



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
S.B. NO. 2516, RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY.

BEFORE THE:
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

DATE: Tuesday, February 24, 2026 **TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 016

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**
(For more information, contact Mark S. Tom,
Deputy Attorney General, at (808) 586-1160)

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) strongly supports this bill.

This bill establishes a more appropriate penalty structure for offenders who obstruct or interfere with the apprehension, prosecution, conviction, or punishment of another offender. Under existing law, this conduct is subject to a maximum penalty of a class C felony, regardless of the severity of the underlying offense. This bill would instead authorize a penalty one level below the offense of the principal offender, except in cases involving murder, where hindering prosecution would be a class A felony.

This bill was submitted with the unanimous support of the Hawaii Law Enforcement Coalition (LEC), whose membership includes the Attorney General, the Chief of Police and Prosecutor of each county, and the Director of Law Enforcement.

The Department respectfully requests the passage of this bill.



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

POLICE DEPARTMENT COUNTY OF KAUA'I



ELLIOTT K. KE, CHIEF OF POLICE
MARK T. OZAKI, DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICE

February 19, 2026

The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
And Honorable Members of the Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 2516, Relating to Public Safety

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kaua'i Police Department, I am submitting testimony in **support of SB 2516**, which proposes to amend Hawai'i Revised Statutes § 710-1029 to establish a graduated penalty structure for the offense of hindering prosecution in the first degree, based on the seriousness of the underlying offense hindered.

SB 2516 is an important public safety measure that enhances accountability for individuals who knowingly assist offenders after serious crimes have been committed — for example by providing shelter, transportation, or other aid that materially hinders apprehension or prosecution. Under current law, hindering prosecution in the first degree is a Class C felony regardless of the severity of the underlying offense, even if the offense being aided involved violent acts such as murder. This results in penalties that do not always reflect the gravity of the conduct being facilitated.

SB 2516 appropriately addresses conduct that enables serious offenders to evade justice. These strengthened penalties enhances public safety by ensuring that our statutes provide meaningful consequences for those who assist serious offenders and hinder the effective prosecution of crime.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to pass SB 2516. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Elliott K. Ke
Chief of Police
Kaua'i Police Department

KELDEN B.A. WALTJEN
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

SHANNON M. KAGAWA
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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2516

A BILL FOR AN ACT
RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference
State Capitol Conference Room 016
415 South Beretania Street

Honorable Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee on Judiciary: The County of Hawai'i, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney submits the following testimony **in strong support** of Senate Bill 2516.

SB 2516 was drafted with the intent to establish a gradient penalty structure for the offense of hindering prosecution in the first degree based on the level of the offense committed by the other person. The findings outlined in this bill reflect a critical gap in our current legal framework. Under existing law, individuals who aid others who have committed serious crimes such as murder or attempted murder often face lenient and inconsistent penalties.

Hindering prosecution in the first degree is currently classified as a class C felony. As such, an individual who "renders assistance" to another "with the intent to hinder the apprehension, prosecution, conviction, or punishment . . . for a class A, B, or C felony or murder in any degree" faces the same, maximum penalty of a five-year prison term . . . no matter what offense the other person committed. This disparity is unjust and undermines the public's confidence in our criminal justice system.

This bill correctly recognizes that rendering such assistance should be met with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crimes involved. By establishing a penalty structure that reflects the seriousness of the underlying offense, this bill will deter potential offenders from assisting criminals after the commission of a crime. It sends a clear message that those who aid others in evading justice will be held accountable, helping to break the cycle of criminal activity and reducing the likelihood of future crimes.

In recent years on Hawai'i Island, we have encountered several instances where a serious crime was committed by an offender and it resulted in an islandwide manhunt jeopardizing public safety, incurring significant financial costs, and causing unnecessary strain upon our

Island's limited resources. Most notably, was the July 2018 killing of Officer Bronson Kaliloa, who was shot and killed during a traffic stop, the March 2025 near fatal shooting of a VICE officer, who was shot while attempting to apprehend a wanted suspect, and also during March 2025, the killing of Latisha Soares, who was shot and killed by her ex-boyfriend. Through criminal investigation, law enforcement would later identify individuals who assisted the suspects in these cases, providing among other things, shelter, transportation, money, disguise, and other forms of assistance. Unfortunately, as Hawai'i law fails to recognize accomplice liability after the commission of an offense, these individuals were limited to convictions under the current Hindering Prosecution in the First and Second Degree (misdemeanor) sections.

For the families of victims, affected by violent crimes, the ability to bring offenders to justice is an essential part of the healing process. Providing for appropriate penalties against those who assist offenders after a crime has been committed will serve as an important tool for ensuring that justice is fully realized and that no one is allowed to escape accountability.

Additionally, our Office would also suggest including the following provision to clarify any ambiguity associated with the offense of murder:

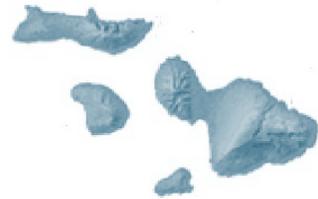
Hindering prosecution in the first degree is [a class C felony] an offense one class or grade, as the case may be, lower than the offense committed by the other person; provided that when the offense committed by the other person is murder in any degree hindering prosecution is a class A felony."

By amending Section 710-1029 to impose more appropriate penalties for those who hinder prosecution, this bill will promote greater respect for the law, deter future criminal activity, and ensure justice for victims and their families. We humbly request this Committee to pass this bill and send a clear message that rendering assistance to those who commit serious crimes will not be tolerated in Hawai'i. For the foregoing reasons, the County of Hawai'i, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney **strongly supports** the passage of Senate Bill 2516. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

ANDREW H. MARTIN
Prosecuting Attorney

SHELLY C. MIYASHIRO
First Deputy Prosecuting Attorney



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TESTIMONY ON
S.B. 2516
RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

February 22, 2026

The Honorable Karl Rhoads
Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard
Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Judiciary

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui respectfully submits the following comments **in support of S.B. 2516, Relating to Public Safety**. This bill increases public safety by establishing a sentencing framework for the offense of Hindering Prosecution in the First Degree that is based on the level of offense hindered.

We support this bill because it provides an appropriate sentence for offenders that intentionally hinder the apprehension, prosecution, conviction or punishment of someone who commits a felony offense by providing them with assistance. This sentence is proportionate and appropriately linked to the initial felony offense committed because it is set one class or grade lower than that offense.

For these reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui **supports S.B. 2516**. Please feel free to contact our office at (808) 270-7777 if you have any questions or inquiries. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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**THE HONORABLE KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawai'i**

February 23, 2026

RE: S.B. 2516; RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY.

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu submits the following testimony in **support** of S.B. 2516.

S.B. 2516 amends the penalty for hindering prosecution in the first degree by grading it according to the seriousness of the predicate offense. Current law treats first-degree hindering as a class C felony, regardless of the underlying crime. S.B. 2516 would assign a penalty one grade lower than the predicate offense.

A conviction for hindering prosecution requires proof that the person rendered assistance to a felony offender.¹ Rendering assistance includes concealing a fugitive, deceiving investigators, or destroying evidence.² Hindering prosecution also requires proof that the person acted with the conscious object of thwarting the apprehension, prosecution, conviction, or punishment of the felony offender.³ Mere passive refusal to surrender a suspect does not qualify.⁴

Consistent with common law, Hawai'i punishes an accomplice to the same extent as the principal.⁵ Accomplices may solicit the crime, aid in its planning or execution, or refrain from reasonable efforts to prevent the crime when legally obliged to do so.⁶ By contrast, hindering prosecution has traditionally qualified one as an accessory after the fact—culpable to a lesser

¹ HRS § 710-1029(1).

² HRS § 710-1028.

³ HRS § 710-1029(1).

⁴ See *State v. Line*, 121 Hawai'i 74, 86-88, 214 P.3d 613, 625-27 (2009).

⁵ HRS § 702-221(c). See also 4 WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND, at *37-39; *Territory v. Bollianday*, 39 Haw. 590, 593 (Terr. 1952).

⁶ HRS § 702-222.

degree.⁷ S.B. 2516 reasonably grades this culpability according to the predicate offense. While the public has a general interest in the lawful adjudication of any offense, society has a greater stake in resolving the most serious crimes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

⁷ See BLACKSTONE, *supra* note 3, at *39 (noting that accessories after the fact qualified for benefit of clergy); *Territory v. Low*, 23 Haw. 108, 111-12 (Terr. 1912) (exemption for close family of the principal).

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Reed K. Mahuna
Police Chief

William V. Brilhante Jr.
Managing Director

County of Hawai`i

POLICE DEPARTMENT

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February 23, 2026

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
And Members
Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Senators Rhoads and Gabbard and Committee Members:

RE: SENATE BILL 2516 RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY
DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2026
TIME: 10:00 A.M.
PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hawai`i Police Department respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2516. This measure addresses a critical gap in our criminal justice system by establishing a penalty structure for the offense of hindering prosecution that reflects the seriousness of the underlying crime.

Under current law, hindering prosecution in the first degree is classified as a class C felony, regardless of whether the person being assisted committed a class A felony or even murder. This means that an individual who knowingly provides shelter, transportation, money, or other assistance to someone who has committed a heinous crime faces the same penalty as someone aiding a lesser felony offender. This disparity is not only unjust—it undermines public confidence in our system and fails to deter those who would help violent criminals evade justice.

Our officers have seen firsthand the consequences of this gap. In recent years, Hawai`i Island has endured several high-profile incidents where suspects in violent crimes were aided by others after the offense. These cases include the tragic killing of Officer Bronson Kaliloa during a traffic stop in July 2018, the near-fatal shooting of a VICE officer in March 2025, and the murder of Latisha Soares that same month. In each instance, individuals provided assistance to suspects—helping them hide, avoid apprehension, and continue to pose a threat to our community. Yet, under current statutes, these individuals could only be charged with hindering prosecution as a class C felony or misdemeanor, penalties that do not reflect the gravity of their actions.

SENATE BILL 2516 RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY
DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2026
TIME: 10:00 A.M.
PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE
PAGE 2

SB 2516 proposes a fair and logical solution: make hindering prosecution one class lower than the offense committed by the person being assisted, and when the underlying crime is murder, classify hindering prosecution as a class A felony. This change sends a clear message that aiding those who commit serious crimes will not be tolerated. It will strengthen deterrence, enhance accountability, and help ensure justice for victims and their families.

For law enforcement, this bill is an essential tool. It will help us break the cycle of criminal activity by discouraging individuals from assisting offenders after a crime has been committed. It will also reduce the risk to officers and the public during manhunts and investigations, which often require significant resources and put lives in danger.

The Hawai'i Police Department urges this Committee to pass SB 2516. Doing so will promote respect for the law, protect our communities, and honor the sacrifices of those who have suffered at the hands of violent offenders.

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


SHERRY D. BIRD
ACTING POLICE CHIEF

SB-2516

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 9:05:59 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Picadura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair **Karl Rhoads**, Vice-Chair **Mike Gabbard**, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joseph Picadura, and I am here in strong support of Senate Bill 2516.

This bill addresses a serious gap in our law. Right now, someone who helps a person who committed murder faces the same maximum penalty as someone who helps a person who committed a much lesser felony. That does not reflect the gravity of the underlying crime.

Hindering prosecution in the first degree is currently a class C felony, with a maximum five-year sentence—regardless of whether the person being assisted committed murder or a lower-level felony. That one-size-fits-all penalty structure undermines accountability and fails to send a clear message.

On Hawai'i Island, we have seen violent crimes that triggered islandwide manhunts, endangered public safety, and strained limited law enforcement resources. In several cases, individuals provided shelter, transportation, money, or disguises to suspects after serious crimes were committed. Assisting someone who has taken a life should carry consequences proportionate to that harm.

SB 2516 establishes a graduated penalty structure so that the punishment fits the seriousness of the underlying offense. That is both fair and necessary.

For the families of victims, justice means holding all responsible parties accountable—including those who help offenders evade arrest.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB 2516.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-2516

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 8:41:25 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elik Vodovoz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Elik Vodovoz, and on March 14, 2025, I was shot in the head and arm by Chris Lucrisia. Immediately after Lucrisia shot me, he was driven away by Silas Zion. Zion was captured later that day in the same vehicle with the license plates removed and hiding from law enforcement. He assisted in Lucrisia to evade law enforcement and potentially destroy evidence. Fast forward to the penalty that Zion received was being sentenced to one year probation. It was a very frustrating experience and the punishment that Zion received does not fit the crime that he committed.

The Need for Proportional Accountability

Currently, Hawai'i law often treats the act of "hindering prosecution" as a Class C felony, regardless of whether the individual is assisting a petty thief or a violent offender. This "one-size-fits-all" approach fails to reflect the gravity of the underlying crime and the danger that certain offenders pose to our community.

* Closing the Accountability Gap: Under current statutes, someone who provides shelter, transportation, or resources to a person who has committed a mass casualty event or killed a law enforcement officer faces the same maximum penalty as someone assisting with a significantly less severe felony. SB2516 corrects this by ensuring the penalty for "hindering" is tied to the severity of the crime committed.

* Deterrence: By elevating the sanctions for assisting those who commit the most heinous acts—specifically making hindering a Class A felony when murder is involved—we send a clear message that the state will not tolerate the enabling of violent fugitives.

* Supporting Law Enforcement: This bill is part of the Law Enforcement Coalition Package. It provides our justice system with the necessary tools to hold the "support network" of dangerous criminals accountable, thereby aiding in the swifter apprehension of primary offenders.

Promoting Respect for the Law

Justice is best served when the punishment fits the crime. Establishing a gradient penalty structure ensures that our legal system recognizes the increased harm done to society when someone actively works to shield a violent criminal from facing the consequences of their actions.

Conclusion

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB2516. This bill is a common-sense update to our public safety laws that ensures our penalties reflect the seriousness of the actions taken to

obstruct justice.

Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to the safety of our islands.