



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/05/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2185, RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS.

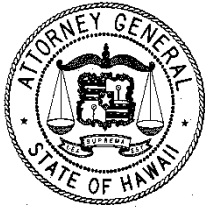
Purpose of Bill: Authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging their sports official duties. Makes intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a class B felony. Clarifies that a sports official includes a school or league administrator. Clarifies that a sports official's duties cover sports events at public schools and private schools.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2185, which provides increased support and protection for educational workers and sports officials by elevating criminal penalties for assaults committed against such persons.

The Department believes that ensuring the safety and well-being of school personnel is of the utmost importance. This bill recognizes the need to safeguard those who serve and support the Department's students each day. The Department commends the bill's focus on advancing safety protections and accountability. The Department is committed to continuing to do everything in its power to keep its staff and students safe. The Department suggests adding athletic directors to the definition of a sports official in HRS § 706-605.6.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2185.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 2185, RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Thursday, February 5, 2026 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
David N. Matsumiya, Deputy Attorney General, or
Alan K. Akao, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General understands and appreciates the purpose of this bill and provides the following comments with suggested amendments.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) authorize the Attorney General to represent a sports official in a civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging the sports official's duties; (2) make intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a class B felony; and (3) clarify the definition of a sports official.

Civil Action

The Attorney General is the chief legal officer for the State of Hawai'i under the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i. See Haw. Const. art. V, § 6. The law reflects that function: the Department of the Attorney General's primary role in litigation is to represent the State in civil actions. See sections 28-1 & 28-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Department of the Attorney General does not have the authority to represent individuals in their personal capacity as plaintiffs in civil suits.

The Department representing clients in a personal capacity as plaintiffs in civil suits—irrespective of the merits of such suits—is antithetical to these principles and could create potential conflicts of interest and unforeseen consequences. To effectuate the legislative intent consistent with these principles, we recommend that section 2 of

the bill be deleted and that section 1 be amended by placing it in an appropriate chapter related to the Department of Education, which would provide that the Department of Education may retain private counsel on behalf of sports official to provide representation for sports officials in civil actions to obtain temporary restraining orders.

Criminal Action

While the Department takes no position on increasing the level of severity for the offense of assaulting a sports official, we believe the following approach would effectively increase protection for sports officials, and increase penalties and deterrence for perpetrators, while still maintaining consistency among protected classes. On page 3, lines 10-15, the Department recommends inserting the word "Substantial" at the beginning of line 10, such that "substantial bodily injury" (e.g., broken bones or serious concussion) perpetrated against a sports official would qualify as assault in the first degree, a class B felony. We then recommend deleting section 5, such that "bodily injury" perpetrated against a sports official would continue to be assault in the second degree, a class C felony.

This approach would place sports officials in a similar protected class as elderly victims, under assault in the first degree, while maintaining a consistent level for protection for all of the protected classes of individuals found under assault in the second degree.

We respectfully ask the Committee to pass this bill with the recommended amendments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
('AHA KULA HO'ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: HB 2185 RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS
DATE: February 5, 2026
TIME: 2:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission ("Commission") appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 2185** which:

- 1) Authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging their sports official duties;
- 2) Clarifies that a sports official includes a league or school administrator; and
- 3) Makes bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a Class B felony.

The Commission supports all initiatives that protect the safety of public school employees and those that serve and support public school employees and students, such as sports officials.

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the DOE, and our public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

JON N. IKENAGA
PUBLIC DEFENDER

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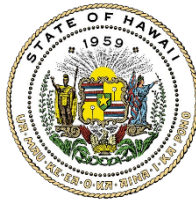
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February 4, 2026

HB1592: RELATING TO ASSAULT

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Committee on Education

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **strongly opposes HB2185.**¹ The OPD supports protection of the safety and well-being of Hawai'i's sports officials. Sports officials should not be subjected to any verbal abuse or physical assaults in the course of their duties. However, current statutes already provide sufficient protections and penalties, including upgraded penalties, to punish persons who assault sports officials.

In particular, the OPD opposes the proposed amendment to Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 707-710, assault in the first degree, which would make intentionally or knowingly causing bodily injury to a sports official an assault in the first degree (a Class B felony). Under current law causing bodily injury to a sports official is already subject to an upgraded penalty as a Class C felony under HRS § 707-711(1)(n).

Making assault against a sports official an assault in the first degree is wholly disproportionate to the degree of injury which constitutes "bodily injury"

Normally, intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing "bodily injury" to another (absent a special class) is a misdemeanor assault in the third degree offense

¹ The OPD takes no position on the proposed amendment to Chapter 28 which allows the Department of the Attorney General to represent a sports official in a civil action.

punishable by up to one year in prison. “Bodily injury” is defined as “physical pain, illness, or any impairment of physical condition.”² In layman’s terms, “bodily injury” would be the most minor degree of injury. Examples of “bodily injury” from Hawai‘i cases are physical pain with no visible physical injuries³, bruising or an abrasion that was treated with antibiotic ointment.⁴ HB2185 seeks to upgrade causing pain with no visible injury to a Class A felony assault in the first degree. Assault in the first degree requires that a person cause either “serious bodily” injury to another person or cause “substantial bodily injury” to a person sixty year of age or older. “Serious bodily injury” means “bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes serious, permanent disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ.” Examples of “serious bodily injury” from Hawai‘i cases include: (1) eight fractured ribs and broken ribs that impaired the victim’s ability to breathe for at least four to six weeks⁵; (2) victim’s lip was split through, four teeth were displaced so severely that surgical intervention was required to retain them, victim’s eye was hemorrhaged and pushed inward and the orbital floor of the eye was fractured causing blurred vision lasting almost eleven months⁶; or extensive facial injuries including fractured cheek bones necessitating corrective surgery, a broken jaw and several missing, broken or displaced teeth⁷. It is wholly disproportionate and likely unconstitutional⁸ to punish a person who causes only pain to the same degree as a person who nearly kills someone.⁹

² HRS § 707-700.

³ State v. Pomroy, 132 Hawai‘i 85, 319 P.3d 1093 (2014).

⁴ State v. Webster, 94 Hawai‘i 241, 11 P.3d 466 (2000).

⁵ State v. Meyers, 112 Hawai‘i 278, 145 P.3d 821 (App. 2006).

⁶ In re Doe, 106 Hawai‘i 530, 107 P.3d 1203 (2005) (cert. denied 107 Hawai‘i 65, 109 P.3d 706)

⁷ State v. Yamashiro, 8 Haw.App. 595, 817 P.2d 123 (1991).

⁸ The eighth amendment to the U.S. Constitution which prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment” includes penalties deemed “grossly disproportionate” to the crime committed as well as punishments which are unnecessarily harsh, arbitrary or offend society’s standard of human dignity. The same rights are protected under article I, section 12 of the Hawai‘i Constitution.

⁹ Notably, the Intermediate Court of Appeals found that even a stab wound that penetrated close to the victim’s heart and adjacent blood vessels but missed vital internal organs was not “serious bodily injury.” State v. Maddox, 116 Hawai‘i 445, 173 P.3d 592 (2007). HB2185 would seek to punish causing pain more severely than such a stab wound.

Upgrading assault against a sports official to assault in the first degree has no rational basis

Causing bodily injury to a sports official is currently assault in the second degree, which is already an upgraded offense as such conduct against a person with no special standing would be an assault in the third degree. Other special classes of persons that are included in the upgrade to assault in the second degree based on intentionally or knowingly causing bodily injury are educational workers, emergency medical services providers, persons employed at state-operated or contracted mental health facilities, firefighters or water safety officers, a home health care services providers, persons employed by a mutual benefit society, persons sixty years of age or older, national guard members and protective services workers. There are no classes of persons for which causing bodily injury would be upgraded from assault in the third degree to assault in the first degree. To reiterate, the only bases for assault in the first degree are causing “serious bodily injury” (substantial risk of death) or causing “substantial bodily injury”¹⁰ to a person sixty years of age or older. There is no rational basis to classify assault against a sports official as more serious than, for example, assault against a senior citizen, an educational worker or a firefighter.

Existing statutes already provide enhanced penalties for assaults against sports officials.

The OPD understands the intent behind this measure however, it is unnecessary as current statutes already provide enhanced penalties assaults against sports officials. To reiterate, HRS § 707-711(1)(n) already provide that a person who intentionally or knowingly causes bodily injury “sports official” is guilty of the upgraded offense of assault in the second degree, a Class C felony. This is an enhanced penalty as intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury to a person (absent any special status) is an assault in the third degree, a misdemeanor. HRS § 706-606.5 also allows persons who commits assaults or terroristic threatening offenses against sports officials to be enjoined from attending sporting events.

Increasing the severity of punishment does little to defer crime

The supposed deterrent effect of upgrading the already upgraded offense of assault against a sports official presumes that potential offenders are aware of the enhanced

¹⁰ HRS § 707-700 defines “substantial bodily injury” as: a major avulsion, laceration or penetration of the skin; a burn of at least second degree severity; a bone fracture; a serious concussion or; a tearing, rupture, or corrosive damage to the esophagus, viscera, or other internal organs.

penalties for such conduct. The reality, however, is that increasing the severity of punishment is ineffective partly because “criminals” know little about the sanctions for specific crimes.

According to legislative analyst Ben Johnson in a January 2019 report, “[T]he state can raise the maximum penalty for an offense, but that does not necessarily change the expectations of someone who might be considering committing a crime. If a person is weighing the benefits of committing a crime against the potential consequences of that act, it is the potential offender’s actual belief about a likely sanction that matters.”¹¹

Not all crimes involve a rational decision

HB2185 further presumes that individuals considering committing a criminal act have an internal discourse whereby the individual weighs the various pro and cons – whether to follow through and commit the contemplated offense. The reality, however, is that many offenses are committed on a spur of the moment – a whim or sudden impulse.

In that same 2019 report, Mr. Johnson indicated, “[C]riminal acts may be driven by many factors. Many crimes take place when the offender is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Others occur in the ‘heat of passion’ when a person experiences a strong emotion. It makes logical sense that a model assuming criminals engage in a rational cost-benefit analysis before committing a crime would not accurately predict conduct by people with an impaired ability to think rationally.”¹²

Even if the individual possesses the correct and accurate information regarding the severity of offense, often times, in the heat of the moment, criminal offenses are committed without deliberation or insight. The reality is that HB2185 may have little to no effect on deterring assaults on sports officials.

Conclusion

The OPD supports protection of the safety and well-being of Hawai‘i’s sports officials. Sports officials should not be subjected to threatening or assaultive behavior in the course of their employment. However, sports officials are already

¹¹ Ben Johnson, Do Criminal Laws Deter Crime? Deterrence Theory in Criminal Justice Policy: A Primer, MN House Research, p. 5, January 2019, available at <https://www.house.mn.gov/hrd/pubs/deterrence.pdf>.

¹² Id.

protected from such illegal conduct under current statutes for harassment, assault, and terroristic threatening, some of which provide enhanced penalties and protections for such conduct when the victim is a sports official.

True deterrence from threatening or assaultive behavior against sports officials could be achieved by enhancing security at sporting events and issuing verbal or written warnings on-the-spot of criminal consequences. This would be a proactive approach to prevent threats or assaults from occurring or escalating, rather than imposing disproportionately harsh penalties and likely unconstitutional punishment after an assault has already occurred.

HB2185 has a laudable purpose, but it is unnecessary, likely unconstitutional, has no rational basis to support its enactment and will likely not achieve its desired result. The OPD strongly opposes HB2185. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



TO: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Committee on Education

FROM: Deanna D'Olier, Executive Director
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **HB 2185 – Relating to Sports Officials – In Support**

DATE: Thursday, February 5, 2026; 2:00 p.m.
Conference room 309 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which represents more than 100 private educational institutions across the state, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 2185.

Many of our member schools are active participants in the Interscholastic League of Honolulu (ILH) and participate in Hawaii High School Athletic Association (HHSAA) state tournaments. We believe this measure is a critical step toward ensuring that student-athletes, sports officials, school personnel, and spectators can engage in athletics within a safe and respectful environment.

The safety of our community is paramount. Athletics serve as an extension of the classroom, where students learn critical life skills and, most importantly, sportsmanship. However, these lessons are undermined when the individuals responsible for maintaining the integrity of the game, the officials, are subjected to threats or physical violence.

HB 2185 addresses this by strengthening penalties, providing legal support and authorizing the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if they are assaulted or threatened while performing their duties. It also broadens protections by including coaches and school or league administrators under the definition of "sports official," whether they are paid professionals or unpaid volunteers.

Beyond the immediate legal protections, I would like to highlight several key considerations that make this bill vital for the future of Hawaii high school sports.

Hawaii, like much of the nation, is facing a critical shortage of qualified sports officials. One of the leading causes cited by departing referees and umpires is the increasing frequency of verbal and physical abuse from spectators and participants. By elevating the legal protections and providing state-backed legal representation, HB 2185 sends a clear message that Hawaii values its officials.

We appreciate that the bill explicitly clarifies that a sports official's duties cover events at both public and private schools. This ensures that our member schools and their staff receive the same level of protection and deterrence as their public school counterparts during interscholastic competitions.

The bill's definition of "lawful discharge of duty," spanning from the moment an official arrives at a venue until they return to their home or business, is an important inclusion. This bill ensures they are protected throughout their entire window of service.

HB 2185 provides the necessary legal framework to deter violence and protect those who make interscholastic athletics possible. By supporting our officials, we are supporting the safety and well-being of our students.

The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools respectfully urges this committee to pass HB 2185.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 12:59:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Osa Tui Jr.	Hawaii State Teachers Association	Support	In Person

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association supports [HB2185](#), to protect sports officials.

This bill strengthens protections for referees, umpires, and other game officials by making intentional bodily injury against them a Class B felony and authorizing the Attorney General to represent officials in civil actions when they are assaulted or threatened while performing their duties.

HSTA believes that athletics offer critical support to child development. Many of our educators work in these roles, as they need second jobs to support their families, or volunteer in these roles to support their communities. Our students deserve to play, and the adults supporting them deserve to be safe.

Please support HB2185.

Mahalo.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 5, 2026

H.B. 2185 — RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports H.B. 2185, which authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings when they are assaulted or threatened while lawfully performing their duties. The bill also enhances penalties by making the intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in their official duties a class B felony and clarifies that these duties include officiating sports events at both public and private schools.

Sports officials play a critical role in maintaining safe athletic environments for Hawai'i's students. They deserve to carry out these responsibilities without fearing for their personal safety. HGEA has long advocated for similar measures. Unfortunately, it took the recent violent incident at Moanalua High School involving Associate Athletic Director Natalie Iwamoto to underscore the urgent need for stronger legal protections. This incident demonstrated that the current system fails to provide adequate support for those who serve on the front lines of school athletics.

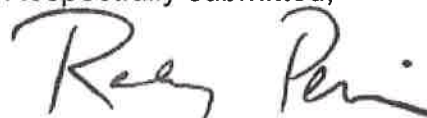
We also ask that the definition of "sports official" be expanded to include all school personnel assigned duties at the sports event, including but not limited to, classified and certificated employees who provide security, collect tickets, run concessions, or perform custodial duties, regardless of whether the person is paid or a volunteer.

In her written testimony to this committee on H.B. 1888 - Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers, Associate AD Iwamoto described having to independently navigate the complex legal process in the aftermath of the assault—dealing with law enforcement, learning how to file a temporary restraining order, and securing private legal representation. No educational or athletic official should be left to manage these challenges alone. This gap in support is unacceptable.

Authorizing the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings will ensure they receive timely, informed, and professional legal support at a moment when they are most vulnerable. Combined with enhanced criminal penalties, this measure sends a clear message: Hawai'i will not tolerate violence against individuals who serve and protect our student-athletes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 2185.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Pereira". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Randy" and last name "Pereira" clearly distinguishable.

Randy Pereira
Executive Director



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Kāneʻohe Elementary School
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Kaneohe, HI 96744
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Date: 02/05/2026
Time: 2:00 PM
Location: 309
Committee: Education

Department: Education
Person Testifying: Derek Minakami, NBCT, Principal of Kāneʻohe Elementary School
Title of Bill: HB2185 RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS.

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee

As a school principal, the safety of students and staff at school or any related function is my highest priority. This extends to after school programs and sports which often serve to motivate students and contribute to their growth as learners. When students feel safe, they are able to fully engage in learning and not be distracted by threats or fears.

Sadly, recently there has been an escalation of threats, harassment and even assault at sporting events and unfortunately with students as witnesses. The assault suffered by Moanalua High School Associate Athletic Director Natalie Iwamoto highlights the elevated risk and real, lasting suffering we face. Regrettably, many other dedicated sport officials who selflessly devote themselves to ensuring students have the opportunity to participate in sports have been enduring repeated harassment outside of the headlines. Feeling exposed and without recourse, too many have quit.

This bill provides accountability for those that threaten the safety of sports officials and puts into place protections for those being targeted. Further, it reinforces that schools, a haven for our most vulnerable populations, should be kept safe and free of harassment.

Mahalo for your consideration of this request.

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:11:48 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joel J Kawachi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 2185

Relating to Sports Officials

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Joel Kawachi**, and I serve as the Athletic Director at **Moanalua High School** in Honolulu. I am submitting testimony **in strong support of House Bill 2185**, a companion measure to **Senate Bill 2900**, which addresses the safety and legal protection of sports officials.

As an athletic administrator, I work closely with referees, umpires, scorers, coaches, and school administrators who serve as sports officials at both public and private school events. These individuals play a critical role in ensuring that athletic contests are conducted safely, fairly, and in accordance with the rules. Unfortunately, they are increasingly exposed to **threats, harassment, and physical assaults** simply for performing their duties.

HB 2185 addresses this growing problem in several important and meaningful ways.

First, I strongly support the provision authorizing the **Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil actions** when they have been assaulted or threatened while lawfully discharging their duties. For many sports officials as defined in this bill—including athletic administrators, coaches, and other event supervisors, many of whom serve in volunteer or part-time roles—the cost and complexity of pursuing legal protection can be prohibitive. This bill sends a clear message that the State of Hawai‘i stands behind those who serve our athletic communities.

Second, I support the bill’s clarification and expansion of the definition of a **“sports official.”** By explicitly including referees, umpires, coaches, and league or school administrators—whether paid or unpaid—this legislation reflects the real-world structure of school athletics. In Hawai‘i, administrators and coaches are frequently on the front lines of event supervision and conflict de-escalation, and they face the same risks as traditional game officials.

Third, I support the bill’s clarification that a sports official’s **lawful discharge of duties extends from arrival at the venue through return to home or business**. This recognizes that threats and assaults do not always occur on the playing field alone, but can occur before or after events, including in parking lots or surrounding areas.

Finally, the enhanced criminal penalties for assaulting a sports official appropriately align these protections with those already afforded to other public-serving professionals, such as educational workers, health care providers, and emergency responders. This is not about punishing passion—it is about **detering violence and reinforcing that abusive behavior has serious consequences.**

Taken together with **SB 2900**, HB 2185 represents a thoughtful and necessary framework to protect sports officials, ensure accountability, and preserve a safe environment for student-athletes, families, and school communities.

I respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB 2185** and continue advancing legislation that prioritizes safety, respect, and support for those who serve our youth through education-based athletics.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your leadership on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,
Joel Kawachi
Athletic Director
Moanalua High School



Hawaii High School Athletic Association

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www.hhsaa.org | Social: @HHSAAsports

February 4, 2026

Testimony in Support of H.B. 2185, Relating to Assault

The Hawaii High School Athletic Association (“HHSAA”) supports H.B. 2185, legislation that authorize the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging their sports official duties. Makes intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a class B felony. Clarifies that a sports official includes a school or league administrator. Clarifies that a sports official's duties cover sports events at public schools and private schools.

Before my role as Executive Director of HHSAA, I was a private litigation attorney familiar with the judicial process. Most victims are not; after assault, they are left to navigate the legal system alone or must pay for representation. I have assisted several victims by providing information or helping them find attorneys. It is unjust that victims should bear these burdens for harm they did not cause.

Hawaii is currently experiencing a significant shortage of individuals willing to serve as sports officials. This shortage is related to inappropriate and unacceptable behavior by fans, which is frequently observed at high school sporting events. For example, during last week's state soccer tournament, I witnessed instances of verbal abuse and hostility towards officials. Such conduct discourages individuals from becoming or remaining officials.

Unless the legislature acts to support sports officials, high school athletic events will suffer. Leagues have shortened their seasons due to the lack of available officials. Immediate action is needed to demonstrate support for these essential individuals and avert further disruption to high school sports.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of H.B. 2185.

Christopher Chun

Christopher Chun, Executive Director

About the HHSAA

Founded in 1956, the Hawaii High School Athletic Association is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational athletic organization exclusively dedicated to serving 98 public and independent member high schools statewide, as they work cooperatively to support and promote athletics as part of the high school education program. As the umbrella organization of high school athletics, the HHSAA operates 52 state championships in 23 different sports, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, in addition to providing professional development opportunities for coaches and athletic administrators.



February 3, 2026

To: House Committee on Education
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

From: Thomas Yoshida
President emeritus, Hawaii State Basketball Officials Association
(yoshidat001@gmail.com)

Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair Woodson and members of the committee,

I am writing in strong support of **HB2185, Relating to Sports Officials**, on behalf of the Hawaii State Basketball Officials Association.

In 2023, I testified in support of HB264, relating to crimes against sports officials. When Governor Green signed that measure into law as **Act 140**, the State of Hawai'i sent a clear message that crimes against sports officials would not be tolerated in youth or interscholastic sports. Unfortunately, recent events demonstrate that this message has not yet resonated with the general public.

The most recent incident at Moanalua High School highlights a growing and troubling pattern. Such incidents not only hinder the recruitment of new officials, but also discourage experienced officials from continuing to serve. Many officials devote countless hours to training and skill development in order to provide this important community service. Yet, poor spectator behavior remains the primary reason nearly two-thirds of officials leave the profession after just two to three years.

In my 43 years as a basketball official, I have witnessed a significant shift in the environment of athletic contests. Where officials once heard encouragement and cheering from spectators, they are now increasingly subjected to berating and abusive comments.

This experience is reflected nationally. In a recent survey of more than 47,000 sports officials conducted by the National Association of Sports Officials, 48 percent of male respondents and 44 percent of female respondents reported feeling unsafe or fearing for their safety. Most troubling, one out of every eight officials reported being assaulted by a fan, coach, or player.

Compounding this issue, the median age of a basketball official nationwide is 56 years old, and officials are being asked to work more games as membership numbers continue to decline at all levels. Without meaningful action, the long-term sustainability of officiating—and organized sports themselves—is at risk.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for the passage of HB2185. Protecting sports officials is essential to preserving safe, fair, and positive athletic environments for our students and communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:17:33 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:28:54 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee:

I submit testimony in strong support of HB2185. Referees, umpires, coaches, and other sports officials should never fear for their safety simply for enforcing rules or ensuring fair play. When sports officials are assaulted or threatened, they should not be left to navigate the legal system alone or forced to find and fund their own attorney while coping with horrific trauma.

Thank you for introducing this important measure and for your commitment to safety.

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:32:21 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:34:00 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel C. Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is good legislation given recent attacks on sports officials. I support the bill.

Daniel C. Smith

Pearl City

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:37:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Veray	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Totally in support of this bill that needs to hold people accountable for respecting school coaches.

HB-2185

Submitted on: 2/5/2026 7:46:16 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Candace Vizcarra	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- This bill makes intentionally injuring a sports official a class B felony and allows the Attorney General to represent officials in civil cases when they've been assaulted or threatened. The bill covers public and private school events and includes referees, umpires, coaches, timers, scorers, and school or league administrators—paid or volunteer.

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