



**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. 2518, RELATING TO ASSAULT AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.

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 refines the penalty structure for the offense of assault against a law enforcement officer in the first degree by differentiating penalties based on the severity of bodily injury sustained by the officer. The bill is intended to promote proportionality in sentencing and to deter future offenses.

This bill was submitted by unanimous agreement 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.

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

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HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I

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

February 1, 2026

RE: S.B. 2518; RELATING TO ASSAULT AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.

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. 2518.

S.B. 2518 increases the penalties for offenders who deliberately attack or seriously injure police officers engaged in their official duties. It provides a minimum six-month jail term, extended by up to a year where the injuries meet the standard thresholds for felony assault.

Assault against a law enforcement officer is an offense in two degrees. The second-degree grade applies to anyone who recklessly causes bodily injury to an on-duty officer.¹ This is a misdemeanor.² The first-degree grade is a felony.³ It applies to offenders who intentionally or knowingly cause bodily injury to the officer,⁴ as well as those who recklessly or negligently assault the officer with a dangerous instrument.⁵

S.B. 2518 would lengthen the mandatory minimum for these felonies. And in cases where the officer suffered serious or substantial bodily injury, it would allow prosecutors to charge this offense rather than ordinary assault.

¹ HRS § 707-712.6(1).

² *Id.* § 707-712.6(2).

³ HRS § 707-712.5(2).

⁴ *Id.* § 707-712.5(1)(a)

⁵ *Id.* § 707-712.5(1)(b).

Although Hawai‘i has relatively low levels of violent crime, our police are on the front lines against the criminal element. In 2024, more than three hundred police officers were assaulted in this state.⁶ Last year, the Honolulu Police Department observed a 20% increase in assaults on its officers between January and October compared to the same period the year before.⁷ Stronger penalties would deter potential offenders and meaningfully incapacitate those who attack officers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

⁶ FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, 2024 LEOKA Report, Table 86 (reporting data from the Honolulu Police Department and Kaua‘i Police Department); Hawaii Crime Dashboard, *Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted 2024*, available at <https://crimestats.hawaii.gov/>. (navigate to Special Topics and then LEOKA).

⁷ HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT, *HPD Police Chief Addresses Rise in Officer Assaults* (Oct. 9, 2025), available at <https://www.honolulupd.org/hpd-police-chief-addresses-rise-in-officer-assaults>.



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 2518, Relating to Assault Against Law Enforcement Officers

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 2518**, which amends Hawai'i Revised Statutes § 707-712.5 to enhance sanctions for the offense of assault against a law enforcement officer in the first degree. This bill recognizes the increased risks that law enforcement officers face in the performance of their duties and provides appropriate sentencing structures to address those risks.

We recognize that the nation is currently engaged in important and difficult conversations about law enforcement, accountability, and the use of force. SB 2518 carefully navigates this context by targeting intentional assaults on law enforcement officers - members of our communities who are sworn to uphold the law - while still respecting the broader conversations about the responsible use of force and accountability. Assaults on law enforcement officers not only endanger the safety of officers who serve and protect our communities, but also undermine public safety and hinder effective policing.

In an environment where public confidence in law enforcement can be fragile, clear, consistent, and principled criminal statutes matter. SB 2518 contributes to that framework. By establishing more distinguishable and significant penalties, SB 2518 will strengthen deterrence, enhance officer safety, and support recruitment and retention efforts within law enforcement.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to pass SB 2518. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

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

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Reed K. Mahuna
Police Chief

William V. Brillhante 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 2518 RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY
DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2026
TIME: 10:00 A.M.
PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 2518. This measure is critical to the safety of our law enforcement officers and, by extension, the safety of our communities.

Across Hawai`i and the nation, we have witnessed a troubling rise in assaults against law enforcement officers. These attacks are no longer rare or isolated—they have become an ongoing and dangerous reality. Here in Hawai`i County, our police officers have been assaulted on average **34 times per year**, a staggering figure that underscores the urgency of this issue. Every day, officers put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities, and yet they face an environment of heightened risk that threatens not only their physical safety but also their morale and well-being. This escalating violence undermines public trust and makes it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified officers. If we cannot ensure the safety of those who protect us, we jeopardize the very foundation of public safety.

Senate Bill 2518 addresses this crisis head-on. By amending HRS §707-712.5, the bill establishes clear and meaningful penalties for those who assault law enforcement officers. These sanctions are not merely punitive—they serve as a powerful deterrent. When individuals understand that violent acts against officers will result in substantial consequences, the likelihood of such incidents decreases. This legislation sends a strong message: Hawai`i stands firmly behind its officers and will not tolerate violence against them.

SENATE BILL 2518 RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY
DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2026
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PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE
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Beyond deterrence, SB 2518 offers hope for the future of law enforcement in our state. Strong protections and legislative support will help restore confidence among current officers and encourage new recruits to join the profession. Our communities depend on effective policing, and effective policing depends on officers who feel safe and supported in their work.

For these reasons, the Hawaii Police Department respectfully urges you to pass Senate Bill 2518. This measure is essential to protecting those who protect us and ensuring the continued safety and security of Hawai'i's residents. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sherry D. Bird".

SHERRY D. BIRD
ACTING POLICE CHIEF

KELDEN B.A. WALTJEN
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

SHANNON M. KAGAWA
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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2518

A BILL FOR AN ACT
RELATING TO ASSAULT AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS.

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 2518.

SB 2518 was drafted with the intent to amend HRS Section 707-712.5 and establish appropriate sanctions for the offense of assault against a law enforcement officer in the first degree.

SB 2518 aims to address the growing issue of assaults against law enforcement officers. As the legislature is aware, the safety of our law enforcement officers is paramount to the safety and security of our communities. This bill seeks to acknowledge and respond to the increasingly dangerous conditions under which law enforcement personnel perform their duties and to offer meaningful deterrence for those who engage in violent actions against officers.

The state of Hawai'i, like many jurisdictions across the United States, has seen a rise in the frequency and severity of attacks against officers, placing them at risk every day. As noted in the preamble, this escalation in assaults is not only a critical public safety issue but also undermines the ability to recruit and retain qualified law enforcement officers.

Officers face an environment of heightened risk, where assaults are no longer an isolated concern but an ongoing challenge that they must contend with daily. These assaults have a profound impact on the morale and well-being of our officers, as well as on the public trust in law enforcement agencies. If we are to maintain effective policing and safeguard the safety of our citizens, we must take immediate and concrete steps to address this escalating crisis.

One of the critical aspects of this bill is its potential to serve as a deterrent. When individuals know that attacks on law enforcement officers will result in substantial penalties, it is less likely that these violent incidents will occur. Furthermore, this bill provides hope for the continued recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers, who are critical to the safety of our communities. The assurance that the legislature stands firmly behind our officers will not only help maintain law and order but will also instill confidence in those considering a career in law enforcement.

SB 2518 establishes clear and meaningful penalties for those who assault law enforcement officers and provides much-needed reforms to ensure that our officers are better protected in their vital work. For the foregoing reasons, the County of Hawai'i, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney **strongly supports** the passage of Senate Bill 2518. 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. 2518
RELATING TO ASSAULT AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

February 24, 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. 2518, Relating to Assault Against Law Enforcement Officers**. This bill helps protect the safety of law enforcement officers by allowing prosecution of offenders that recklessly cause serious or substantial bodily injury to the offense of Assault Against a Law Enforcement Officer in the First Degree and requiring that any probation sentence include a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment ranging from six months to one year.

We support this bill because it recognizes the dangers that law enforcement officers face every day for simply doing their job. We believe that this bill will send a message to Hawai'i law enforcement officers that they deserve our support by providing a significant penalty for assaults against law enforcement officers.

For these reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui **supports S.B. 2518**. 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.

SB-2518

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:59:33 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debra Bringman	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully submit comments on SB2518. While I understand and appreciate the intent behind strengthening penalties for assaulting law enforcement officers, I am concerned that the proposed increase may still not adequately reflect the seriousness of the harm these officers face. Under current law, assault against a law enforcement officer in the first degree is a Class C felony with a mandatory minimum of only thirty days when probation is imposed, despite the fact that even “minor” injuries satisfy the statutory definition of bodily injury and officers can suffer severe, sometimes permanent consequences from such assaults. A bruise may appear minor, but that may simply mean the officer was fortunate that day—the next encounter may result in far greater harm. Officers put themselves at risk to maintain public safety, and the consequences for injuring them should carry enough weight to deter violence and reinforce the expectation that people must comply with lawful instructions. For these reasons, I urge the committee to consider whether stronger minimum penalties are necessary to ensure meaningful protection for the officers who serve our communities.

SB-2518

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 8:42:38 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 Wakai, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB2518, which addresses the critical need for appropriate sanctions for those who commit first-degree assault against our law enforcement officers.

Why This Bill is Necessary

Our law enforcement officers face increasingly dangerous conditions while serving the people of Hawai‘i. SB2518 is a necessary step in protecting those who protect us for several reasons:

* **Deterrence and Accountability:** By establishing clear, tiered penalties based on the severity of the bodily injury sustained, this bill sends a firm message that violence against public servants will not be tolerated.

* **Recruitment and Retention:** As Hawai‘i continues to face a shortage of law enforcement personnel, the safety of the working environment is paramount. Ensuring that the legal system provides justice for injured officers is vital for morale and for attracting new applicants to the force.

* **Safety of the Public:** When officers are sidelined by preventable injuries caused by intentional or reckless acts, our communities are left less secure. Protecting the physical integrity of our first responders directly correlates to the safety of our neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Law enforcement officers are often required to put themselves in harm's way to de-escalate volatile situations. When an individual intentionally or recklessly causes them serious bodily injury, the law must reflect the gravity of that offense. SB2518 provides the necessary legal framework to ensure accountability and honor the service of our officers.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB2518.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify

SB-2518

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 9:09:55 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 on Judiciary:

My name is Joseph Picadura, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2518.

SB 2518 amends HRS Section 707-712.5 to establish appropriate sanctions for assault against a law enforcement officer in the first degree. This bill addresses a serious and growing concern: the increasing frequency and severity of assaults against our law enforcement officers.

The safety of our officers is directly tied to the safety of our communities. Officers today face heightened risks in the performance of their duties. Assaults are no longer isolated incidents—they are an ongoing challenge that affects officer morale, recruitment, and retention.

When attacks against officers are not met with meaningful consequences, it undermines both public safety and public confidence. Establishing clear and substantial penalties sends a strong message that violence against those who serve and protect our communities will not be tolerated.

This bill also plays an important role in supporting recruitment and retention. Demonstrating that the Legislature stands firmly behind law enforcement helps ensure that qualified individuals are willing to step forward and serve.

SB 2518 provides necessary reform and meaningful deterrence, while reinforcing our commitment to the safety of those who protect Hawai'i's communities.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass Senate Bill 2518.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

February 23, 2026

LATE

Re: SB 2518, regarding more protection for police from assaults

Dear Mssrs. Rhoades and Gabbard, and other members of the committee:

I apologize for the late submission of this testimony, but I only tonight saw S.B. 2518 for the first time, and it took my breath away and filled me with the same terror I experienced in 2020 when a “routine traffic stop” was mishandled by patrolmen, one of whose misconduct is the reason I am walking with a cane and facing hip replacement surgery, and I have to at least try to speak to this dangerous bill even if the testimony is late.

On December 8, 2020, a gung-ho rookie traffic patrolman in Kona kicked my feet out from under me and dropped me on my hip where I stood, which was on the beach, where I was looking for shells, calming down after being issued a \$2,079 infractions ticket by the man’s partner an hour earlier.

The pair doubled back over an hour later to take me, from off the beach, to jail where they could take my fingerprints to verify my identity in order to charge me for driving while license revoked, something they could have done, and I thought they had done, with a ticket before they released me and the car. I did not examine the ticket they threw through the sun roof because I was too shaken after the 45-minute detention and needed to walk and get some air. I presumed there were two tickets and when I was released I thought the encounter was over and did not expect to see them again.

I’d told them up front I did not have a license, and that I must have left my passport on the dresser at home, but I gave them my name. I had to call the insurance company because they once again failed to send new cards, and while one man was on the phone with the insurance agent, the other went to do a warrant check. I knew the dispatcher would report the license revoked because it had been erroneously revoked for sixteen years at that time. What I did not know was that without a photo ID, they could not charge me for no license. I fully expected to be cited because it was the ninth time my car was stopped for no safety sticker, and that encounter led to dispatch transmitting the inaccurate status in the record, which was inaccurate for sixteen years at that time, and I’d given up trying to correct it because the administrators refused to remove the stopper or correct the status until I paid the fines ADLRO assessed in error for an alleged DUI that the eCourt records proved never happened. I would finally prove this at trial in late 2021, but in December 2020, the dispatcher relayed the information she presumed was true to the officers, and that put me in harm’s way before a rookie who did not know what to do in such a situation.

I was detained 45 minutes while the two men tried to figure out a way to charge me for a supposed “offense” that was not a cause of their action, and unlike finding contraband during a “stop”, where mere possession was the offensive conduct and the conduct was present-time, the status of the license was not my conduct, or anything that could be witnessed by anyone. It was an extrinsic condition with no outward manifestation and did not exist in the moment, but came to the officer’s attention via hearsay uttered by a third party (dispatcher) who had no firsthand knowledge. I never thought about it before that day, but not having a license (or photo ID) makes it impossible to charge someone with not having a license. Ironic? Or is this evidence that the purported “offense” is not offensive at all, for it cannot be detected with the five senses, and how can something undetectable pose a danger to public safety?

This raises questions about what ulterior purpose the license serves and whether it is reasonable to classify non-compliance with this administrative rule as a criminal offense, and whether it is reasonable and fair to subject the living men and women in the islands to unconstitutional arrests, searches and seizures for an entry in a remote record that cannot harm or offend anyone because it is not conduct-driven? Does the license truly serve a compelling public interest? Or does it serve a private interest of the quasi-public corporation doing business in the islands?

The officer would not charge me because I did not have a picture ID that connected my face with the name, and I could tell that made him mad by the way he threw the infractions ticket at me through the open sunroof when he released me. But what happened next really took me by surprise: he and his partner left, and I parked the car and went walking with my dog. The officers abandoned their patrols and came back, but parked somewhere their vehicles were not visible. While I was walking, they must have decided they could use fingerprints to “ID me”, if they took me to jail. They laid in wait until I came back around the point. I was looking for shells, taking my time, unaware they were there. The one who assaulted me came out onto the beach, and taking me unawares, he swept my feet out from under me and let me fall, full force, on the left hip. Before I knew

who it was or what was happening, he'd violently yanked up my arm, rolled me on my face, put his knee in my back, and tied my hands behind me. It was terrifying! The next week, my hip looked like this:



I was taken to jail, fingerprinted, and held without a phone call for several hours. They did all that, and did not even do the police report to charge me with anything until they were contacted weeks later by the lieutenant who was begrudgingly assigned to investigate my complaint.

Not one stitch of what they did was necessary or proper. They had my name (they called it in to dispatch), I did not deny being the registered owner of the car, I told them I did not have a license, and I was no threat to public safety. There was no crime afoot, I was not wanted for anything, I was sober, the car was insured, and I was using the car in a safe manner, not breaking any rules of the road. Even if the license were revoked, that was not a factor in the decision to seize the automobile; that decision was based on the absence of a proof-of-compliance emblem. If the policemen really thought it necessary to remove me from society for the sake of public safety, their duty would be to take me before a magistrate immediately and ask for a warrant to take my fingerprints, which are my property.

What made it so heinous was they doubled back an hour or so after releasing the car and me. The officers did not use the hour to get a warrant, and they could have. They used the time to contrive a plan to circumvent the Fourth Amendment's warrant requirement, in callous disregard of my age, my rights, my safety, my welfare, and my dignity; not to mention providing proof that the police have become a bunch of bullies who don't know right from wrong or know they will never be held accountable. They recklessly exceeded the bounds of their colorable authority. They had malice aforethought because everybody knows it is against public policy, against the law, and against public morals for men to use violence against unarmed women, especially old women who are minding their own business.

And the license was not revoked, it was expired, but the DMV, since 2004, had knowingly and wrongfully maintained the record with a false status of "revoked", which the DMV administrator admitted at trial in 2021. She kept certifying for the prosecutors that the license was expired, not revoked or suspended, and the prosecutors would change the charge on the ticket to the lesser, not included offense of driving without a license instead of doing a Nolle Prosequi motion before amending the complaint. Failure to "go through the motions" in this regard is a Class C Felony under HRS § 286-138, and it is the standard protocol for prosecutors.

I wrote and called the police department and when I got no response, I wrote the mayor, the county council, and even the ombudsman's office, and it was more than a month before anyone called me to take a statement. It was a police lieutenant who was assigned to "investigate". In March the Lieutenant called me to say he found the arrest was lawful. I have not felt safe on the island ever since. If the police are trained to think this is lawful conduct and the necessary and proper way to address violations of administrative rules, the whole department is a menace to society.

The proposed bill, S.B. 2518, protects these brutes who are already over-protected and not held accountable or even made to apologize when they are the ones causing injury to the people they once were trained to serve and protect. I would ask the committee to give serious consideration to balance the proposed bill by calling for internal accountability when its officers run amuck, and when it can be shown there was a cover up, the penalties should be more severe than the penalty of an unarmed, untrained civilian causing the same damage to police.

The police are already so sheltered and protected by the system and being segregated from society, the incidents of violence against women are more frequent and it feels like the government is at war against the people who pay for its protection.

Please refrain from passing the bill today until you can get a commitment from the police department that it will hold its officers to at least the same standard as it holds the rest of the people with whom they were created equal and who have equal rights to equal protection of evenly applied laws.

I pray this reaches you in time. Thank you for your consideration.

Aloha,
Julia Compton