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## STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

February 2, 2026

### HB 2094: RELATING TO JURY DUTY:

#### Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **supports** HB 2094 which increases compensation for jurors and prospective jurors who are summoned to serve. While the increase provided by this bill is modest, it is nonetheless an important and meaningful step toward ensuring that jury service remains accessible and that jury pools reflect a fair cross-section of our community.

Jury service is a cornerstone of our justice system. Both the United States and Hawai'i Constitutions guarantee the right to a trial by an impartial jury drawn from a representative cross-section of the community. That promise is undermined when economic realities effectively exclude working people, low-income individuals, caregivers, and hourly wage earners from serving. When juror compensation fails to keep pace with the real costs of participation, such as lost wages, transportation, or childcare, jury service can become a financial hardship rather than a shared civic responsibility.

From the perspective of the OPD, representative juries are essential to fair trials. Our clients' constitutional rights depend not only on the presence of a jury, but on a jury that reflects the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the community. When financial barriers discourage participation, juries are more likely to be drawn from a narrower segment of the population, which can undermine confidence in verdicts and in the justice system itself.

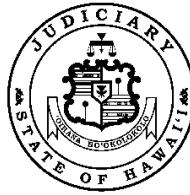
We acknowledge that the increase in juror compensation proposed by this measure will not, on its own, eliminate all barriers to jury service. However, even a nominal increase matters. For many individuals, particularly those living paycheck to

paycheck, small increases can make the difference between being able to serve and needing to seek excusal due to hardship. This bill sends an important message that the State values jurors' time and recognizes the real costs associated with fulfilling this civic duty.

Moreover, improving juror compensation promotes efficiencies within the judicial system. By reducing hardship-based excusals and improving juror turnout, the courts can more effectively assemble jury panels and avoid delays that strain already limited judicial resources.

For these reasons, the Office of the Public Defender **supports** HB 2094.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



***The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i***  
***Ka 'Oihana Ho'okolokolo, Moku'āina 'o Hawai'i***

**Testimony to the Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session**

**House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs**

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair

Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

By

Dean T. Hiraki  
Deputy Chief Court Administrator, Third Circuit

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 2094, Relating to Jury Duty.

**Purpose:** Increase the amount of each juror or prospective juror is paid for each day of actual attendance at court. Appropriates moneys.

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary strongly supports this bill, which is part of the Judiciary's 2026 legislative package. This bill proposes to increase juror compensation from a fixed flat rate of \$30 to \$50 per day.

Juror compensation was last increased in 1989 from \$20 to \$30 per day. Since that time, the cost of living in the State of Hawai'i has drastically increased. While juror compensation is not meant to serve as a substitute for wages, raising the daily rate would provide some relief for those who serve this important civic duty.

By comparison, jurors who serve in the United States District Court for the District of Hawai'i receive \$50 per day. The National Center for State Courts recommends that at the very least, state courts should review compensation rates in relation to the prevailing federal rate for the local federal district.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Jury Studies, National Center for State Courts, Juror Compensation in the United States, (April 2022).



House Bill No. 2094, Relating to Jury Duty  
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 2:00 PM  
Page 2

An increase in juror compensation helps ensure a diverse jury pool by allowing people from varying socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in the judicial system without undue hardship. It further acknowledges the sacrifice our citizenry makes to serve on a jury and shows the state's appreciation for such service.

The increase would require commensurate annual funding by the Legislature. We therefore also ask that the requested appropriation be supported by the Legislature and that any additional funding not supplant the Judiciary's other existing funding and budget requests.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2094.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY**  
**KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I**  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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**THE HONORABLE DAVID A. TARNAS, CHAIR**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**  
**Thirty-Third State Legislature**  
**Regular Session of 2026**  
**State of Hawai'i**

February 3, 2026

**RE: H.B. 2094; RELATING TO JURY DUTY.**

Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in support of H.B. 2094.

H.B. 2094 addresses a quiet but serious threat to the fairness and integrity of our justice system: the growing financial burden placed on ordinary citizens who answer the call for jury service. Our court system relies on jurors to decide matters that profoundly affect people's lives: whether a victim receives justice, whether a defendant is held accountable, whether the values of our community are upheld. Jurors are not passive observers. They listen carefully to difficult evidence, deliberate thoughtfully, and shoulder the moral weight of decisions no one else can make for them. This system only works when juries reflect the full diversity of our community.

Jury compensation in Hawai'i simply does not reflect today's economic reality. For many working people, that amount does not even come close to covering lost wages, childcare costs, or even basic transportation. As a result, certain people experience disproportionate hardship from jury service: hourly workers, caregivers, young workers, and those living paycheck to paycheck. Although the courts can grant relief from jury service for manifest hardship, this reality skews jury pools and undermines public confidence in verdicts. Justice should not depend on whether someone can afford to serve.

For prosecutors, this matters deeply. When juries are unrepresentative, both victims and defendants suffer. Both victims and defendants deserve verdicts delivered by juries that truly reflect the community. When financial barriers narrow who can serve, the legitimacy of outcomes is called into question. That harms everyone involved in the justice system.

This bill takes a modest, responsible step toward fixing that problem by increasing daily juror compensation. It does not overpay jurors or turn jury service into a financial windfall. It

simply acknowledges that civic duty should not come at an unreasonable personal cost. The appropriation recognizes that if we value juries as a cornerstone of our judiciary, we must be willing to invest in them.

We regularly tell jurors that their service is essential and appreciated. This bill makes the message real. The Department respectfully urges this Committee to pass H.B. 2094 and strengthen the foundation of justice in Hawaii by ensuring jury service is accessible to all.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-2094**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:03:47 AM  
Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!!