



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okolokolo, Moku'āina 'o Hawai'i

Testimony to the Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

By

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Intermediate Court of Appeals

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 2446, Relating to the Judiciary.

Purpose: Increases the number of associate judges on the Intermediate Court of Appeals from six to seven. Appropriates funds.

Judiciary's Position:

The Hawai'i State Judiciary appreciates the intent of Senate Bill No. 2446, which would add a seventh associate judge on the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA), increasing the total number of ICA judges to eight (one chief judge and seven associate judges), but respectfully requests that this measure be held until such time as the court fills its current judicial vacancy and assesses resource needs.

We greatly appreciate the Legislature's continued support of the ICA. During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature passed Act 90, which increased the number of ICA judges by one, thereby establishing the sixth associate judge position in place today. Since the position was added, the ICA has only operated at its full complement of seven judges (one chief judge and six associate judges) for about six months, from May 2023 to January 2024. Despite being short one judge, the court has nevertheless reduced its case backlog with case terminations now exceeding new filings. For example, in Fiscal Year 2024–2025, the ICA terminated 594 primary cases while 499 new cases were filed, reducing pending cases from 859 to 764.



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These trends suggest that once the current judicial vacancy is filled and the ICA is allowed a period of stable operation with all seven authorized judges, its workload may be more manageable and the court would be in a better position to assess ongoing resource needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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February 5, 2026

SB2446: RELATING TO THE JUDICIARY

Chair Rhodes, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **supports SB2446**, which establishes an additional associate judge to serve on the Hawai'i Intermediate Court of Appeals ("ICA").

An additional judge on the ICA means faster resolutions of appeals in criminal cases. For defendants, especially incarcerated defendants, reducing delays reduces the anxiety from uncertainty, provides finality, and serves justice.

The OPD supports SB2446.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

SB-2446

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:48:15 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

OPPOSE this bill. In this proposal, there is NO justification that support the need to add another judge.