



# HAWAI'I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

*Komikina Ho'opono Kulekele o Hawai'i Moku'āina*

Committee: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Bill Number: SB 2778  
Hearing Date/Time: February 11, 2026, 3:00 p.m.  
Re: Testimony Commenting on SB 2778

Aloha Chair Elefante, Vice-Chair Lamosao, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 2778. The Hawai'i State Ethics Commission ("Commission") has not yet had an opportunity to review this measure in a public meeting but will do so at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Based on an initial staff review, several implementation and policy concerns warrant the Legislature's careful consideration. The bill appears to establish a complex statutory framework to address an issue that may affect a relatively small number of individuals. In addition, certain proposed definitions do not clearly align with Hawai'i Revised Statutes chapter 84 or with the Commission's longstanding interpretations of the State Ethics Code, which could create uncertainty in administration and enforcement.

Successful implementation would also require sufficient time, resources, and funding. For officials who would immediately become subject to the new requirements, the current timeline may not provide adequate opportunity to understand and comply with the law, potentially resulting in confusion and administrative disruption. The measure may also benefit from closer integration with existing conflict-of-interest provisions and financial disclosure requirements under chapter 84.

The Legislature may wish to consider whether alternative or complementary policy approaches could address the underlying concerns in a more integrated and administrable manner. For example, broader refinement of existing conflict-of-interest provisions applicable to public officials, enhanced transparency within the current financial disclosure framework, or periodic, confidential compliance audits may provide more consistent and effective oversight while remaining closely aligned with the structure of chapter 84. Blind trusts can serve an important role — particularly for public officials or employees with active investment portfolios — but they are not a universal solution. Careful consideration of the underlying concern, together with a range of potential policy tools, may help ensure that any reform advances transparency and public trust without creating unnecessary complexity or implementation challenges.

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If the bill moves forward, the Legislature may wish to consider the practical costs of implementation, including the likelihood that additional Commission staffing and administrative resources would be required, as well as the potential impact on the willingness of qualified individuals to serve in public positions.

The Commission looks forward to further reviewing this measure and continuing to work with the Legislature to ensure that any changes to Hawai'i's ethics framework remain clear, workable, and effective in promoting public trust.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Very truly yours,

**/S/** Robert D. Harris

Robert D. Harris

Executive Director and General Counsel



Committee on Labor and Technology  
Chair Brandon Elefante, Vice Chair Rachele Lamosao  
Wednesday Feb. 11, 2026, 3:00 pm  
Room 225  
SB2778 – RELATING TO ETHICS

TESTIMONY

Judith Wong, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Committee Members:

**The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports SB2778**

This measure seeks to requires key administrative, legislative and departmental decisionmakers to put certain financial interests in a blind trust in order that the public can be confident that decisions made on behalf of the state are free from self-interest.

Unfortunately, in this country, we have seen numerous examples of lawmakers and administrators making decisions to benefit themselves at the cost of the average citizen. These can take the form of trading on inside information or of making decisions on behalf of the citizenry that are tainted with self-interest. This bill seeks to create a separation between the decisionmaker's personal interest and their responsibility to their role as a representative of the public good. We applaud the Ethics Commission addressing this need.

Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports SB2778.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

**SB-2778**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 5:10:01 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/11/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support

**SB-2778**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 6:27:36 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/11/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

**SB-2778**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:06:31 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/11/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Pamela Elders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The influence of big money is anethema to fair politics; it undermines the general public's faith in the process of voting. This bill will help level the playing field.

**SB-2778**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 3:00:47 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/11/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**STRONG SUPPORT!**