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To: Senate Committee on Government Operations

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: March 17, 2026, 3:05 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 2469, H.D. 1
Relating to a Regular Session Review Working Group

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would create a Regular Session Working Group that would be exempt from the Sunshine Law, part I of chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) takes no position on the substance of this bill, but offers comments on the proposed Sunshine Law exemption.

OIP defers to the Legislature's authority to exempt or not exempt the Working Group from the Sunshine Law. If the Working Group is exempt from the Sunshine Law, it is not required to give public notice of its meetings; not required to allow public participation; and not required to keep a record of its meetings. The Sunshine Law was enacted to protect the public's right to know. It recognizes that "[i]n a democracy, the people are vested with the ultimate decision-making power." HRS § 92F-2. Government boards exist to serve the people; to help create and carry out public policies that affect us all. The "only viable and reasonable method of protecting the public's interest" is to open government processes to public scrutiny and participation. Id.

OIP recognizes that the legislative calendar is an issue that may be of more compelling interest to the Legislature itself than to the public at large. Nonetheless, exempting the Working Group from the Sunshine Law could result in it deciding not to allow public participation in meetings. This would mean that the recommendations created by the Working Group – which would have only one member from outside government – would be made without any public input. Public feedback on a group’s work and discussions is important to help that group craft solutions and recommended legislation that will work for everyone affected.

OIP therefore respectfully recommends that this Committee consider alternatives to a full Sunshine Law exemption. For example, the Working Group could be **subject to the Sunshine Law, but given a special permitted interaction** allowing less than a quorum of members to discuss Working Group business together so long as they refrained from making or seeking a commitment to vote. That would allow up to five of the eleven members to talk together without worrying about whether their discussion included issues before the Working Group, while still ensuring the public was kept informed via minutes and open meetings, and could submit testimony on issues before the Working Group. **To make this change,** this Committee should replace subsection (i) beginning on bill page 9, line 17, with the following:

- (i) In addition to the permitted interactions provided in section 92-2.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the regular session working group’s members may discuss between themselves matters relating to official board business to enable them to perform their duties faithfully, as long as no commitment to vote is made or sought and the members do not constitute a quorum of their board.

Thank you for considering OIP’s testimony.

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi
Director

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First Assistant

Research 808-587-0666
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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
State of Hawaii
State Capitol, Room 446
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Written Comments

HB2469, HD1

RELATING TO A REGULAR SESSION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the Senate Committee on Government Operations

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 3:05 p.m.
Conference Room 225 and Via Videoconference

Chair Angus L.K. McKelvey and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon, Chair McKelvey and members of the Committee. My name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi, and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau (Bureau). Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written **comments** on **H.B. No. 2469, H.D. 1, Relating to a Regular Session Review Working Group**.

The purpose of H.B. No. 2469, H.D. 1, is to establish a Regular Session Review Working Group to consider the suggestions proposed by the Bureau's report, *Sine Die Another Day: Should Hawaii's Legislative Sessions Be Longer?*, which the Bureau submitted to the Legislature in response to House Concurrent Resolution No. 138, H.D. 1, S.D.1 (2024) (H.C.R. No. 138). More specifically, H.B. No. 2469, H.D. 1:

- (1) Establishes the Regular Session Review Working Group to determine the essential timing and effective framework for a lengthened legislative session calendar for election and non-election years;
- (2) Establishes the membership of the Working Group, which includes two Co-Chairs, one of whom shall be a Senator selected by the President of the Senate and the other of whom shall be a Representative selected by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- (3) Requires the Working Group to:

- (A) Study the feasibility of transitioning the Hawaii State Legislature's regular session from one that meets from mid-January to early May to one that is lengthened, which means any regular session that is of significantly longer duration than Hawaii's typical January-to-May regular session;
 - (B) Analyze the financial impacts and necessary costs to operate lengthened regular sessions, including staffing requirements, changes to legislative services, operational costs, office space needs, and impacts on legislation;
 - (C) Analyze and recommend any constitutional, statutory, and legislative rule changes necessary to implement lengthened regular sessions;
 - (D) Examine other states that have lengthened sessions, as deemed appropriate by the Working Group; and
 - (E) Consider the findings and suggestions made by the Bureau in its H.C.R. No. 138 report;
- (4) Requires the Working Group to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2028;
 - (5) Requires the Bureau to finalize the Working Group's report and draft any proposed legislation; provided that the Working Group submits a draft report to the Bureau no later than October 31, 2027; and
 - (6) Appropriates unspecified moneys to the Senate and the House of Representatives to contract for the services of a facilitator for Working Group meetings, and provides that the contracting of services using appropriated funds shall be exempt from the Procurement Code.

The Bureau takes no position on the merits of this measure but submits the following comments for your consideration.

The Bureau believes that the services required of the Bureau under H.B. No. 2469, H.D. 1 are manageable, provided that the Bureau's interim workload is not adversely impacted by too many other additional responsibilities, such as conducting studies, writing or finalizing other reports, drafting legislation, or any combination of these for the Legislature or for other state agencies, task forces, or working groups that may be requested or required under other legislative measures.

Thank you again for your consideration.

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



BONNIE KAHAKUI
ADMINISTRATOR

DAYNA OMIYA
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

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TESTIMONY
OF
BONNIE KAHAKUI, ADMINISTRATOR
STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE
ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
MARCH 17, 2026, 3:05 PM

HOUSE BILL 2469, HD1
RELATING TO A REGULAR SESSION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2469, HD1, which establishes a Regular Session Review Working Group, requires a report and appropriate moneys.

The State Procurement Office (SPO) acknowledges the intent of the bill to convene a working group to determine the framework for a continuous legislative session. However, the SPO respectfully opposes the language in Section 2, Page 9, lines 6-7; Section 3, Page 10, lines 5-8; and Section 4, Page 10, lines 15-18, which state that contracting services using funds appropriated for this purpose shall be exempt from the requirements of Chapter 103D – Hawaii Public Procurement Code, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

The SPO recommends the following revisions to require that contracts are subject to HRS Chapter 103D.

- **SECTION 2, Page 9, lines 3-7:**

"(f) The co-chairs of the regular session review working group may contract the services of a qualified facilitator to facilitate its meetings if the co-chairs deem it appropriate. Any contract subject to this subsection shall be [~~exempt from~~] **subject to** chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes."

- **SECTION 3, Page 10, lines 1-8:**

"SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to contract for the services of a facilitator for meetings of the regular session review working group; provided that the contracting of services using funds appropriated under this section shall be ~~exempt from~~ subject to chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes."

- **SECTION 4, Page 10, lines 11-18:**

"SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to contract for the services of a facilitator for meetings of the regular session review working group; provided that the contracting of services using funds appropriated under this section shall be ~~exempt from~~ subject to chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes."

The SPO testifies that service contracts that support the regular session review working group should comply with Chapter 103D, HRS, to ensure fair, open competition and to prevent favoritism, collusion, or fraud in awarding of contracts. This also ensures oversight, accountability, and transparency in the procurement and contracting process which is vital to good government.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.



MARCH 17, 2026

HOUSE BILL 2469 HD1

CURRENT REFERRAL: GVO

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Corey Rosenlee,
Director

Amy Zhao,
*Policy and Partnerships
Strategist*

POSITION: SUPPORT

Imua Alliance supports HB 2469 HD1, which establishes a Regular Session Review Working Group to determine the essential timing and effective framework for a lengthened legislative calendar for election and non-election years; requires a report to the legislature; and requires report finalization and drafting assistance from the Legislative Reference Bureau.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai‘i-based organization dedicated to ending all forms of exploitation, including corporate interference in our democracy.

Compressed sessions limit legislative effectiveness. Hawai‘i’s current system condenses thousands of bills, hearings, stakeholder consultations, and budgetary deliberations into approximately five months each year (January–May). According to reports from national legislative studies, condensed sessions contribute to rushed policy deliberation, reduced stakeholder engagement, and increased work outside of committee hearings, often in informal or remote settings that are less accessible to the public. As noted by the National Conference of State Legislatures, in its 2021 study “Session Length and Effectiveness”, states with continuous or extended sessions consistently report higher rates of public testimony, deeper committee engagement, and more thoughtful deliberation on complex policy topics.

Comparative data illustrates real benefits. Oregon and Washington operate longer legislative cycles (biennial with extended meeting periods or biennial with annual interim sessions) and have documented that expanded committee availability leads to earlier bill drafts, improved technical review, and better incorporation of public input. According to the Oregon Legislative Policy and Research Office, longer sessions improve policy analysis and reduce last-minute amendments that can undermine transparency and oversight.

Year-round continuity supports public participation and transparency. A hallmark of democratic governance is sustained engagement between policymakers and the communities they represent. Continuous session structures help ensure that public testimony is heard in real time and not

compressed into limited hearing windows. They also allow for incremental review of fiscal impacts and mid-course corrections that are challenging in a heavily compressed schedule. Testimony provided early in the session can meaningfully shape legislation, rather than being an afterthought in a late-March or April hearing rush, and impactful measures can be given more time for public vetting, rather than being scrapped without justification because of time and scheduling constraints.

Continuity fosters better policy outcomes and institutional memory. A continuous session would allow committees and working groups to build longer timelines for complex interagency coordination. According to legislative scholars, the ability to work year-round significantly reduces the policy “whiplash” experienced when statutes must be drafted, vetted, amended, and passed in just a few months. Longer cycles also help reduce staff burnout and improve legislative research quality, increasing the legislature’s capacity to address emergent issues—such as housing affordability, climate resilience, artificial intelligence, or health equity—without procedural strain.

Economic and administrative benefits are tied to better governance. While Hawai‘i’s compact session may appear cost-efficient on its face, rushed timelines increase administrative costs in other ways: last-minute budget adjustments, implementation delays, and reactive policymaking can lead to inefficiencies and unanticipated fiscal risks. Longer or continuous sessions, balanced with appropriate cost containment, promote proactive budgeting and better alignment with executive and agency planning cycles.

For these reasons, Imua Alliance urges the legislature to adopt this measure to evaluate the impacts of transitioning toward a legislative structure that prioritizes thoughtful deliberation and more meaningful public engagement.

With aloha,

Kris Coffield

President, Imua Alliance

HB-2469-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2026 3:48:29 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/17/2026 3:05:00 PM

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 supports** of HB2469, which establishes a working group to study the essential timing and effective framework for a lengthened legislative calendar.

Hawai‘i currently operates under one of the shortest legislative sessions in the nation: just 60 working days over 3.5 months, from mid-January to early May. This compressed timeline forces lawmakers to grapple with hundreds of complex bills in a frantic rush, leaving little room for deliberate consideration, meaningful public input, or thorough vetting of fiscal impacts. Good policy cannot be crafted in a sprint.

The result is a process that serves insiders better than it serves the public. When deadlines loom and bills move at lightning speed, it is the well-connected—well-funded lobbyists with deep relationships—who can keep up. Ordinary residents, working families, and community organizations are left behind, unable to navigate a system that prioritizes speed over substance.

HB2469 takes a crucial first step toward fixing this broken dynamic. By tasking a working group to determine the essential timing and framework for a lengthened calendar—distinguishing between election and non-election years—this bill acknowledges that Hawai‘i deserves a legislature with adequate time to do its job.

A longer session would not simply mean more days in session. It would mean:

- **More thoughtful legislation**, crafted with care rather than cobbled together under deadline pressure.
- **Improved community engagement**, giving residents real time to review, understand, and testify on bills that affect their lives.
- **More effective oversight**, allowing legislators to properly scrutinize the executive branch and state agencies.
- **Faster emergency response**, ensuring the legislature can convene and act when crises arise, rather than waiting for the next scheduled session.

Other states with year-round or significantly longer sessions—including California, New York, Michigan, and Pennsylvania—demonstrate that full-time legislatures can function effectively

while maintaining accountability to their constituents. HB2469 directs the working group to learn from these examples and recommend a framework tailored to Hawai‘i’s unique needs.

Importantly, the bill requires the Legislative Reference Bureau to assist with drafting and finalizing the report, ensuring the working group's recommendations are actionable and ready for implementation.

Some may raise concerns about cost. But we must weigh those costs against the price of our current system: rushed decisions, missed opportunities, and laws that fail to serve the people they are meant to protect. A legislature with adequate time to deliberate is not an expense—it is an investment in better governance.

I urge this committee to pass HB2469 and take the first step toward a legislative process that puts thoughtful deliberation ahead of breakneck speed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2469-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 3:40:35 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/17/2026 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair McKelvey and Committee Members,

My name is Brett Kulbis, I'm a 26yr retired Navy Veteran, who took a solemn oath to defend the Constitution from all enemies foreign and domestic, and that oath didn't expire when I retired. I live in Ewa Beach.

I STRONGLY OPPOSE BILL HB-2469 HD1.

House Concurrent Resolution 138 (2024) already directed the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) to study options for a continuous legislature, extended regular sessions, and additional recess days. The LRB completed that work and delivered its report, "Sine Die Another Day: Should Hawaii's Legislative Sessions Be Longer?", which reviewed Hawaii's constitutional and statutory framework, surveyed other states with longer sessions, and analyzed operational and cost impacts of lengthened or continuous sessions. HB-2469 HD1 now proposes to create another working group to revisit the same topic and to spend \$200,000 to do so. From a veteran's perspective, this is not a wise or disciplined use of public resources.

In the military, we are taught not to duplicate effort and not to waste limited resources. The LRB report already concludes that there is no "one-size-fits-all" model that Hawai'i can easily adopt and that any significant change to session length would require major constitutional and statutory adjustments. It also notes that Hawaii's regular session duration already generally tracks the timeframes in many other states. Rather than respecting those findings and moving on to higher-priority needs, HB-2469 HD1 asks taxpayers, many of them veterans on fixed incomes, to fund yet another layer of process and discussion about how to keep the Legislature in session longer.

As a veteran, I am also concerned with mission focus. The LRB report recognizes that fiscal bills make up the supermajority of measures and that the legislative process must continue to prioritize passing those bills in a timely way to avoid economic uncertainty and disruption of public services. The problem, then, is not the length of the session, but how that time is used. In uniform, when a mission window is fixed, we adjust our planning and execution; we do not simply ask for more time and more money. HB-2469 HD1 goes in the opposite direction by trying to open the door to a "lengthened" session instead of improving discipline within the existing 60-day framework the State Constitution provides.

The composition and powers of the proposed Regular Session Review Working Group also raise red flags. The bill places this work primarily in the hands of sitting legislators, committee chairs, and top state officials, with a few invited organizations. It tasks them with examining other states, recommending constitutional and statutory changes, and preparing draft legislation to lengthen sessions. Yet the group is explicitly exempted from Hawaii's Sunshine Law in chapter 92, allowing these consequential discussions about restructuring legislative power and calendar to occur behind closed doors. Veterans understand the importance of accountability in any chain of command; transparency is essential when government actors are redesigning the very rules that govern how long they sit in session.

Finally, from a veteran's view, HB-2469 HD1 reflects a troubling set of priorities. Many Hawai'i veterans are dealing with challenges related to housing, health care, employment, and reintegration. Families across Hawai'i are struggling with the cost of living and taxes. In that context, appropriating \$100,000 for the Senate and \$100,000 for the House "to facilitate meetings" of a working group about extending legislative sessions sends a message that internal process matters more than the everyday needs of the people who served and sacrificed. The Legislature should take the LRB's report as sufficient analysis, honor its conclusions about complexity and cost, and refocus energy on concrete problems facing Hawai'i veterans and working families.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to DEFER indefinitely HB-2469 HD1.

Brett Kulbis
U.S. Navy Retired