



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

802 LEHUA AVENUE
PEARL CITY, HAWAII 96782
elections.hawaii.gov

SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2728
RELATING TO THE ELECTIONS

February 13, 2026

Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Chair Wakai and members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2728. This bill appropriates funds to: (1) the counties for more voter service centers for in-person voting; (2) the Office of Elections to print and mail the digital voter information guide to all registered voters; and (3) the Office of Elections to support a public outreach and engagement campaign to encourage greater voter participation.

As it relates to Section 2 of the bill regarding the appropriation of funds to print and mail the digital voter information guide to all registered voters, we estimate it to cost \$2,074,913 for the 2026 General Election. This includes costs to print and mail the digital voter guide in 5 language versions – English, Hawaiian, Chinese, Ilocano, Tagalog as well as mailing services and postage:

Printing	685,617
Mailing and Postage	<u>1,389,296</u>
Total	<u>\$2,074,913</u>

We acknowledge there are benefits of adding funding to better inform and support the electorate. This is based on our response to House Concurrent Resolution

87 provided ahead of the 2024 Legislative Session. We would note that our estimates have been updated to assume over 868,000 active registered voters for the 2026 General Election. Additionally, we respectfully ask that this bill be related to the conduct of the 2026 General Election only, as funding would not be available through this measure in time for the 2026 Primary Election.

The scope of distribution of the digital voter information guide determines the costs and can be adapted. For example, distribution to households using estimates by the U.S. Census without regard to whether an active registered voter resides at the address, would be \$1,371,183 for the 2026 General Election. In contrast, distribution to households with an active registered voter would adjust to \$984,093 for the 2026 General Election.

As it relates to Section 3 of the bill to appropriate funds to support a public outreach and engagement campaign to encourage greater voter participation, we would estimate this to cost \$178,000. This request includes:

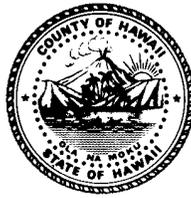
Production	28,000
<u>Ad Flight</u>	<u>150,000</u>
Total	<u>\$178,000</u>

Similarly, given timelines, it would only be feasible to produce and run ads for the 2026 General Election. The appropriation could be adjusted to increase or decrease the amount of advertising to saturate the market. The estimate of \$150,000 is for a single advertising flight.

As reference, in the 2024 Elections we expended approximately \$441,000 on advertising to include a combination of television, radio, online, out-of-home, and newspaper from June through November, to provide voter registration and voting information during an election cycle.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2728.

JON HENRICKS
County Clerk



AARON BROWN
Deputy County Clerk

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Elections Division
County of Hawai'i
Hawai'i County Building
25 Aupuni Street
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

TESTIMONY OF JON HENRICKS

COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF HAWAI'I

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ON SENATE BILL NO. 2728

RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 13, 2026

Chair Rhoads, Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 2728. This bill in part appropriates funds to the four counties to open additional Voter Service Centers (VSC) for in-person voting on election day.

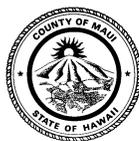
The effective date of SB 2728 indicates that this appropriation is to be expended to open additional VSCs on Election Day for the 2026 Primary and General Elections. Hawai'i County would be unable to secure resources to operate one or more additional VSCs under that timeline. Funding would need to be established well in advance of any such expansion to secure a location, acquire equipment, hire personnel, and take all other actions necessary to ensure a successful and secure operation.

Funding issues notwithstanding, operating a VSC without at least one full-time, experienced elections staff person present at all times is not in the best interest of our voters. Voter Service Centers, by their statutory definition, are not polling places that can be effectively operated by volunteers trained to provide services on Election Day and for that matter, only Election Day. Hawai'i County does not have additional full-time, experienced staffers to manage an additional VSC.

Upon adoption of Act 136 in 2019, Hawai'i County fully transitioned its Election Division to administer Elections by Mail. Hawai'i County invested in sophisticated equipment and software, including annual licensure fees, to securely process voted ballot packets. Our personnel have been trained and their position descriptions modified to best ensure a successful Elections by Mail program, which includes professional operations at a VSC. With all due consideration for voters who choose to vote in-person on Election Day, Hawai'i County reaffirms its position that under our Elections by Mail laws and program, the best and highest use of resources is for our voters to use the ballot that was created for and mailed to them.

In summation, Hawai‘i County serves every voter who casts his or her ballot at a VSC on Election Day with aloha and will never discourage their active participation in our democracy. However, this proposed expansion of services appears to encourage voters to vote at a VSC on Election Day. Doing so communicates to our voters that we are sliding back towards a polling place model, which could be inferred by some of our voters that voting by mail may be deficient or even ineffective. **Voting by mail is safe, secure, and effective.** The State and counties finite resources should be used to support voting by mail.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 2728.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK
KE KE'ENA O KE KĀKAU `ŌLELO KALANA
COUNTY OF MAUI
KALANA O MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov/county/clerk
www.mauicountyvotes.gov

February 12, 2026

TESTIMONY
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2728
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

Chair Karl Rhoads, Chair Glenn Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 2728, as it relates to voter service centers (“VSCs”) for in-person voting and commentary on the mailing of digital voter guides to all registered voters.

Our primary opposition to SB 2728 is that requiring additional VSCs on election days require additional resources that election officials are unable to secure – even with additional funding. During the 2024 election cycle, we had very limited human resources to staff the two VSCs on Maui. If we were required to staff additional VSCs on election days, they would be run with bare minimum staff. We are not able to simply hire people and send them to work at a VSC without training.

We would like to further emphasize that Hawaii’s legislators recognized that the vast majority of voters preferred to vote by mail (87% in the 2018 General Election), and responded by passing Act 136 in 2019. Since Hawaii became a vote by mail state in 2020, the mail-in voter turnout continues to be exponentially higher than in-person voting.

Election Year	Maui County Registered Voters	% of Registered Voters Voting In-person
2020	107,930	4.2%
2022	114,841	2.0%

2024	115,009	5.1%
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VSCs are open in each of the counties for ten business days *in advance* of each election and on election day. H.R.S. §11-109. In Maui County, there are two VSCs on the island of Maui (Lahaina and Wailuku), one on Lana'i and one on Molokai. To address the needs of voters in the remote area of Hana, we provide an additional VSC prior to election day.

The Hawaii Legislature's decision to move from the polling place model to permanent vote by mail responded to the decades long trend away from in-person voting.¹ Vote by mail effectively serves the vast majority of voters, offers workers, the home-bound, and others with accessible opportunities to exercise their right to vote comfortably from their own home. Ballot dropboxes distributed throughout the county make it easy for voters to deposit their ballot envelope, and ballot-tracking allows voters to track their ballot from mailing to receipt.

Funding additional VSCs to operate specifically on election day addresses only a portion of the logistical issues. To staff VSCs, we contract with two temporary agency companies to provide us with staff beginning in January of each election year. After months of training, we divide up our staff to cover different components required to run a VSC. Unfortunately, recruiting staff (whether through the temp agencies or direct county hires) has proved difficult.

Our concern with SB 2728 is that we will not be able to staff additional VSCs on election day unless we spread our already limited human resources to an absolute bare minimum. This means that every VSC would be understaffed on election day, and could detract rather than assist our efficient provision of services to the voting public.

In regard to digital voter guides being sent to each registered voter, we believe that this should be required on request only. Mailing a voter guide to every voter would mean that most homes would receive multiple copies of the voter guides. This is an expensive, and unnecessary, expense.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

¹ Implementing Elections by Mail, 2019 report to the Hawaii Legislature at <https://elections.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/Report-to-Legislature-20191104.pdf> (page 4)



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TESTIMONY
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
& COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2728
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 13, 2026

Chair Rhoads, Wakai, and members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB2728. The following provides background information for the funding proposal for additional Voter Service Centers (VSCs).

The final day of voting in the 2024 general election involved longer than usual wait times across the voter service centers that appear to occur during presidential general elections. On Oahu, the final day servicing totaled roughly 8,000 of the 22,000 voters serviced over the thirteen (13) available in-person service days. Approximately 322,000 voters utilized the mail ballot process.

Hawai'i's transition to vote-by-mail, with in-person VSCs serving as an option and contact point for same-day voter registration interactions and independent voting for persons with disabilities has created requirements that differ significantly from the former polling place election model. Expansion must be evaluated in the context of the differences as there are certain operational realities affecting whether expansion can occur.

Traditional polling places (prior to 2020) operated on one day and served voters allocated among fixed geographic areas. In contrast, VSCs operate over multiple days, servicing any voter (regardless of voting residence, registration status etc.) across numerous districts (using approximately 140 available ballot styles). These requirements eliminated the inherent workload distribution previously afforded by precinct boundaries. It also substantially changed the demands on staffing, systems/technology, and management oversight.

While volunteers were used for traditional polling places, VSC staff undergo weeks of hands-on training and preparation to enable direct editing and access to the Statewide Voter Registration system. VSC operators perform critical functions that support election integrity and voter access such as eligibility verification, same-day voter registration, address updates, district assignment verification, ballot issuance/replacement, turnout recording, and assisting voters requiring language or accessibility services.

While we appreciate any financial assistance that the State is willing to appropriate, unfortunately, the primary determinant affecting expanding VSC operations is the availability of personnel that may be utilized as full-time election workers for a final day operational surge. The availability and release of any appropriation is also essential and needs to occur well in advance of the scheduled elections.

The Honolulu Elections Division (and at least two other counties) staff its mail balloting operation, places of deposit program, and service center operations through a contracted temporary staffing agency. The agency recruits and assigns workers and provides administrative, payroll and other human resource functions (e.g. benefits, time/attendance).

Since VSCs operate over multiple days, maintaining service continuity requires full-time staffing throughout the voting period. Staffing agencies continue to face challenges filling the available positions as turnover routinely occurs within the assigned workforce.

Please note that in addition to seasonally assigned workers, the Honolulu Elections Division also recruits and utilizes both direct contractors and a smaller cohort of one day 'stipended' volunteers (for duties that do not require a high level of training or specific procedural knowledge). The volunteers have typically been recruited from schools and community organizations.

To address staffing challenges for the 2026 elections, the City hopes that contracting with more than one temporary staffing agency will expand the labor pool and increase the number of available assignees, particularly for the processing roles affecting service throughput and wait times (experienced on the final day).

However, increasing the number of Voter Service Centers without the corresponding availability of the labor required may not produce the intended result of shorter wait times and smaller election day crowds. Understaffed VSCs are almost certain to require dispersing and diluting the remaining available staffing, potentially replicating or worsening current challenges. Additionally, factors such as late voter engagement, ballot length, political messaging, etc. have an unpredictable effect upon final day service totals.

A single-day expansion is also governed by the availability of suitable facilities, especially in certain regions of the island. While traditional polling places permitted the use of school facilities and some private locations, by contrast voter service centers operate for multiple consecutive days. This substantially limits the pool of viable sites that must also have adequate floor space (to accommodate voter circulation and queue management) as well as access to parking and secure network connectivity.

Under current assumptions, we estimate that operation of a single voter service center location in both the Primary and General elections would involve a recurring cost of roughly \$675,000, mostly associated with the labor required. This total should be multiplied by the number of sites envisioned.

In an effort to identify potential solutions to workforce constraints, we have evaluated the use of electronic pollbooks. We believe that a considerable investment, of perhaps \$1,000,000 for Honolulu alone, would be necessary to acquire electronic pollbooks and enable the State Office of Elections' vendor to integrate these devices with the statewide voter registration system. Beyond improving voter processing efficiency, electronic pollbooks could potentially lower the training threshold and technical skill level currently required of Voter Service Center workers, thereby expanding the available labor pool.

It should also be noted that prior efforts to employ these devices in other counties have failed due to system integration issues. As a result, we have been reluctant to pursue this supporting technology solution to assist with voter service center expansion. Finally, the use

of electronic pollbooks as supporting technology would also require refreshing devices approximately every six years to address technology lifecycle and obsolescence considerations.

We recognize that long voter lines can also delay the release of election results for interested stakeholders. Under current law, a delay at any single VSC, (whether at an existing location or an expansion site), will inevitably cause a delay in election results for the entire State, regardless of any overall success in reducing voter wait times. The Committee may wish to consider whether statutory adjustments allowing release of election results would more directly address this ancillary issue as most vote-by-mail jurisdictions release election results at a fixed time regardless of whether in-person voting activity continues beyond the closing hour.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





LATE

**Senate Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports SB2728
Friday, February 13th, 9 AM in Conference Room 016 & Videoconference**

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee,

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action strongly supports SB2728, which appropriates funding to expand voter service centers, ensure statewide distribution of the voter information guide, and support voter outreach and engagement efforts.

A healthy democracy depends on meaningful access to voting and accurate information. While Hawai'i has made progress in expanding vote-by-mail, in-person voter service centers remain essential for many residents. This includes rural and neighbor island residents, elders, people with disabilities, language barriers, houseless voters, and those with limited or unreliable internet access. Expanding and adequately funding voter service centers helps ensure no community is left behind.

SB2728 also recognizes the importance of providing voters with clear, accessible, and unbiased election information. Mailing the voter information guide to all registered voters helps close information gaps and supports informed participation. Voters should not have to rely solely on online access to understand candidates, ballot measures, and election procedures.

Currently, not all voter service centers are open on election day, which leads to confusion and frustration. Voters often need these centers at the last minute because of failed signature verifications or ballots not being accepted, with notification arriving after the window to remedy the ballot has closed.

In addition, funding voter outreach and engagement is critical to increasing participation and strengthening public trust in the electoral process. We hope the BallotTrax software is highly promoted to voters. Civic participation does not occur automatically. Outreach is necessary to ensure voters understand their options, deadlines, and rights, especially in historically underrepresented communities.

HAPA is committed to advancing an inclusive, accountable democracy. SB248 takes concrete steps toward that goal by investing in the infrastructure and outreach needed to support broad voter participation across the state.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge support for SB2480

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:32:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support SB2728 to ensure adequate funding for in-person voting options. While Hawai'i has transitioned to permanent vote-by-mail, I remain disappointed that the public was never given the opportunity to vote directly on this major statewide change. Recent reports show that some officials continue to deny any possibility of fraud or significant error, yet documented concerns remain unresolved — including ballot discrepancies in the 2024 election and findings that required chain-of-custody records were incomplete or unverifiable. Given that an independent audit has not been fully permitted to clarify these issues, restoring and strengthening in-person voting is essential to rebuilding public trust and ensuring full transparency in our election system.

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:25:28 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2728 SB RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:45:55 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony today in strong support of SB2728.

In-person voter service centers are essential, especially for kūpuna, neighbor island and rural residents, people with disabilities, first time voters, and anyone who needs to address ballot discrepancies.

Over the past two elections, people had to wait hours in line to vote or drive over an hour to reach their closest voter service center.

We should be opening up more opportunities for people to vote, not reducing. This bill works to do that.

SB2728 will ensure every vote is cast and all votes are counted.

Mahalo for this opportunity to share testimony,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:21:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Aynessazian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure.

Tanya Yamanaka Aynessazian

Hawaii Island

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:49:12 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 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 SB2728, which appropriates critical funding to expand voter service centers, ensure statewide distribution of the voter information guide, and support voter outreach and engagement efforts. This bill is a direct investment in the health and accessibility of our democracy.

The right to vote means little if the act of voting is unnecessarily difficult. Currently, too many Hawai‘i voters face barriers that have nothing to do with their eligibility and everything to do with logistics. Working parents, kūpuna, rural residents, and those without reliable transportation or flexible schedules often find themselves unable to access the services they need to register, update their information, or cast a ballot in person.

SB2728 addresses these barriers head-on by:

- **Expanding voter service centers** and increasing their hours of operation. More locations, in more communities, open for more days means fewer voters are turned away or forced to choose between voting and their job, their caregiving responsibilities, or their health.
- **Ensuring statewide distribution of the voter information guide.** This guide is a trusted, nonpartisan, and accessible source of election information. Yet too many households never receive it. Funding its full distribution is a matter of basic informational equity.
- **Supporting voter outreach and engagement.** Infrastructure alone is not enough. People need to know that these services exist, where they are located, and how to use them. Outreach ensures that our investments in access are actually realized by the communities they are designed to serve.

This is not a partisan bill. It does not advantage one candidate or party over another. It simply ensures that every eligible voter in Hawai‘i has a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in our elections. That is the baseline promise of democracy, and SB2728 helps us deliver on it.

I urge you to pass SB2728 and make voting in Hawai‘i more accessible, more equitable, and more reflective of the diverse communities we serve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:30:18 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Perez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

What are we doing having 300-400 people lines, where people can intimidate each other from casting their vote?? Ridiculous, add more!

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:04:29 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2728. I feel we really need more in-person Voting Service Centers and I am glad that the Legislature is considering setting aside more funds to support this. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:41:48 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joell Edwards. I am a resident of Wainiha on Kaua‘i and Chair of the Kaua‘i County Democrats, but I am testifying today in my personal capacity in strong support of SB2728.

In-person voter service centers are essential, especially for kūpuna, neighbor island and rural residents, people with disabilities, first-time voters, and anyone who needs to address ballot discrepancies.

In rural communities like mine, this is imperative. Many of us live far from centralized town hubs. Transportation is limited, work schedules are tight, and not everyone has reliable internet or mail service. When voter service centers are too few or too far away, participation becomes a burden rather than a right.

In past elections, we've witnessed people who have had to wait longer times in line to vote or drive over an hour to reach their closest voter service center. That is not equitable access. Democracy should meet people where they are — not require them to navigate unnecessary barriers.

SB2728 helps ensure every vote is cast and all votes are counted, regardless of where someone lives.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:47:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB2728. In-person voter service centers are essential, especially for kūpuna, neighbor island and rural residents, people with disabilities, first-time voters, and anyone who needs to address ballot discrepancies. Over the past two elections, people had to wait hours in line to vote or drive over an hour to reach their closest voter service center. Please help make it as easy and convenient as possible for people to vote! HB1525 will ensure every vote is cast and all votes are counted.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:42:38 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2728.

In-person voter service centers are essential, especially for kūpuna, neighbor island and rural residents, people with disabilities, first time voters, and anyone who needs to address ballot discrepancies.

Over the past two elections, people had to wait hours in line to vote or drive over an hour to reach their closest voter service center.

SB2728 will ensure every vote is cast and all votes are counted.

Mahalo,

kimdonghyeon

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:54:03 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2728.

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:07:51 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Petricci	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Robert Petricci

In Support of SB2728

Aloha I support making voting easier. Helping more people vote so they have a voice is how representative government is suppose to work, IMO.

Mahalo

Robert Petricci

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:16:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this common sense bill

SB-2728

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:02:37 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roberta Hickey-Gómez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2728.

In-person voter service centers are essential, especially for kūpuna, neighbor island and rural residents, people with disabilities, first time voters, and anyone who needs to address ballot discrepancies.

Over the past two elections, people had to wait hours in line to vote or drive over an hour to reach their closest voter service center. In my district, lines extended across Frank F. Fasi Civic Grounds Public Park. Even then, those lines were relatively small compared to those reported in the news for westside residents.

Access to justice begins at the voting booth. SB2728 helps ensure that every eligible voter has a meaningful opportunity to cast their ballot and have it counted. I respectfully urge passage of SB2728.

Mahalo,

Roberta Hickey-Gómez

Pūowaina Resident

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair

Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Friday, February 13, 2026, 10:30 am Conference Room 016

SB2728, RELATING TO ELECTIONS

Good Morning Senators,

My name is Bart Dame and I am testifying as an individual with **COMMENTS** about SB2728.

This bill includes appropriations for three election-related purposes:

- 1) To the counties to open additional voter service centers for in-person voting **on election day**;
- 2) To the State Office of Elections to print and mail a voters guide **to all registered voters**;
- 3) To the OOE for voter education and to encourage turnout.

I support Purpose 3). I support Purpose 2), funding for the voters guide, though amended as recommended by the Chief Elections Officer that it be sent to each household with an active registered voter. **One per household rather than one per voter.** This would result in very significant savings for both printing and postage.

It is Purpose 1) that I find the most problematic and needing closer examination. Who would object to having more Voter Service Centers open on Election Day?

In 2019, Hawaii decided to move to all mail-in elections. This was a conscious choice and represented a strong consensus. HB1248, which became Act 136, was passed by the Senate unanimously. In the House, only 2 members, out of 51, voted against it. State and county election officials developed plans, contracted for technology, trained personnel and instituted structures to ensure every voter could easily register to vote and have an opportunity to vote in multiple ways at their convenience.

In the 2024 General Election, **93.4%** of voters on Oahu voted by mail. Those who needed to register to vote, to change their address, to use assistive technology, or to “cure”

problems with the recognition of their signature, or just because they WANT to vote in-person, were provided ten business days prior to Election Day in which to do that. About 4.06% of Oahu voters took advantage of Early walk-in voting.

Only about **2.3% of Oahu voters decided to vote in-person on Election Day**, either in Kapolei or at Honolulu Hale. It appears few of those voters were there because they needed special assistance or it was the only day they could set aside to vote. The vast majority appear to have been encouraged by President Trump and Republican officials to wait until the last minute to vote, thereby clogging the voting system, forming long lines and wait times for voters.

State and county election officials had strongly recommended voters either vote by mail or to do early walk-in voting which would avoid long lines and take very little time. They warned that showing up in-person on Election Day would likely result in long delays. But they also pledged they would keep the polling places open until everyone who had shown up by 7pm had a chance to cast their ballot.

Election officials bent over backwards to accommodate those voters who decided to wait until the last minute. Now those election officials are under attack because the long lines they had warned about came to pass.

There is an easy, cost-effective way to reduce the long lines and delays we have experienced on Election Day. That would be for elected officials and leaders of both/all political parties to stop promoting unfounded allegations of mass election fraud due to both Vote by Mail and Early Walk-in Voting. If, as originally intended by Act 136, the only people to show up to vote in-person are those who had to change their voter registration, correct their signatures, use assistive voting technology or those few who only got inspired to vote at the last minute, there would be no long lines on Election Day. And election results will not be delayed until long in the night. Problem solved.

But that would require frank talk from both elected officials and party activists. The election officials are already there, doing the right thing. It falls on the rest of us to support them rather than disparage them.

Each of the county clerks, in their testimony, has said giving them more money to open more Voter Service Centers on Election Day will NOT solve the problem. I suggest we listen to them.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.