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of both HB1519 and HB2052. I believe that HB2052 is the stronger approach, but I think at least ONE of them needs to go through.

Preventing state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support.

Mahalo,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:01:18 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. But I prefer the version that requires disclosure of the names of officers and their immediate family members. Please ensure this gets through all committees and gets a final vote this session.

Ideally, the disclosure list of officers and immediate family members should be a publicly available database. That way we don't need the CSC staff expending resources to try to monitor compliance. We can crowdsource compliance (i.e., investigative journalists will be all over it). To me, the public disclosure of these individuals is just as important as the prohibition.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:50:18 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of HB2052, which would prevent state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active. It will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This is one of the most important bills to me in this legislative session. It is SO IMPORTANT to make our elections more honest and more transparent! Many people are now so cynical and distrusting of politics, and the influence of big money is a major reason for that. This bill builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached.

I understand that HB1519 is very similar to HB2052. **I prefer the broader provisions in HB2052**, but I'd be happy if either bill were passed.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:08:10 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of HB2052

Preventing state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support.

Mahalo,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:53:05 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Stover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:09:18 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support HB2052 because I believe it will make our elections fairer and more transparent, which is important for a representative democracy. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:36:37 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lindsay Roth	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB2052.

This bill advances thoughtful policy that strengthens community wellbeing and promotes fairness and accountability within our systems. HB2052 reflects Hawai‘i’s commitment to practical, people-centered solutions that serve the long-term health of our communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Roth, LCSW
Kailua-Kona, Hawai‘i

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:53:57 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANDREW ISODA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of HB1519 / HB2052

Preventing state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support.

Mahalo,

Andrew Isoda
Lahaina, Mau'i

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:54:41 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

But if you look at this in reality, let's say someone gives you \$500 or \$1,000. But class or whatever isn't necessary. Then, the person who gave you the \$1,000 could potentially benefit. However, this could eventually lead to oligarchy.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:00:24 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kencho Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of HB1519 / HB2052

Preventing state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support.

Mahalo,

Kencho Gurung, Hilo

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 6:33:31 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of HB2052 and urge you to pass it

Preventing state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support.

Thank you

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 3:09:05 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HB2052.

Preventing state and county contractors, grantees, and their families from making political contributions while their contracts or grants are active will close a serious loophole and ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes, not to sway political campaigns or decisions.

This bill makes our elections more honest and more transparent. It also builds trust by making sure contractors and grantees stay focused on their work without causing any perception of political strings attached. Please support. Mahalo.

HB-2052

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:33:34 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of both HB2052 and HB1519. I offer this testimony as a board member of the Hawai‘i Workers Center and a member of the Honolulu Tenants Union.

Preventing contractors and grantees from donating to politicians is an important safeguard for the integrity of government. These measures would help ensure that decisions about awarding contracts and grants are based on merit and public need—not political donations. When residents can see that government business is conducted free from political influence, trust in elected officials and public institutions grows, strengthening our democracy.

Between the two proposals, I believe HB2052 represents the stronger approach. Drafted by the Campaign Spending Commission, HB2052 is broader in scope, covering all contractors and grantees—including unpaid nonprofit board members—and applies at a lower contribution threshold. This comprehensive coverage would close loopholes and create clearer, more enforceable standards.

HB1519 also takes important steps by incorporating lessons learned from similar legislation that advanced to Conference Committee last year. By focusing on paid officers of organizations and adding disclosure requirements, it reflects thoughtful refinement and addresses some practical concerns raised in prior sessions.

While both bills move Hawai‘i in the right direction, I urge lawmakers to advance HB2052 as the more robust and effective tool for protecting public confidence in government contracting and grant-making.

me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Hawai‘i Workers Center Board Member

Honolulu Tenants Union

