



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1960 HD2 SD1**

RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai

(Senate Committee on Ways and Means)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

‘Apelila 6, 2026

10:32 AM

Lumi 211

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Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB1960 HD2 SD1**, which requires the Department of the Attorney General to develop a human trafficking awareness training program and 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. OHA appreciates recent amendments which established clear timelines and specified that the fine for violating the training, signage, policy implementation, and reporting requirements established is \$100 for each separate offense to ensure meaningful compliance with and enforcement of the law.

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.<sup>1</sup> Programs serving trafficking survivors in Hawai‘i similarly report that 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 HD2 SD1** 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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<sup>1</sup> 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>



April 3, 2026

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means

**Re: H.B. 1960: Relating to Human Trafficking**

**Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2026, 10:32 AM, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and the Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

Hawaii Women Lawyers is a lawyer's trade organization that aims to improve the lives and careers of women in all aspects of the legal profession, influence the future of the legal profession, and enhance the status of women and promote equal opportunities for all.

**Hawaii Women Lawyers submits testimony in strong support of H.B. 1960: Relating to Human Trafficking.**

We strongly concur with the Legislature that the establishment of a Human Trafficking Awareness Training Program within the transient accommodations sector could support the State's most vulnerable populations, including women. Increased awareness and training can empower individuals working in the transient accommodations sector to identify warning signs, respond appropriately, and connect victims with essential services.

Victims of human trafficking often face significant legal, economic, and social barriers that prevent them from seeking help. By investing in prevention and awareness through this training program, the State takes an important step toward interrupting cycles of exploitation and advancing the safety and dignity of women in our communities.

Hawaii Women Lawyers commends and thanks the Legislature for prioritizing victims of human trafficking and

**For the above reasons, we strongly support H.B. 1960 Relating to Human Trafficking.**

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



APRIL 6, 2026

## HOUSE BILL 1960 HD2 SD1

CURRENT REFERRAL: WAM

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Amy Zhao,  
*Policy and Partnerships  
Strategist*

### POSITION: SUPPORT

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Imua Alliance supports HB 1960 HD2 SD1, relating to human trafficking, which requires the Department of the Attorney General to develop a Human Trafficking Awareness Training Program to educate and train workers in the transient accommodations sector; requires transient accommodations employers or transient accommodations third-party contractors to periodically provide the human trafficking awareness training to certain employees and contract workers, keep records of the training, post signage, and develop and implement a human trafficking prevention policy that includes procedures for the reporting of suspected human trafficking; establishes penalties; and requires the Department of Law Enforcement to adopt rules.

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

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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,

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Waikīkī, Līhu‘e, 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



April 5, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB1960 HD2 SD1**, Relating to Human Trafficking

**To:** Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

**Re:** Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB1960 HD2 SD1**, Relating to Human Trafficking

Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2026, 10:32 a.m.  
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

As a statewide feminist government body dedicated to safety, health, and gender equity, the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women recognizes that human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls. The Commission **supports HB1960 HD2 SD1**, as it **addresses the need for increased awareness and proactive measures within the transient accommodations sector**, a known risk area for trafficking activity, and **establishes a consistent framework for education, prevention, and intervention**. By requiring targeted training, signage, and clear reporting protocols, this bill directly supports our mission to foster environments where women and girls can live free from violence.

Mandating regular training, recordkeeping, and the posting of informational signage ensures that employees and contractors are equipped to recognize and respond to signs of trafficking. These requirements align with best practices in other jurisdictions, where increased awareness and clear reporting procedures have been shown to improve early identification and intervention. The bill's focus on prevention policy development, training documentation, and reporting protocols within businesses empower workers, foster safer workplaces, and increase the likelihood of timely intervention, creating a culture of accountability and vigilance, which is essential for disrupting trafficking networks.

The Commission urges the Committee to **pass HB1960 HD2 SD1**, increasing community safety through mandated human trafficking training, reporting procedures, and awareness initiatives.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

**HB-1960-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:51:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in **strong support** of HB1960, which requires the Department of the Attorney General to develop a Human Trafficking Awareness Training Program for workers in the transient accommodations sector and establishes clear requirements for employer training, record-keeping, signage, and prevention policies. This bill transforms good intentions into enforceable action and places Hawai‘i at the forefront of the fight against modern slavery.

**The Reality of Trafficking in Hawai‘i**

Human trafficking is not a problem that happens somewhere else. It happens here, every day, on every island. Jessica Munoz, founder and CEO of Ho‘ōla Nā Pua, which combats sex trafficking, has stated plainly: “Children being sold for sex is happening every single day across our state on every single island.”

The data bear this out. Between 2019 and 2021, surveys of social service clients across five islands found that 26.7% of respondents had experienced sex trafficking, with 23.7% trafficked before the age of 18.

Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented, with studies showing that 64% to 77.3% of sex trafficking victims identify as Native Hawaiian—a reflection of systemic vulnerabilities rooted in historical trauma, economic marginalization, and intergenerational poverty.

The demand that fuels this exploitation is staggering. A 2018 study found that approximately one in every eleven adult males with an 808 area code is an online sex shopper. When nonresidents are included, an estimated 74,362 sex shoppers are potentially active in the islands.

**Hotels: The Front Lines of Exploitation**

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, hotels and motels are a common venue for sex trafficking due to the ease of access for buyers, the ability to pay in cash and maintain secrecy, and the lack of facility maintenance or upkeep expenses that might otherwise draw attention. As John Tobon of Homeland Security Investigations Honolulu has warned: “If you own or work for a hotel, there is human trafficking happening in your hotel.”

Yet without training, workers cannot identify what they are seeing. According to advocacy group Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking, only 8% of hoteliers can identify instances of sex or human trafficking before training, while 44% of employees recognized cases afterward. This is not a failure of individual vigilance; it is a failure of institutional preparation. HB1960 addresses that failure directly.

### **What HB1960 Does**

This bill requires the Department of the Attorney General to develop a comprehensive Human Trafficking Awareness Training Program tailored to the transient accommodations sector. It then requires employers to:

- Provide periodic training to employees and contract workers.
- Maintain records of training completion.
- Post signage with reporting information in prominent locations.
- Develop and implement a human trafficking prevention policy that includes clear procedures for reporting suspected trafficking.

The bill also establishes penalties for noncompliance and requires the Department of Law Enforcement to adopt implementing rules.

Crucially, the training is designed to protect workers as well as potential victims. As Rosanna Maietta of the American Hotel & Lodging Association has noted: “What we don’t want to do is have a housekeeper get into harm’s way by calling attention. Instead it teaches them very specifically, here’s what to look for and if you see this, here’s who to go talk to.”

### **What Workers Will Learn**

Training under this program would teach hospitality workers to recognize warning signs such as:

- Individuals who appear to be under someone else's control.
- People who are not allowed to speak for themselves or who have someone else speaking for them.
- Guests who request rooms away from staff or who refuse housekeeping services.
- Multiple unrelated individuals coming and going from a single room.
- Signs of physical abuse, malnourishment, or fear.
- Individuals who are not in possession of their own identification or travel documents.

As Jessica Munoz explained: “If you have a pimp or the person who’s selling the youth, they will have rented the hotel room, or they rented another person’s name and they’ll have multiple people coming and going.”

### **Building on Industry Partnership**

This bill does not impose an unfunded mandate on an unwilling industry. Major hospitality companies are already committed to this work. As Trevor Bracher of Marriott has stated: “There

are 700,000 people wearing a Marriott nametag. And that's many pairs of eyes. When educated properly and trained on what to look for, we can use those eyes for good.”

The American Hotel & Lodging Association is actively campaigning with “No Room for Trafficking” and supporting this legislation. Ho‘ōla Nā Pua, which provides prevention training and care for exploited children, is also backing HB1960. This is a partnership between government, industry, and advocates—precisely the kind of collaboration that makes policy effective.

### **Closing Loopholes, Creating Accountability**

Current law requires certain high-risk establishments—including those with liquor licenses, massage therapy establishments employing three or more people, and establishments employing erotic or nude dancers—to post National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline information. Penalties for violations were increased in 2020, and fines are now deposited into the Human Trafficking Victim Services Fund.

But posting a sign, while necessary, is not sufficient. Workers need training to understand what they are seeing and clear protocols for how to respond. HB1960 moves beyond passive posting to active prevention.

### **A Bipartisan Priority**

HB1960 is part of the Hawai‘i Women's Legislative Caucus 2026 bill package, introduced with bipartisan support. It reflects a deep commitment to protecting women, children, and families across our state. As Senator Lynn DeCoite has said: “These bills recognize the real challenges facing our communities and affirm that everyone deserves to live with safety, dignity, and compassion no matter where they live in our state.”

The transient accommodations sector is both a venue for trafficking and a critical front for intervention. The housekeepers, front desk staff, maintenance workers, and security personnel who move through hotels every day are potential first responders—if they know what to look for and how to act.

HB1960 gives them that knowledge. It equips thousands of hospitality workers with the training they need to identify exploitation, protect themselves and others, and connect victims with help. It establishes clear standards for employers and holds them accountable. And it affirms that, in Hawai‘i, we will not look away from the most vulnerable among us.

I urge this committee to pass HB1960 and send a clear message that human trafficking has no place in our islands, and that our visitor industry will be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-1960-SD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:55:42 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christine L. Andrews, J.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully request your support of this important measure.

Mahalo nui