



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 27, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: HB 1838-HD2 -- RELATING TO VISAS

HEARING: Monday, March 2, 2026 @ 2:00 pm; Conference Room 308

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 1838-HD2 with comments.

The U and T visas are humanitarian forms of immigration relief for survivors of crime. They were created by Congress in 2000 under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. U visas are for victims of certain crimes who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse and have information about the crime, while T visas are for victims of human trafficking who assist law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of trafficking crimes. Both visas provide legal status, work authorization, and a pathway to permanent residency. They also encourage victims to cooperate with law enforcement without fear of deportation.

These visa programs are vital tools that protect victims of crime and individuals who contribute significantly to our communities.

As we are witnessing, immigration issues are complex. Because of the complexities, some entities are resistant to certify victim helpfulness due to lack of understanding about the U or T nonimmigrant status process or the lack of resources, among other reasons. Absent uniform standards for U and T visa certifications, noncitizen victims face inconsistent access to justice. Uniform policies and training of individuals involved will help to address these inconsistencies. By supporting use of U and T visas, we ensure that vulnerable individuals can come forward without fear, assist law enforcement, and help strengthen the fabric of our society. I urge you to

HB 1838-HD2: testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued.

support these essential pathways so that our immigration system remains fair, humane, and effective.

Thank you for hearing HB 1838-HD2.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



March 1, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB1838 HD2**, Relating to Visas

To: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1838 HD2, Relating to Visas

Hearing: Monday, March 2, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women is dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of women and girls in Hawaii, with a particular focus on those who are most vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and discrimination. The Commission **supports HB1838 HD2**, as **it seeks to standardize and improve the process by which noncitizen victims of crime, including survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, can access U and T visa certifications**, by establishing clear, uniform statewide requirements. These visas provide a critical pathway to safety and justice for individuals who have suffered serious crimes and are willing to assist law enforcement.

By establishing uniform statewide requirements and mandating consistent policies across state and county certifying entities, this **bill addresses longstanding barriers to equitable access for noncitizen victims**. Inconsistent practices and lack of clear guidance have historically resulted in confusion, delays, and, in some cases, the denial of protections for those most in need. The bill's provisions for training and resource allocation to certifying officials are especially vital, as they **will help ensure that staff are equipped with the knowledge and sensitivity required to handle these cases appropriately** and in accordance with federal law.

HB1838 HD2 aligns with best practices recognized nationally, which emphasize the importance of clear, survivor-centered protocols and interagency coordination in the certification process. **By supporting a more uniform, transparent, and accessible system, Hawaii can better fulfill its obligations to protect crime victims, promote public safety, and uphold the dignity of all residents.**

We respectfully urge this Committee to **pass HB1838 HD2**.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

In SUPPORT of HB1838 HD2 — Relating to Visas (U & T Certification Standards)

To: Representative **Chris Todd**, Chair
Representative **Jenna Takenouchi**, Vice Chair
and Members of the **House Committee on Finance (FIN)**

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance:

My name is **Liza Ryan-Gill**, testifying on behalf of the **Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)**. HCIR is a coalition of **30+ immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations** across the pae ‘āina working to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen Hawai‘i as a place where all families can thrive.

We write in **strong support of HB1838 HD2**, which **establishes uniform statewide requirements for U and T visa certification policies and processes**, requires each state and county certifying entity to adopt a compliant policy, and **appropriates funds for the Department of the Attorney General to provide training** so agencies can implement the law correctly. (Effective 7/1/3000.)

Why this matters for Finance

HB1838 HD2 is fundamentally a **public safety and access-to-justice measure**, but it is also an **efficient use of state resources**. Today, survivors of serious crimes and human trafficking can experience a “**zip code lottery**” depending on where they live or which agency they contact—leading to inconsistent outcomes, avoidable delays, and preventable administrative burden.

This bill improves efficiency by setting a clear statewide baseline and funding training so agencies can comply with **federal requirements** from the start—reducing rework, confusion, and inconsistent handling.

U and T visas strengthen public safety

U and T visas are federal tools intended to help **noncitizen survivors of qualifying crimes** (including domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking) **come forward, cooperate with investigations, and stabilize their lives**. When survivors fear that reporting crime will expose them to immigration consequences—or when the certification process is confusing or unpredictable—crimes go unreported and offenders remain in the community.



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hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

A consistent, transparent certification process **builds trust**, increases cooperation, and supports law enforcement and prosecutors in holding perpetrators accountable.

What HB1838 HD2 does well (and why training funds are essential)

HB1838 HD2:

- **Ends the “zip code lottery”** by requiring consistent statewide standards for U/T certification policies and processes.
- **Improves public safety** by making it easier for survivors to report crimes and cooperate with investigations.
- **Funds Attorney General training**, which is essential to reduce delays, errors, and inconsistent practices across agencies.
- Promotes **trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices** by clarifying expectations, timelines, and procedures.
- Helps ensure Hawai‘i agencies follow **federal requirements**, reducing risk of improper denials or mishandling.

From a Finance perspective, the training appropriation is the bill’s “make it work” component: it supports consistent implementation across counties and agencies, prevents costly administrative mistakes, and helps Hawai‘i avoid patchwork compliance that invites confusion and erodes public trust.

Conclusion

HB1838 HD2 strengthens Hawai‘i’s response to crime and trafficking by ensuring survivors have a fair, consistent pathway to request U and T visa certifications—grounded in federal law and supported by the training agencies need to implement it correctly.

For these reasons, HCIR respectfully urges you to **PASS HB1838 HD2**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Liza Ryan-Gill

Executive Director

Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1838, HD2 - RELATING TO VISAS

House Committee on Finance

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026 | Letter Date: March 1, 2026

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (TLC) strongly supports HB1838, HD2, a measure that strengthens public safety and due process by establishing consistent statewide procedures for U and T visa certification for noncitizen survivors of serious crime and human trafficking. TLC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing justice for immigrants and migrants across Hawai'i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy. TLC also serves on the steering committee of the Campaign for Immigrant Justice alongside the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights and the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i, and this measure is among the campaign's top legislative priorities.

U and T visas are important public safety tools created by Congress to support the detection, investigation, prosecution, conviction, and sentencing of serious crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. These programs provide humanitarian protections that allow noncitizen survivors to report crimes and cooperate with the justice system without fear of immigration consequences. Certification confirming victimization and helpfulness is a required first step in the visa application process. Although federal law authorizes state and county law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and other entities to issue certifications, it does not require them to do so. In the absence of uniform statewide standards, practices have varied across counties and agencies, resulting in confusion, improper delays and denials, and unequal access to protection for survivors.

TLC appreciates the improvements adopted by the Committee on Economic Development and Technology and the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs. The amendments clarify and strengthen survivor protections while maintaining the bill's core purpose of establishing uniform statewide certification standards aligned with federal law and best practices. Importantly, HB1838, HD2 preserves judicial review as an essential accountability mechanism and clarifies that survivors are not required to seek re-evaluation by a certifying entity before pursuing judicial review. This provision ensures survivors facing urgent immigration or safety concerns retain meaningful and timely access to relief.

TLC respectfully requests that the Committee on Finance amend this measure to reinstate language from HB1838, HD1 recognizing state courts and judges as U and T visa certifiers, consistent with federal law. State courts and judges are explicitly authorized under federal law to issue certifications, and Hawai`i courts have exercised this authority. The Hawai`i Judiciary has also invested in judicial training on U and T visa certification, including as recently as January 2024 and September 2023, recognizing the courts' essential role in enhancing access to justice for noncitizen survivors.

Moreover, state courts are often the first - and sometimes the only - viable certifying option available to survivors. Judges may sign certifications whether a criminal investigation or prosecution has occurred or will occur. In many cases, judges may be the only government officials positioned to certify a survivor's helpfulness, particularly in non-criminal proceedings involving domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. These proceedings include civil protection orders, injunctions against harassment, gun violence protective orders, child welfare matters, workplace sexual assault and labor abuse cases, adult protection proceedings, and civil lawsuits seeking damages. Such proceedings provide meaningful accountability and court-ordered protection but do not require involvement in the criminal legal system. For many survivors seeking safety and stability, state courts and judges serve as a critical access point for U and T visa certification.

TLC therefore proposes the following amendments:

On p. 4, lines 8-10:

“Certifying entity” means any state or county entity that is authorized under federal law to issue U or T visa certifications, ~~excluding state courts.~~

On p. 4, lines 11-16:

“Certifying official” means:

- (1) The head of a certifying entity;
- (2) A person employed in a supervisory role specifically designated by the head of a certifying entity to respond to requests for U or T visa certifications; ~~or~~
- (3) A state or county prosecutor; or
- (4) A state judge.**

HB1838, HD2 promotes safer communities by supporting survivors and establishing fair, transparent, and consistent certification practices statewide. The bill requires certifying entities to adopt written public policies, designate certifying officials, and comply with reasonable response timelines. It also preserves confidentiality safeguards, language access provisions, and reporting and training requirements – all essential to supporting statewide implementation and survivor access to relief.

We are grateful for the Legislature’s leadership in prioritizing survivor protection and public safety, and we urge the Committee to advance this measure with the recommended amendments.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of The Legal Clinic
and Board President Amefil Agbayani,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Sablan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1838, HD2 RELATING TO VISAS

**REP. CHRIS TODD, CHAIR
REP. JENNA TAKENOUCI, VICE-CHAIR**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**SHAWN BENTON
WILLIAM KANEKO
CO-CHAIRS**

HAWAII COALITION FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Hearing Date: Monday, March 2, 2026, 2:00 pm, Room 308

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Coalition for Civil Rights (HCCR) is a coalition of over 100+ leading social justice, civil rights and immigration organizations and individuals, including the ACLU of Hawai'i, Japanese American Citizens League, J20+, Hawai'i Commission on the Status of Women, The Legal Clinic, NAPABA Hawai'i, and others. HCCR is in **strong support** of House Bill 1838, HD2 which establishes uniform statewide requirements for policies and processes governing the issuance of U and T visa certifications for noncitizen victims of crime in Hawaii.

Currently, there is no statewide policy requiring or standardizing U and T visa certification processes in Hawaii. Without uniform requirements, victims' ability to obtain certifications depends entirely on which agency they encounter and that agency's individual policies—if any exist at all. This patchwork approach leads to disparate outcomes for similarly situated crime victims based solely on geography or the agency handling their case.

Issuing U and T visa certifications strengthens agencies' ability to detect, investigate, and prosecute serious crimes and encourages victims to report crimes committed against them and participate in investigations and prosecutions.

When victims know that clear, consistent policies govern certification processes, they are more likely to cooperate with law enforcement. This leads to more successful investigations and prosecutions of serious crimes including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. HB 1838 represents sound public policy that serves the interests of crime victims, law enforcement, and all Hawaii residents. By establishing uniform statewide requirements for U and T visa certifications and funding training for certifying officials, this bill will:

- Encourage immigrant crime victims to report crimes and cooperate with law enforcement;
- Strengthen Hawaii's ability to investigate and prosecute serious crimes including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking;
- Ensure fair and consistent treatment of crime victims across all islands and jurisdictions; and
- Make our communities safer by building trust between law enforcement and all residents.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 1838, HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

To: House Committee on Finance
Re: **HB1838 HD2– Relating to Visas**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
March 2, 2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1838 HD2**. This bill establishes uniform statewide requirements for policies and processes for the issuance of U and T visa certifications for noncitizen victims of crime, requires each state and county certifying entity to adopt a policy and process for the issuance of U and T visa certifications consistent with those statewide requirements. It also appropriates funds for the Department of the Attorney General to provide training on federal and state requirements for U and T visa certifications.

Across our state, many mothers who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or trafficking are raising children while navigating the criminal justice system. When a mother cooperates with law enforcement but cannot obtain timely certification for a U or T visa, her entire family is placed at risk. The fear of deportation or family separation can force mothers to choose between protecting their children and seeking safety.

For children, the consequences are profound. Instability in immigration status can mean housing insecurity, economic hardship, and ongoing exposure to trauma. When mothers are unable to secure legal protection, children may remain in dangerous situations or lose access to stability that supports healing and healthy development.

This bill provides clear timelines, written policies, and accountability so that families are not left in limbo due to inconsistent practices. The bill's training provisions will also help ensure that agencies respond in a trauma-informed and family-centered manner.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy



COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 2, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1838, HD2, RELATING TO VISAS.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Reps. Miyake and Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - *The People in Action Maui*. Roots Reborn **strongly supports HB 1838, HD2**, Relating to Visas, which establishes uniform statewide requirements for policies and processes for the issuance of U and T visa certifications for noncitizen victims of crime, requires each state and county certifying entity to adopt those policies and processes, and funds training so they comply with federal U and T visa requirements. *Roots Reborn has successfully collaborated with the Maui Police Department to co-author MPD's current U-visa certification policy, which has been implemented and is working well in practice, giving us direct, practical insight into how effective policies can be designed and used on the ground.*

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, multicultural immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and beyond. We operate the first Maui-based immigration legal aid program, providing pro bono services. We support community members with document replacement, complex immigration cases, and defense against policies that undermine immigrant rights, including for clients seeking U and T visas. U visas serve immigrant victims of qualifying crimes, and T visas serve victims of human trafficking; in both cases, a law enforcement or government-signed certification (Form I-918B for U visas or I-914B for T visas) confirming a victim's helpfulness in detecting, investigating, or prosecuting crime or trafficking is essential to their federal applications.

Under federal law, U and T visa certifications are discretionary, but in practice they are often the decisive factor in whether a survivor can obtain safety, stability, and lawful presence. We see daily how inconsistent or unclear local policies and ad hoc practices for issuing these certifications can delay or derail a victim's case. Attorneys and legal staff must navigate different expectations and procedures from one agency to another, and survivors bear the costs in time, uncertainty, and exposure to continued violence or exploitation.

For Maui clients, many of whom are also wildfire survivors, these delays compound trauma. Victims of domestic violence and trafficking are especially vulnerable; they must weigh the risk of reaching out for help when they do not know whether a certifying agency will respond promptly, at all, or according to any clear standard. Uneven processes and uncertain use of discretion around U and T visa certifications effectively retraumatize people who have already suffered serious harm and discourage them from cooperating with law enforcement, undermining community safety for everyone.

HB 1838, HD2 is a practical, targeted solution. By creating uniform statewide requirements and requiring every state and county certifying entity to adopt clear policies and processes that are supported by training from the Department of the Attorney General. This bill removes a major barrier for immigrant victims of crime seeking U and T visas and promotes consistency, transparency, and timely access to life-saving protections. Our communities' safety should not depend on whether a victim happens to live in a county with a well-developed U and T visa policy; statewide standards ensure that all survivors in Hawai'i can seek protection and cooperate with law enforcement without fear.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written in a cursive style.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*

El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*



Committee: House Committee on Finance
Hearing Date/Time: Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00 PM
Place: Conference Room 308 & via Videoconference
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB 1838, HD2, Relating to Visas

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i, I write in strong support of HB 1838, HD2, which would establish uniform statewide policies and processes for U and T visa certifications for noncitizen crime survivors in Hawai'i.

HB 1838, HD2 enhances access to justice and strengthen community trust. By requiring law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and other certifying entities to adopt clear, consistent policies, this bill promotes fairness and transparency in the certification process. Standardized procedures give survivors confidence that their cooperation will be supported, which strengthens trust between immigrant communities and public safety officials.

HB 1838, HD2 promotes safe communities by encouraging crime reporting. Evidence shows that when victims feel safe coming forward, public safety outcomes improve for all community members, as fear of deportation reduces crime reporting among immigrant communities.¹ By reducing uncertainty and fear surrounding the certification process, this measure helps victims report crimes and cooperate with law enforcement, supporting safer communities.

HB 1838, HD2 ensures proper training and accountability for certifying officials. The bill's training requirements for state and county certifying officials are essential to preventing inappropriate denials and ensuring compliance with federal and state law. Well-trained officials are better equipped to understand their responsibilities, protect vulnerable populations, and uphold victims' rights—particularly important for individuals who may otherwise avoid authorities due to fear or misinformation.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the committee to support HB 1838, HD2.

¹ Reva Dhingra et al., "Immigration Policies and Access to the Justice System: The Effect of Enforcement Escalations on Undocumented Immigrants and Their Communities," *Political Behavior* 44 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09663-w>

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mandy Fernandes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Mandy Fernandes
Policy Director
ACLU of Hawai'i

With more than 4,000 Hawaii-based members, the mission of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the United States and Hawai'i State Constitutions through legislative, litigation, and public education work. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving our communities in Hawai'i for over 60 years.

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 1:38:06 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	CARES Community Advocacy Research Education Services	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support.

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 10:49:58 AM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha,

Please support this Bill.

Larry Smith

HD 27

Member of Indivisible

Testimony In SUPPORT of HB1838 HD2

Committee on Finance

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Jeremiah Brown and I submit this testimony in **support of HB1838 HD2**, which establishes uniform statewide requirements for policies and processes for issuing U and T visa certifications for noncitizen victims of crime, requires each state and county certifying entity to adopt a compliant policy and process, and appropriates funds for the Department of the Attorney General to provide training on all federal and state requirements for U and T visa certifications.

Survivors of serious crimes and trafficking should not face a “zip code lottery” when seeking U or T visa certification. HB1838 HD2 creates clear, consistent statewide standards so victims and survivors can access fair and timely certification processes regardless of which county or agency they interact with. This measure also strengthens public safety. When survivors trust that coming forward will not create additional harm, confusion, or arbitrary delays, they are more likely to report crimes and cooperate with investigations—helping hold offenders accountable and keeping our communities safer.

Finally, training is essential for effective implementation. Funding for Attorney General training will help certifying entities and officials understand federal requirements, reduce errors and delays, and promote consistent practices statewide.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1838 HD2**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 4:53:24 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jen Lum, and I support HB1838 HD2. This bill sets clear rules for how to issue U and T visa certifications for noncitizen victims of crime. It requires each state and county office that issues these certifications to follow the same policies and processes. It also provides funding for the Department of the Attorney General to train staff on the federal and state requirements for these certifications.

Survivors of serious crimes and trafficking should not face unfair differences based on where they live when trying to get U or T visas. HB1838 HD2 creates consistent standards so that victims can receive fair and timely support, no matter which county or office they deal with. This bill also improves public safety. When survivors know they can come forward without facing extra harm, confusion, or delays, they are more likely to report crimes and help with investigations. This helps hold offenders accountable and makes our communities safer.

Training is crucial for making this work effectively. Funding for training will help certification offices understand the requirements better, which will reduce mistakes and delays and ensure consistent practices statewide.

For these reasons, I ask that the Committee PASS HB1838 HD2.

Mahalo,
Jen Lum, 'Ewa Beach

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 8:25:23 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith Mura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT HB1838 HD2

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 6:12:23 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Dickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB1838 STANDARDIZED PROCEDURE FOR U-VISA AND T-VISA

I am writing in strong support of HB1838. This Bill would add a new Chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes setting standardized procedures for applying for U and T visa status for noncitizen victims of crime. These visas were established by Congress to protect noncitizen victims of human trafficking or other crimes to avoid deportation by immigration authorities while assisting local law enforcement to find and prosecute the perpetrators.

Everyone in the community is harmed when serious crimes are not reported to the authorities or prosecuted. Noncitizen residents may be afraid to report crimes or assist in investigation and prosecution if they face deportation by coming forward. These special visa categories are intended to protect victims who come forward from immigration proceedings.

The application for these visas must be filed with federal authorities by local law enforcement and prosecuting agencies. Since the application is a discretionary process there are significant differences in filing across Hawaii's agencies and islands. This bill is an important step toward providing support for noncitizens who have been victimized, and a step toward more effective prosecution of human traffickers and criminals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this Bill.

Kathleen Dickson

Waikiki

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 10:54:06 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ana Laura Flores-Garcia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB1838, HD2

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and respected members of the Committee on Finance,

I am a community member residing in Manoa and submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 1838, HD2 which establishes uniform statewide policies and processes for U and T visa certifications for noncitizen survivors of crime in Hawai‘i. In my ten years of experience working for the Mexican Consulate in New York and Philadelphia, I witnessed firsthand how U and T visas can be life-changing tools for survivors of serious and often violent crimes. When survivors understand the process and trust that certifying agencies will treat them fairly, they are far more likely to come forward, cooperate with investigations, and seek protection.

U and T visas are federally established mechanisms designed to support public safety and survivor protection, but their effectiveness depends heavily on consistent and transparent implementation at the state and local level. By creating clear, uniform certification practices, HB 1838 would strengthen systems that already exist, improve trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement, and ultimately make Hawai‘i’s communities safer for everyone.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support HB 1838, HD2.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Ana Flores
anaflores.mpa@gmail.com

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 6:43:57 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you. I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 9:02:25 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support HB1838.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 9:37:06 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Teare	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to protect noncitizens who are victims of crimes.
I'm a member of East Hawaii Indivisible

Thank you.

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 12:10:44 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Amy Agbayani in strong support of this bill. U and at bisas are needed by vullnerable individuals who need protection. This meadure will provide training and standardized protocols .

I respectfull request an amendment to reinstate language recognizing courts and judges as certifiers consistent with federal law.

mahalo for your consideration andcrrquetd your approval with the amendment.

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 1:28:22 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Cuthbert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB1838 STANDARDIZED PROCEDURE FOR U-VISA AND T-VISA

I am writing in strong support of HB1838 both personally and as a member of the East Hawai'i Indivisible. This Bill would add a new Chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes setting standardized procedures for applying for U and T visa status for noncitizen victims of crime. These visas were established by Congress to protect noncitizen victims of human trafficking or other crimes to avoid deportation by immigration authorities while assisting local law enforcement to find and prosecute the perpetrators. This is certainly a win-win.

Everyone in the community is harmed when serious crimes are not reported to the authorities or prosecuted. Noncitizen residents may be afraid to report crimes or assist in investigation and prosecution if they face deportation by coming forward. These special visa categories are intended to protect victims who come forward from immigration proceedings.

The application for these visas must be filed with federal authorities by local law enforcement and prosecuting agencies. Since the application is a discretionary process there are significant differences in filing across Hawaii's agencies and islands. This bill is an important step toward providing support for noncitizens who have been victimized, and a step toward more effective prosecution of human traffickers and criminals. This standardization across Hawai'i state agencies promises to save time and money.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this Bill.

David Cuthbert, Pahoa, Hawai'i

HB-1838-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 1:52:49 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Bellamy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1838 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes setting standardized procedures for applying for U and T visa status for noncitizen victims of crime. These visas were established by Congress to protect noncitizen victims of human trafficking or other crimes to avoid deportation by immigration authorities while assisting local law enforcement to find and prosecute the perpetrators.

Everyone in the community is harmed when serious crimes are not reported to the authorities or prosecuted. Noncitizen residents may be afraid to report crimes or assist in investigation and prosecution if they face deportation by coming forward. These special visa categories are intended to protect victims who come forward from immigration proceedings.

The application for these visas must be filed with federal authorities by local law enforcement and prosecuting agencies. Since the application is a discretionary process there are significant differences in filing across Hawaii's agencies and islands. This bill is an important step toward providing support for noncitizens who have been victimized, and a step toward more effective prosecution of human traffickers and criminals.

Mahalo!

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 2, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1838, HD2, RELATING TO VISAS.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake for my district, Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I am also an attorney licensed in the state of Hawaii for over 25 years and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui — The People in Action Maui. I am writing today in **strong support of HB1838, HD2**, Relating to Visas, which establishes uniform statewide requirements for policies and processes for the issuance of U and T visa certifications for noncitizen victims of crime, requires each state and county certifying entity to adopt those policies and processes, and funds training so they comply with federal U and T visa requirements.

Under federal law, U and T visa certifications are discretionary. Unfortunately, inconsistent or unclear local policies and practices for issuing these certifications can delay or derail a victim's U or T visa. U and T visa certifications are often the decisive factor in whether a survivor can obtain safety, stability, and lawful presence. Attorneys and legal staff must navigate different expectations and procedures from one agency to another, and survivors bear the costs in time, uncertainty, and exposure to continued violence or exploitation.

On Maui, where many visa applicants are also wildfire survivors, the stress of the wildfires has contributed to conditions of increased domestic violence and exploitation. Delays in the processing of U & T visa certifications by law enforcement agencies have the unintended consequence of compounding trauma. Victims of domestic violence and trafficking are especially vulnerable; they must weigh the risk of reaching out for help when they do not know how or if a certifying agency will respond. Uneven processes and uncertain use of discretion around U and T visa certifications effectively retraumatize people who have already suffered serious harm and discourage them from cooperating with law enforcement, undermining community safety for everyone.

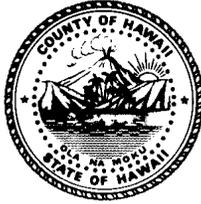
HB 1838, HD2 is a practical, targeted solution. By creating uniform statewide requirements and requiring every state and county certifying entity to adopt clear policies and processes that are supported by training from the Department of the Attorney General. This bill removes a major barrier for immigrant victims of crime seeking U and T visas and promotes consistency, transparency, and timely access to life-saving protections. Our communities' safety should not depend on whether a victim happens to live in a county with a well-developed U and T visa policy; statewide standards ensure that all survivors in Hawai'i can seek protection and cooperate with law enforcement without fear. I respectfully request that you stand with Hawai'i's immigrant crime victims and **vote in support of HB 1838, HD2**.

Mahalo for supporting our most vulnerable community members,

Christine Andrews, J.D.

Wailuku, Maui

Jennifer Kagiwada
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: March 2, 2026
TO: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: HB1838

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support of HB 1838**. I support this bill because it will:

- **Enhance access to justice and community trust.**

By requiring that law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and other certifying entities adopt clear, consistent policies, this bill promotes fairness and transparency in the certification process. This gives survivors confidence that their cooperation will be supported, which in turn strengthens trust between immigrant communities and public safety officials.

- **Ensure proper training and accountability for certifying officials.**

The bill's training requirements for state and county certifying officials are critical to preventing improper denials and ensuring compliance with federal and state law. Well-trained officials are better equipped to understand their roles and responsibilities, protect sensitive populations, and uphold victims' rights. This is especially important for individuals who may otherwise avoid authorities due to fear or misinformation.

Mahalo,

Jenn Kagiwada