



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/17/2026

Time: 01:01 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDT/EDU

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2900, RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging their sports official duties. Makes intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a class B felony. Clarifies that a sports official includes a school or league administrator. Clarifies that a sports official's duties cover sports events at public schools and private schools.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2900.

The Department is committed to providing a safe and secure educational environment for both staff and students. SB 2900 authorizes the Attorney General's office to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if they are assaulted or threatened in the performance of their duties. The Attorney General's office is in the best position to represent the Department's employees in Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) hearings. The Department does not employ attorneys. Additionally, the Department does not have the funding for private attorneys. The Attorney General's office has the ability and legal expertise to represent the Department's employees.

SB 2900 also enhances legal protections for sports officials, including referees, umpires, coaches, and school administrators. The bill also elevates intentional bodily injury of a sports official to a Class B felony. This measure aligns with the Department's priority to deter violence and harassment. By explicitly including "school or league administrators" under the definition of sports officials, the bill provides critical safeguards for Department staff who are often the target of threats from parents and spectators during school events.

Strengthening legal protections through representation by the Attorney General's office is a key strategy to maintain the viability of state-wide athletic programs. Additionally, the bill includes both public and private school events, ensuring a standardized level of safety for all students and officials across the state's educational landscape.

Interscholastic athletics are an integral component of comprehensive K-12 education. When violence and threats against officials go unaddressed, the educational value of athletics can be severely compromised. Students witness adult misconduct, games are canceled, and the lessons of respect, discipline, teamwork, and fair play are undermined. SB 2900 helps protect the integrity of school athletics.

JON N. IKENAGA
PUBLIC DEFENDER

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February 15, 2026

SB2900: RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee on Education

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **strongly opposes SB2900**.¹ The OPD supports protection of the safety and well-being of Hawai'i's sports officials. Sports officials should not be subjected to any verbal abuse or physical assaults in the course of their duties. However, current statutes already provide sufficient protections and penalties, including upgraded penalties, to punish persons who assault sports officials.

In particular, the OPD opposes the proposed amendment to Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 707-710, assault in the first degree, which would make intentionally or knowingly causing bodily injury to a sports official an assault in the first degree (a Class B felony). Under current law causing bodily injury to a sports official is already subject to an upgraded penalty as a Class C felony under HRS § 707-711(1)(n).

¹ The OPD takes no position on the proposed amendment to Chapter 28 which allows the Department of the Attorney General to represent a sports official in a civil action.

Making assault against a sports official an assault in the first degree is wholly disproportionate to the degree of injury which constitutes “bodily injury”

Normally, intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing “bodily injury” to another (absent a special class) is a misdemeanor assault in the third degree offense punishable by up to one year in prison. “Bodily injury” is defined as “physical pain, illness, or any impairment of physical condition.”² In layman’s terms, “bodily injury” would be the most minor degree of injury. Examples of “bodily injury” from Hawai‘i cases are physical pain with no visible physical injuries³, bruising or an abrasion that was treated with antibiotic ointment.⁴ SB2900 seeks to upgrade causing pain with no visible injury to a Class A felony assault in the first degree. Assault in the first degree requires that a person cause either “serious bodily” injury to another person or cause “substantial bodily injury” to a person sixty year of age or older. “Serious bodily injury” means “bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes serious, permanent disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ.” Examples of “serious bodily injury” from Hawai‘i cases include: (1) eight fractured ribs and broken ribs that impaired the victim’s ability to breathe for at least four to six weeks⁵; (2) victim’s lip was split through, four teeth were displaced so severely that surgical intervention was required to retain them, victim’s eye was hemorrhaged and pushed inward and the orbital floor of the eye was fractured causing blurred vision lasting almost eleven months⁶; or extensive facial injuries including fractured cheek bones necessitating corrective surgery, a broken jaw and several missing, broken or displaced teeth⁷. It is wholly disproportionate and likely unconstitutional⁸ to punish

² HRS § 707-700.

³ State v. Pomroy, 132 Hawai‘i 85, 319 P.3d 1093 (2014).

⁴ State v. Webster, 94 Hawai‘i 241, 11 P.3d 466 (2000).

⁵ State v. Meyers, 112 Hawai‘i 278, 145 P.3d 821 (App. 2006).

⁶ In re Doe, 106 Hawai‘i 530, 107 P.3d 1203 (2005) (cert. denied 107 Hawai‘i 65, 109 P.3d 706)

⁷ State v. Yamashiro, 8 Haw.App. 595, 817 P.2d 123 (1991).

⁸ The eighth amendment to the U.S. Constitution which prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment” includes penalties deemed “grossly disproportionate” to the crime committed as well as punishments which are unnecessarily harsh, arbitrary or offend society’s standard of human dignity. The same rights are protected under article I, section 12 of the Hawai‘i Constitution.

a person who causes only pain to the same degree as a person who nearly kills someone.⁹

Upgrading assault against a sports official to assault in the first degree has no rational basis

Causing bodily injury to a sports official is currently assault in the second degree, which is already an upgraded offense as such conduct against a person with no special standing would be an assault in the third degree. Other special classes of persons that are included in the upgrade to assault in the second degree based on intentionally or knowingly causing bodily injury are educational workers, emergency medical services providers, persons employed at state-operated or contracted mental health facilities, firefighters or water safety officers, a home health care services providers, persons employed by a mutual benefit society, persons sixty years of age or older, national guard members and protective services workers. There are no classes of persons for which causing bodily injury would be upgraded from assault in the third degree to assault in the first degree. To reiterate, the only bases for assault in the first degree are causing “serious bodily injury” (substantial risk of death) or causing “substantial bodily injury”¹⁰ to a person sixty years of age or older. There is no rational basis to classify assault against a sports official as more serious than, for example, assault against a senior citizen, an educational worker or a firefighter.

Existing statutes already provide enhanced penalties for assaults against sports officials.

The OPD understands the intent behind this measure however, it is unnecessary as current statutes already provide enhanced penalties assaults against sports officials. To reiterate, HRS § 707-711(1)(n) already provide that a person who intentionally or knowingly causes bodily injury “sports official” is guilty of the upgraded offense of assault in the second degree, a Class C felony. This is an enhanced penalty as intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury to a person (absent any special status) is an assault in the third degree, a misdemeanor. HRS § 706-606.5

⁹ Notably, the Intermediate Court of Appeals found that even a stab wound that penetrated close to the victim’s heart and adjacent blood vessels but missed vital internal organs was not “serious bodily injury.” State v. Maddox, 116 Hawai‘i 445, 173 P.3d 592 (2007). SB2900 would seek to punish causing pain more severely than such a stab wound.

¹⁰ HRS § 707-700 defines “substantial bodily injury” as: a major avulsion, laceration or penetration of the skin; a burn of at least second degree severity; a bone fracture; a serious concussion or; a tearing, rupture, or corrosive damage to the esophagus, viscera, or other internal organs.

also allows persons who commits assaults or terroristic threatening offenses against sports officials to be enjoined from attending sporting events.

Increasing the severity of punishment does little to defer crime

The supposed deterrent effect of upgrading the already upgraded offense of assault against a sports official presumes that potential offenders are aware of the enhanced penalties for such conduct. The reality, however, is that increasing the severity of punishment is ineffective partly because “criminals” know little about the sanctions for specific crimes.

According to legislative analyst Ben Johnson in a January 2019 report, “[T]he state can raise the maximum penalty for an offense, but that does not necessarily change the expectations of someone who might be considering committing a crime. If a person is weighing the benefits of committing a crime against the potential consequences of that act, it is the potential offender’s actual belief about a likely sanction that matters.”¹¹

Not all crimes involve a rational decision

SB2900 further presumes that individuals considering committing a criminal act have an internal discourse whereby the individual weighs the various pro and cons – whether to follow through and commit the contemplated offense. The reality, however, is that many offenses are committed on a spur of the moment – a whim or sudden impulse.

In that same 2019 report, Mr. Johnson indicated, “[C]riminal acts may be driven by many factors. Many crimes take place when the offender is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Others occur in the ‘heat of passion’ when a person experiences a strong emotion. It makes logical sense that a model assuming criminals engage in a rational cost-benefit analysis before committing a crime would not accurately predict conduct by people with an impaired ability to think rationally.”¹²

Even if the individual possesses the correct and accurate information regarding the severity of offense, often times, in the heat of the moment, criminal offenses are

¹¹ Ben Johnson, Do Criminal Laws Deter Crime? Deterrence Theory in Criminal Justice Policy: A Primer, MN House Research, p. 5, January 2019, available at <https://www.house.mn.gov/hrd/pubs/deterrence.pdf>.

¹² Id.

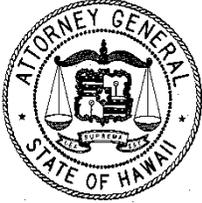
committed without deliberation or insight. The reality is that SB2900 will have little to no effect on deterring assaults on sports officials.

Conclusion

The OPD supports protection of the safety and well-being of Hawai'i's sports officials. Sports officials should not be subjected to threatening or assaultive behavior in the course of their employment. However, sports officials are already protected from such illegal conduct under current statutes for harassment, assault, and terroristic threatening, some of which provide enhanced penalties and protections for such conduct when the victim is a sports official.

True deterrence from threatening or assaultive behavior against sports officials could be achieved by enhancing security at sporting events and issuing verbal or written warnings on-the-spot of criminal consequences. This would be a proactive approach to prevent threats or assaults from occurring or escalating, rather than imposing disproportionately harsh penalties and likely unconstitutional punishment after an assault has already occurred.

SB2900 has a laudable purpose, but it is unnecessary, likely unconstitutional, has no rational basis to support its enactment and will likely not achieve its desired result. **The OPD strongly opposes SB2900.** Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**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. 2900, RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AND ON
EDUCATION

DATE: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 **TIME:** 1:01 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 229

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
David N. Matsumiya, Deputy Attorney General, or
Alan K. Akao, Deputy Attorney General

Chairs DeCoite and Kim and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General understands and appreciates the purpose of this bill and provides the following comments with suggested amendments.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) authorize the Attorney General to represent a sports official in a civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging the sports official's duties; (2) make intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a class B felony; and (3) clarify the definition of a sports official.

Civil Action

The Attorney General is the chief legal officer for the State of Hawai'i under the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i. See Haw. Const. art. V, § 6. The law reflects that function: the Department of the Attorney General's primary role in litigation is to represent the State in civil actions. See sections 28-1 & 28-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Department of the Attorney General does not have the authority to represent individuals in their personal capacity as plaintiffs in civil suits.

The Department representing clients in a personal capacity as plaintiffs in civil suits—irrespective of the merits of such suits—is antithetical to these principles and could create potential conflicts of interest and unforeseen consequences. To effectuate the legislative intent consistent with these principles, we recommend that section 2 of

the bill be deleted and that section 1 be amended by placing it in an appropriate chapter related to the Department of Education, which would provide that the Department of Education may retain private counsel on behalf of sports official to provide representation for sports officials in civil actions to obtain temporary restraining orders.

Criminal Action

While the Department takes no position on increasing the level of severity for the offense of assaulting a sports official, we believe the following approach would effectively increase protection for sports officials, and increase penalties and deterrence for perpetrators, while still maintaining consistency among protected classes. On page 3, lines 10-15, the Department recommends inserting the word "Substantial" at the beginning of line 10, such that "substantial bodily injury" (e.g., broken bones or serious concussion) perpetrated against a sports official would qualify as assault in the first degree, a class B felony. We then recommend deleting section 5, such that "bodily injury" perpetrated against a sports official would continue to be assault in the second degree, a class C felony.

This approach would place sports officials in a similar protected class as elderly victims, under assault in the first degree, while maintaining a consistent level for protection for all of the protected classes of individuals found under assault in the second degree.

We respectfully ask the Committee to pass this bill with the recommended amendments.

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 1:02:23 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Jack Sur	Testifying for Oahu Interscholastic Association	Support	In Person

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern;

I am in favor of HB 2900 regarding protecting sports administrators, officials, and coaches. The relentless and reckless behavior of individuals attending sports events has gotten worse every year. Whether it be parents yelling from the stands regarding their child's participation, or swearing when officials do not make calls to their satisfaction, as well as some tormenting both coaches, officials, and players throughout the game. The attitude of these individuals should not be given the privilege of attending any OIA game once they are determined unsportsmanlike. The incident that brought this issue up should have never happened if this law was put in place. Seems unsportsmanlike conduct is happening around the country, and it should not be allowed period.



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Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

**TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
&
TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Item: SB 2900 – Relating to Sports Officials

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 1:01 pm, Room 229

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **supports** S.B. 2900, to protect sports officials.

This bill strengthens protections for referees, umpires, and other game officials by making intentional bodily injury against them a Class B felony and authorizing the Attorney General to represent officials in civil actions when they are assaulted or threatened while performing their duties.

HSTA believes that athletics offer critical support to child development. Many of our educators work in these roles, as they need second jobs to support their families, or volunteer in these roles to support their communities. Our students deserve to play, and the adults supporting them deserve to be safe.

Please support S.B. 2900.

Mahalo.



February 13, 2026

Hawaii State Legislature

Dear Hawaii State Legislators,

I submit this testimony on behalf of the ILH Board in support of 2900 SB RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS. We assert that the legislation is an appropriate additional protective measure for sports officials overseeing interscholastic competitions.

Earlier in December 2025, the ILH Board determined it would ban the assailant and his spouse that attacked Ms. Natalie Iwamoto of Moanalua High School. We were shocked that she suffered the grievous event, an action that flies in the face of community standards and is inconsistent with the values of the ILH and the wholesome educational environment of interscholastic competition we support.

Nonetheless, we express concern that this sort of inappropriate conduct is on the rise. It is time for the ILH as a league to take further action promoting safety and good sportsmanship. But our efforts toward these ends will achieve greater success if there are consequences targeted inappropriate conduct at interscholastic sports competitions. Our administrators, coaches, and student athletes need the support of legislators in our state.

The measures being crafted in the legislature is one part of a systemic effort the ILH has undertaken to address the problem of inappropriate conduct and violence at interscholastic sports competitions.

The ILH Board, ILH Office, and members of the Athletic Directors Council of the ILH are reviewing member school safety procedures; pre-game and post-game protocols promoting sportsmanship and the safety of student athletes and coaches, officials, and attendees; and action plans to address safety concerns, including crowd control measures, deconfliction strategies, and enhanced aloha for our sacred officials who make competition possible.

As a legislative body, you hold a critical role to provide a backstop that further shields sports officials.

Interscholastic sports offer our students critical growth opportunities and our schools indelible moments to build community and identity. But we must ensure those lessons affirm mutual respect, express value for our educators, coaches, and officials who make competition meaningful and possible, and embody the spirit of togetherness we intend.

Please work to further refine and pass this measure. We are counting on your effective action.

In solidarity,

Josh Hernandez Morse
Chair, ILH Board

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 10:40:48 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leolani Corpuz	Testifying for Maui High School Athletics	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB2900

To: Chairperson and Members of the Committee

From: Leolani Corpuz, TA Athletic Director, Maui High School

Re: Support for SB2900 – Relating to Sports Officials

"As an Assistant Athletic Director at Maui High School, I am writing in **strong support of SB2900**. Every week, I witness the dedication of our referees, coaches, and staff who work tirelessly to provide a safe and competitive environment for our student-athletes. Unfortunately, we have seen a rising and alarming trend of verbal threats and physical hostility directed toward officials. These individuals are the backbone of our athletic programs, yet they often feel vulnerable and unprotected when doing their jobs.

SB2900 sends a clear message that violence and intimidation have no place in Hawaii's school sports. By providing legal support through the Attorney General and increasing the penalties for assault, this bill offers the protection our officials deserve. It is not just about punishment; it is about ensuring that we can continue to recruit and retain the quality officials and coaches our students need. I urge the committee to pass SB2900 to safeguard those who serve our youth on the field and in the gym. Mahalo nui."

Keith Amemiya
P.O. Box 3590
Honolulu, HI 96811

SENATE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AND
EDUCATION

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

1:01 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

In consideration of

SB 2900

RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS

Chairs DeCoite and Kim, and Vice Chairs Wakai and Kidani, and Members of the Committees on Economic Development and Tourism and Education:

I'm Keith Amemiya, former Executive Director of the Hawaii High School Athletic Association and current Chair of the Governor's Sports Task Force and Senior Vice President at Central Pacific Bank, and I strongly support SB 2900, which authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings and makes intentional bodily injury of a sports official a Class B felony.

As the HHSAA's Executive Director for 12 years and continuing to be heavily involved in high school and youth sports since then, I've seen far too many incidents of verbal abuse, threats, harassment, and assaults of our valued and essential officials, administrators, school employees, and volunteers at sports events.

Sports officials are an integral part of high school and youth sports, and we're already facing a shortage of them. Without them, we will no longer have high school and youth sports.

Therefore, SB 2900 will provide much needed protection for these essential workers.

As for Moanalua High School Assistant Athletic Director, Natalie Iwamoto, it would be fitting to have this bill passed for her and many other dedicated sports officials.

I hired Natalie out of college as my Assistant at the HHSAA and we've been colleagues and friends since. Her career long dedication to Hawaii high school sports is unmatched, as is her courage, bravery, fortitude, and conviction to always do what's right.

Enough is enough. We all need to take a stand against violence, threats, and abuse in high school sports.

Based upon the above, I humbly ask for your support and to pass SB 2900.

Please let me know if you have any questions and mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Keith Y. Amemiya
Former Executive Director
Hawaii High School Athletic Association



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
Committee on Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 17, 2026

S.B. 2900 — RELATING TO SPORTS OFFICIALS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports S.B. 2900, which authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings when they are assaulted or threatened while lawfully performing their duties. The bill also enhances penalties by making the intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in their official duties a class B felony and clarifies that these duties include officiating sports events at both public and private schools.

Sports officials play a critical role in maintaining safe athletic environments for Hawai'i's students. They deserve to carry out these responsibilities without fearing for their personal safety. HGEA has long advocated for similar measures. Unfortunately, it took the recent violent incident at Moanalua High School involving Associate Athletic Director Natalie Iwamoto to underscore the urgent need for stronger legal protections. This incident demonstrated that the current system fails to provide adequate support for those who serve on the front lines of school athletics. Associate AD Iwamoto had to independently navigate the complex legal process in the aftermath of the assault—dealing with law enforcement, learning how to file a temporary restraining order, and securing private legal representation. No educational or athletic official should be left to manage these challenges alone. This gap in support is unacceptable.

We also ask that the definition of “sports official” be expanded to include all school personnel assigned duties at the sports event, including but not limited to, classified and certificated employees who provide security, collect tickets, run concessions, or perform custodial duties, regardless of whether the person is paid or a volunteer.

Authorizing the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings will ensure they receive timely, informed, and professional legal support at a moment when they are most vulnerable. Combined with enhanced criminal penalties, this measure sends a clear message: Hawai'i will not tolerate violence against individuals who serve and protect our student-athletes.

S.B.2900 – HGEA Testimony

Page 2

February 17, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2900.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Perreira". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



Hawaii High School Athletic Association

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February 13, 2026

Testimony in Support of S.B. 2900, Relating to Assault

The Hawaii High School Athletic Association (“HHSAA”) supports S.B. 2900, legislation that authorize the Attorney General to represent sports officials in civil proceedings if the sports official has been assaulted or threatened in the course of legally discharging their sports official duties. Makes intentional bodily injury of a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties a class B felony. Clarifies that a sports official includes a school or league administrator. Clarifies that a sports official's duties cover sports events at public schools and private schools.

Before my role as Executive Director of HHSAA, I was a private litigation attorney familiar with the judicial process. Most victims are not; after assault, they are left to navigate the legal system alone or must pay for representation. I have assisted several victims by providing information or helping them find attorneys. It is unjust that victims should bear these burdens for harm they did not cause.

Hawaii is currently experiencing a significant shortage of individuals willing to serve as sports officials and work as administrators. This shortage is related to inappropriate and unacceptable behavior by fans, which is especially prevalent at high school sporting events. For example, during the state soccer tournament 2 weeks ago, I witnessed instances of verbal abuse and hostility towards officials. This past weekend, at the state basketball championship game, ushers were threatened while performing their jobs of keeping fans in line. Personally, I was also threatened by a student while performing my duties. Such conduct discourages individuals from becoming or remaining officials and working as administrators.

Unless the legislature acts to support sports officials, high school athletic events will suffer. Leagues have shortened their seasons due to the lack of available officials. Immediate action is needed to demonstrate support for these essential individuals and avert further disruption to high school sports.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of S.B. 2900.

Christopher Chun

Christopher Chun, Executive Director

About the HHSAA

Founded in 1956, the Hawaii High School Athletic Association is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational athletic organization exclusively dedicated to serving 98 public and independent member high schools statewide, as they work cooperatively to support and promote athletics as part of the high school education program. As the umbrella organization of high school athletics, the HHSAA operates 52 state championships in 23 different sports, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, in addition to providing professional development opportunities for coaches and athletic administrators.

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 11:29:05 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joel J Kawachi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB 2900

Relating to Sports Officials

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joel Kawachi, and I serve as the Athletic Director at Moanalua High School and as an administrator within the Oahu Interscholastic Association (OIA). I am writing in strong support of SB 2900.

This measure represents a critical step forward in protecting the individuals who make interscholastic athletics possible. Sports officials, coaches, and school administrators are essential to the safe and orderly conduct of athletic events. Without them, contests simply cannot take place.

In recent years, we have all observed an increase in verbal hostility, threats, and, in some cases, physical aggression directed at officials and event personnel. While the vast majority of our spectators and families are supportive and respectful, it only takes one incident to cause harm—physically, emotionally, and operationally.

SB 2900 does several important things:

First, it authorizes the Attorney General to represent a sports official in civil proceedings when that individual has been assaulted or threatened in the lawful discharge of their duties. This sends a strong message that the State of Hawai‘i stands behind those who serve our student-athletes.

Second, the bill appropriately clarifies that the definition of “sports official” includes not only referees and umpires, but also coaches and school or league administrators—whether paid or volunteer. This reflects the reality of school-based athletics. Athletic directors, coaches, and administrators are often the individuals tasked with crowd management, supervision, and de-escalation when tensions rise.

Third, by strengthening the criminal consequences for intentionally causing bodily injury to a sports official engaged in the lawful discharge of duties, the bill establishes a meaningful deterrent. Sporting events must remain safe spaces for students, families, and staff. Clear legal protections reinforce expectations for appropriate conduct.

Importantly, this legislation applies to events at both public and private schools, ensuring consistent protections statewide. It also clarifies that a sports official's duties extend from arrival at the venue until return home or to their place of business—recognizing that risks do not end at the final whistle.

From a school operations perspective, this bill supports recruitment and retention. Across the state, we face shortages of qualified officials. Many cite safety concerns and spectator behavior as reasons for leaving. Providing stronger legal protections demonstrates that Hawai'i values and protects those who serve in these roles.

Our student-athletes deserve structured, well-officiated, and professionally managed contests. SB 2900 strengthens the framework that allows that to happen.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB 2900.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Joel Kawachi
Athletic Director
Moanalua High School
Oahu Interscholastic Association

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 12:09:29 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
wade hondo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 2900, which establishes stricter penalties for assault and harassment against sports officials.

Across our state in all of our high school interscholastic leagues, sports officials are facing a continued rise in verbal and physical abuse. Whether they are administrators, coaches, referees, or school officials, the motivation has and always will be to be there for our kids, to help them learn live lessons, and to grow. Unfortunately, the entitlement that empowers some parents and spectators to cross lines, to intimidate and to confront makes it increasingly difficult to do our jobs efficiently.

SB 2900 is a necessary deterrent. By classifying the assault of an official during or immediately following a contest as a more serious offense, this bill sends a clear message that those behaviors have no place in sports. This legislation does more than punish bad behavior; it protects the future of our athletic programs and ensures that our children have a safe, structured environment in which to play.

I respectfully urge this committee to **pass SB 2900**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 4:54:14 PM

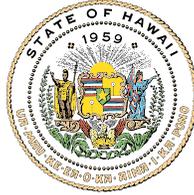
Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

No limited to only sports BUT to include any authorized school function. AND if the sports official is found "guilty" that individual(s) are required to reimburse the State of Hawaii - AG for cost and so forth.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

HENRY J. KAISER HIGH SCHOOL
An International Baccalaureate World School

511 Lunalilo Home Road
Honolulu HI 96825-1705
USA

To: Senate Committees on Economic Development and Technology (EDT) and Education (EDU)

From: Justin S. N. Mew, Principal, Henry J. Kaiser High School

Position: Strong Support

Date: February 17, 2026

Aloha Chairpersons, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

I submit this written testimony in strong support of **Senate Bill 2900**, which authorizes the Attorney General to represent sports officials who are assaulted or threatened while performing their duties and strengthens protections for those who serve our athletic communities.

As a public school principal at Henry J. Kaiser High School for 13 years, I have personally managed four high-profile, emotionally charged athletics-related incidents, in addition to several other athletic matters that required time-consuming investigations. These situations often extend well beyond the playing field, impacting student safety, staff well-being, and school climate.

I am a strong proponent of high school athletics. Athletics are an integral part of the high school experience and provide students with opportunities for growth, discipline, teamwork, and belonging. However, these benefits depend on safe, respectful environments for all involved—athletes, officials, coaches, and administrators alike.

SB 2900 is particularly important because it recognizes the reality of modern school athletics. By expanding the definition of “sports official” to include referees, umpires, timers, scorers, coaches, and school or league administrators—whether paid or volunteer—the bill acknowledges that responsibility and risk extend beyond those holding whistles. School administrators and coaches are often required to intervene during emotionally charged situations, sometimes facing threats or physical aggression while acting in the lawful discharge of their duties.

The bill’s clarification that a sports official’s duties extend from arrival at the venue until returning home or to their place of business reflects real-world conditions and provides needed clarity.

Additionally, establishing intentional bodily injury of a sports official as a felony sends a clear and necessary message: violence and threats have no place in school or community athletics.

Ultimately, SB 2900 supports our shared goal of allowing coaches to coach, athletes to compete, and officials to officiate—without fear for their personal safety. It strengthens accountability while reinforcing respect for those who serve our students and communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your favorable consideration and passage of Senate Bill 2900.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to safe and positive athletic environments across Hawai'i.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin S. N. Mew
Principal
Henry J. Kaiser High School

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 8:20:14 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carlos A. Santana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Sports officials are an extention of the league for educational purposes. I supprt this legislation to allow the attorney general to represent a sports official in a civil action in relation to a sports event at which the sports official has been, or has allegedly been, assaulted or threatened while engaged in the lawful discharge of the sports official's duties.

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 10:23:16 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

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

Comments:

As an administrator at a local high school and someone involved in athletics for over 30 years, I strongly support SB2900. Our ability to sustain high school athletics in Hawaii is currently threatened by a critical shortage of officials, fueled largely by an environment of increasing verbal and physical hostility. By elevating intentional injury of an official to a Class B felony and providing Attorney General representation, this bill offers the essential protections needed to recruit and retain the staff who make our games possible. These protections for officials and administrators are not just about safety; they are about preserving the integrity and future of competitive sports for our student-athletes.

Aloha,

Michael Ban

LATE

SB-2900

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 6:29:00 PM
Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
STACEY DAWN GOODHUE-SOUZA- KAULULAAU	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 2900 – Relating to Sports Officials

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committees on Economic Development and Technology and Education,

My name is Stacey Dawn Goodhue-Souza-Kaululaau, and I am writing in strong support of bill SB 2900. I am writing as both a sports parent and a social work student who values safe and supportive environments for youth and families. I have four children who actively participate in youth athletics, and I have seen firsthand how important sports officials are in creating safe, fair, and structured environments for our keiki.

Sports officials, including referees, coaches, and league administrators, play an essential role in youth development. They help teach teamwork, accountability, respect, and sportsmanship. Unfortunately, many parents like myself and community members have witnessed many situations where officials are verbally threatened or treated aggressively during games. This behavior not only puts individuals at risk but also sets a harmful example for the young athletes who are watching and learning from adults.

SB 2900 sends a clear message that violence or intimidation toward sports officials is not acceptable. By strengthening protections and ensuring that officials have legal support when they are threatened or assaulted, this bill helps promote safer environments for everyone involved, players, families, volunteers, and officials alike. When officials feel protected and supported, they are more likely to continue volunteering their time and expertise, which is critical for sustaining youth sports programs in our communities.

As a parent, I want my children to grow up seeing adults model respect, emotional regulation, and accountability, even in moments of competition or disagreement. Supporting sports officials ultimately supports our youth, our families, and the values we are trying to teach through athletics.

From a social work perspective, this bill supports safe community environments and helps prevent harm before it occurs. Youth sports are important spaces for social development, emotional regulation, and community connection. Policies that protect the adults

responsible for maintaining structure and safety also protect the developmental wellbeing of children participating in those environments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2900. I respectfully urge you to pass this measure.

**Sincerely,
Stacey Dawn Goodhue-Souza-Kaululaau, BSW
Sports Parent and Community Member**