



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1960 HD1
RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Limahana
(House Committee on Labor)
Ke Kapitala 'o Hawai'i
(Hawai'i State Capitol)

Pepeluali 19, 2026

9:30 AM

Lumi 309

Aloha e Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, a me Members of Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Limahana:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB1960 HD1**, which requires the Department of the Attorney General to develop a human trafficking awareness training program. Furthermore, it requires transient accommodations employers and contractors to provide training for their employees, maintain records, post signage, and implement reporting and prevention policies, including policies to report suspected trafficking. This measure represents an important step toward strengthening Hawai'i's ability to identify, prevent, and respond to human trafficking, particularly in sectors where trafficking is known to occur.

Human trafficking is a pervasive and deeply harmful form of exploitation that disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations, including Native Hawaiians. Hawai'i's geographic isolation, high tourism volume, and economic disparities create conditions in which traffickers can exploit individuals while remaining difficult to detect. Workers in the transient accommodations sector are uniquely positioned to identify warning signs of suspected trafficking and intervene appropriately when equipped with proper training and reporting procedures. By providing standardized, trauma-informed training and clear reporting procedures, this measure strengthens early identification and intervention, which are critical to protecting victims and disrupting trafficking activity.

Native Hawaiians face disproportionate vulnerability to trafficking due to longstanding structural inequities, including housing instability, economic hardship, and historical trauma. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women's Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls Task Force Report found that Native Hawaiian girls and women are overrepresented among trafficking victims in Hawai'i.¹ Programs serving trafficking survivors in Hawai'i similarly report that

¹ Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, *Holoī ā nalo Wāhine 'Ōiwi: Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls Task Force Report (Part I)* (2022), <https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/MMNHWG-Report-Web.pdf>

Native Hawaiian females constitute a significant proportion of those receiving services. These disparities underscore the urgent need for prevention-oriented measures that improve awareness, strengthen reporting systems, and protect individuals before exploitation escalates.

This measure advances a proactive, prevention-focused approach by ensuring that workers are equipped with the knowledge to recognize and report suspected exploitation safely and effectively. Increasing awareness within the transient accommodations sector strengthens coordination between workers, service providers, and law enforcement, and helps ensure that victims are identified earlier and connected to appropriate support. Accordingly, OHA urges this Committee to **PASS HB1960 HD1** to strengthen Hawai'i's human trafficking prevention efforts, protect vulnerable individuals, and advance the safety and wellbeing of Native Hawaiian communities and all residents of our state.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1960, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Before the House Committee on
LABOR
Thursday, February 19, 2026, 9:30 AM
State Capitol Conference Room 309
WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) strongly supports House Bill 1960, House Draft 1. This bill requires the Department of the Attorney General to develop a Human Trafficking Awareness Training Program for workers in the transient accommodations sector. It also mandates that transient accommodations employers or third-party contractors periodically train certain employees and contract workers, maintain training records, post signage, and implement a human trafficking prevention policy that includes procedures for reporting suspected human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a serious crime that violates human rights and dignity. Victims of human trafficking are often hidden in plain sight, and the transient accommodations sector can be a critical point of identification and intervention. Hotel and motel staff, particularly those with guest-facing roles, are uniquely positioned to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and report suspicious activity.

The DLE supports this bill as it aligns with our mission to protect public safety and prevent crime throughout the state. The requirement for the DLE to adopt rules will allow us to effectively implement the bill's provisions and ensure compliance with the training and reporting requirements.

By educating workers in the transient accommodations sector about human trafficking, this bill will enhance the state's ability to identify potential victims, deter traffickers from using these establishments, and ultimately contribute to the prevention and reduction of human trafficking in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



FEBRUARY 19, 2026

HOUSE BILL 1960 HD1

CURRENT REFERRAL: LAB

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POSITION: SUPPORT

Imua Alliance supports HB 1960 HD1, relating to human trafficking, which requires the Attorney General to create a human trafficking awareness training program for the transient accommodations industry and requires visitor industry employers to provide training, maintain records, post signage, and implement reporting and prevention policies.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai‘i-based organization dedicated to ending gender and sexual exploitation, and advancing human rights. We appreciate this measure, which recognizes the need for public-private collaboration to prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation associated with our visitor industry.

Each of the survivors we have assisted has suffered from complex and overlapping trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, dissociation, parasuicidal behavior, and substance abuse. Trafficking-related trauma can lead to a complete loss of identity. A victim we cared for in 2016, for example, had become so heavily trauma bonded to her pimp that while under his grasp, she couldn’t remember her own name. Yet, sadly, many of the victims with whom we work are misidentified as so-called “voluntary prostitutes” and are subsequently arrested and incarcerated, with no financial resources from which to pay for their release.

Sex trafficking is a profoundly violent crime. At least 23 percent of trafficking victims in Hawai‘i report being first exploited before turning 18, according to a recent report, with the average age of

trafficked keiki's initial exposure to exploitation being 11. Based on regular outreach and monitoring, we estimate that approximately 150 high-risk sex trafficking establishments operate in Hawai'i. In a recent report conducted by the State Commission on the Status of Women, researchers from Arizona State University found that 1 in every 11 adult males living in our state buys sex online. When visitors are also counted, that number worsens to 1 in every 7 men walking the streets of our island home, a daily online sex buyer market of 18,614 for O'ahu, and a total sex buyer population for Honolulu of 74,362.

ASU's findings are grim, but not surprising to local organizations that provide services to survivors of sex trafficking. Imua Alliance, for example, has trained volunteers to perform outreach to victims in high-risk locations, like strip clubs, massage parlors, and hostess bars. More than 80 percent of runaway youth report being approached for sexual exploitation while on the run, over 30 percent of whom are targeted within the first 48 hours of leaving home. With regard to mental health, sex trafficking victims are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD as a soldier in a war zone.

Human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation are global and local concerns, and Hawai'i's unique tourism economy heightens risks. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, transportation, tourism, and hospitality industries are among the top sectors where traffickers recruit, exploit, and conceal victims, often using legitimate travel networks, hotels, and rental services to facilitate exploitation and conceal abuse.

Hawai'i welcomed over 9.7 million visitors in 2024, generating significant economic activity, but also creating environments where traffickers can operate with anonymity and access. According to statewide law enforcement and service provider reports, trafficking cases often intersect with the visitor economy, especially in areas with high hotel density, nightlife, and short-term rentals. Survivors report being moved between Kailua-Kona, Waikiki, Lihue, and other tourism hubs where traffickers leverage tourist demand for commercial sex.

Airports, hotel chains, and rental platforms provide the infrastructure that traffickers use to recruit, house, and move victims, while obscuring their activities among legitimate visitors. The visitor industry is not inherently a source of harm, but it

occupies critical vantage points for identifying and preventing exploitation. Hotels, airlines, tour operators, and other tourism stakeholders intersect with residents and visitors daily. With appropriate training and protocols, they can serve as first responders who identify red flags and connect survivors to help.

Other states and regions have adopted targeted partnerships with the visitor sector. In Orlando and Orange County, Florida, the Haven for Hope initiative works with major hotel chains and airport personnel to implement human trafficking recognition training, compliance protocols, and reporting mechanisms. Hotels in the region have reported increased victim identification and law enforcement referrals after staff participated in structured education programs.

Similarly, in Las Vegas, Nevada, the Hotel Safety Alliance is a consortium of hospitality providers, law enforcement, and NGOs that meets quarterly to share intelligence, adopt best practices, and implement staff training. Their programs include protocols for responding to suspected trafficking in licensed premises and standardized reporting tools.

These models demonstrate how structured visitor industry engagement can disrupt trafficking networks and strengthen community awareness.

With aloha,

Kris Coffield

President, Imua Alliance