

PUBLIC DEFENDER

DEFENDER COUNCIL
1130 NORTH NIMITZ HIGHWAY
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HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96817

HONOLULU OFFICE
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APPELLATE DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2080

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TEL. No. (808) 586-2100

FAMILY COURT DIVISION
TEL. No. (808) 586-2300

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STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER

HILO OFFICE
275 PONAHAHAWAI STREET
SUITE 201
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TEL. No. (808) 974-4571
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75-1000 HENRY STREET
SUITE #209
KAILUA-KONA HI 96740
TEL. No. (808) 327-4650
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KAUA'I OFFICE
3060 EIWA STREET
SUITE 206
LIHUE, HAWAI'I 96766
TEL. No. (808) 241-7128
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MAUI OFFICE
81 N. MARKET STREET
WAILUKU, HAWAI'I 96793
TEL. No. (808) 984-5018
FAX No. (808) 984-5022

February 19, 2026

LATE

SB2919 SD1: RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **strongly supports SB2919 SD1**. This measure seeks to add a Deputy Public Defender III position to the Office of the Public Defender, provided that the position be assigned as needed to provide counsel on constitutional and related legal matters.

The OPD is a statewide agency with branches on O'ahu, Maui (servicing Maui, Lana'i and Moloka'i), Kaua'i, and Hawai'i (Kona and Hilo). The mission of the OPD is to fulfill the State's obligation to provide legal counsel for indigent persons who are charged with a criminal offense or to other persons who have been statutorily afforded counsel. The representation provided by the OPD is required by the constitution, statute and rule to be zealous and effective. Last year the OPD's 102 attorneys handled 34,363 cases – this included parole matters, involuntary civil commitment cases, appeals, traffic cases, petty misdemeanor cases, misdemeanor cases, felony cases and murder cases, an average of 337 cases per attorney.¹ In order to provide constitutionally effective representation, attorneys must be apprised of all direct and collateral legal consequences of cases. For example, many charges may have convictions which have constitutional, civil or statutory ramifications in addition to the direct legal penalties. More importantly, other cases may have immigration consequences which must be taken into consideration when resolving

¹ The majority of cases handled by the OPD are traffic, petty misdemeanor and misdemeanor cases in the district courts. The 102 attorneys includes 9 supervisors and the Assistant Public Defender. Generally supervisors carry a lower case load due their administrative duties. The additional caveat to the per-attorney count is that this average assumes that all 102 positions are filled when, in fact, the OPD generally has vacancies which would increase the per-attorney case count.

the case. Despite the fact that the OPD is a statewide office, the OPD has no attorneys who are assigned to provide assistance to attorneys statewide in immigration matters. All currently available attorney positions at the office are necessary to provide representation in trial and appellate matters. Padilla and the Hawai'i cases that followed (Najera and Araiza) were decided in a time when there was more certainty regarding the immigration consequences of convictions. Under the current federal administration, laws, regulations regarding immigration consequences and the interpretations and implementation thereof are moving targets. As it stands now, the OPD relies upon advice from outside agencies, such as the Hawai'i Immigrant Justice Center, or from the experience or research into immigration issues by other attorneys in the office, to wade through the complex area of immigration law. HB2600 would allow the OPD to dedicate a single position to focus on immigration law as it relates to the criminal cases handled by the OPD attorneys. Under Padilla, Najera and Araija, the OPD has a "clear duty" to provide adequate and accurate device to its clients regarding immigration consequences. SB2919 SD1 would provide an attorney position so that the OPD can fulfil the mandates of Padilla, Najera and Araija in the course of fulfilling its constitutionally and statutorily mandated mission of providing indigent persons with representation in criminal matters

The position allocated by SB2919 will be used to provide statewide advice and assistance on all constitutional and related legal matters and collateral issues that affect the clients of the OPD, most significantly on immigration issues. The attorney filling this position will be required to keep themselves apprised of the rapidly changing legal landscape in issues that affect the clients of the OPD to ensure that attorneys statewide provide effective and competent representation.

The OPD strongly supports SB2919 SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2919, SD1 - RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER.

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, Rep. Cochran of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - The People in Action Maui. Roots Reborn **strongly supports SB 2919, SD1**, Relating to the Office of the Public Defender, which appropriates funds to the Office of the Public Defender for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Deputy Public Defender III position.

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and across the state. Formed after the August 2023 wildfires, our team has worked alongside families through every phase of recovery by providing aid, navigating systems, and building community trust that remains the foundation of our work today. We have grown into an organization providing pro bono immigration legal services, Know Your Rights education, and rapid response coordination for immigrant residents statewide.

Our pro bono immigration legal services work has shown us that access to legal counsel, regardless of ability to pay, strengthens families, supports community, and ensures that everyone's rights under the Constitution are protected. That is why we **support SB 2919, SD1** to add legal resources where needed and to ensure the rights of all are upheld regardless of financial circumstance.

We respectfully urge your strong **support for SB 2919, SD1**.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written over a horizontal line.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*

El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

**Testimony of Liza Ryan Gill
In SUPPORT of SB2919 SD1**

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 19, 2026

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Liza Ryan Gill, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR), a coalition of immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations working statewide to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen our shared future. We respectfully **support SB2919 SD1**, which appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent Deputy Public Defender III position within the Office of the Public Defender.

The constitutional right to counsel is only meaningful when public defenders have the capacity to provide genuinely effective representation. The Office of the Public Defender plays a critical role in ensuring that all individuals, regardless of income, have access to competent legal representation — a cornerstone of due process under both the United States and Hawai‘i State Constitutions. However, the office is currently understaffed relative to the volume and complexity of cases across Hawai‘i’s judicial circuits. Public defenders are often stretched thin, which can lead to delays, increased pressure on attorneys, and limitations on the time available for each client.

For immigrant defendants, the stakes are especially high. Criminal cases can carry severe and often irreversible immigration consequences, including deportation, loss of legal status, or permanent separation from family. Effective representation requires time for careful advisement and informed decision-making — something that is difficult to achieve under excessive caseloads.

Investing in an additional Deputy Public Defender III position is a practical and targeted step to strengthen the office’s capacity, improve case outcomes, and uphold due process. Adequate staffing not only protects the rights of indigent defendants — who are disproportionately immigrants and people of color — but also improves overall judicial efficiency by reducing delays and case backlogs.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

For these reasons, the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights respectfully urges the Committee to PASS SB2919 SD1 and fully fund this position. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Liza Ryan Gill
Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 11:21:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Estela Chao-Reza	Faith Action for Community Equity	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of the Rev. Dr. Estela Chao-Reza

Faith Action for Community Equity (Faith Action)

In SUPPORT of SB2919 SD1

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair

Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 19, 2026

Dear Chair David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Estela Chao-Reza, and I submit this testimony in strong support of SB2919 SD1, which appropriates funds to the Office of the Public Defender for one full-time equivalent Deputy Public Defender III position. I serve as the Executive Director of Faith Action for Community Equity (Faith Action), a statewide, faith-rooted organization that works alongside low-income families, immigrants, and directly impacted individuals to advance justice, dignity, and opportunity for all people in Hawai‘i.

Through our work, we regularly accompany community members navigating the legal system—many of whom are immigrants or come from historically marginalized communities. We see firsthand how limited access to adequate legal representation can lead to devastating consequences for individuals and families.

The constitutional right to counsel is only meaningful when public defenders have the time and capacity to provide effective representation. For immigrant defendants in particular, the consequences of criminal cases extend far beyond fines or incarceration. A single conviction—or even a plea made without full understanding—can result in deportation, permanent separation from family, or loss of lawful status. These are life-altering outcomes that demand careful, informed legal guidance.

However, public defenders are often overburdened, managing heavy caseloads that limit the time they can spend with each client. This makes it difficult to fully advise individuals of the complex and severe immigration consequences tied to their cases. By funding an additional Deputy Public Defender III position, SB2919 SD1 takes a concrete and necessary step toward ensuring that every person receives the thorough, competent representation they are constitutionally guaranteed.

This bill also reflects Hawai'i's commitment to fairness and equity. Low-income residents—disproportionately immigrants and people of color—should not face worse legal outcomes simply because they cannot afford private counsel. Strengthening the capacity of the Office of the Public Defender promotes more equitable case outcomes, protects due process, and helps maintain trust in our justice system.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to PASS SB2919 SD1 and fully fund this critical position. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your commitment to justice in our communities.

Sincerely,
Estela

LATE

Law Office of Georgette A. Yaindl, LLLC
Georgette Anne Yaindl 8940
P.O. Box 307
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(808) 224-0219 v/txt (877) 300-8869 fax
gyaindl@gyattorney.com

March 18, 2026

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
House of Representatives
33rd Legislature, State of Hawai'i

via: <http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov>

Dear Committee leadership and members,

Re: **SUPPORT FOR SB2919, SD1 RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF THE
PUBLIC DEFENDER**

DATE: Thursday, March 19, 2026
TIME: 2:00 pm
PLACE: Conference Room 325& Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

The original draft of this bill is better. Please restore it:

SECTION 1. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$125,004 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) deputy public defender III position within the office of the public defender (BUF151); provided that the deputy public defender III shall be assigned as needed to provide counsel on constitutional and related legal matters.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of the public defender for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 2. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. Aloha.

/s/ Georgette A. Yaindl
GEORGETTE ANNE YAINDL



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2919, SD1
RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER**

LATE

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 19, 2026 | Letter Date: March 18, 2026

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (TLC) strongly supports SB2919, SD1 which appropriates funding to establish an additional Deputy Public Defender position within the Office of the Public Defender. TLC is a nonprofit organization that works to advance immigrant justice in Hawai'i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy. We are committed to ensuring due process and equitable access to justice for all in Hawai'i, particularly immigrant and migrant communities who often face language barriers, economic hardship, and unfamiliarity with the legal system.

SB2919, SD1 strengthens Hawai'i's public defense capacity by supporting counsel on constitutional and related legal matters, an essential safeguard for fairness and due process. Noncitizens who come into contact with the criminal legal system face unique and often severe immigration consequences, including detention, deportation, and family separation. These individuals have a constitutional right to be informed of their legal rights and options, including the potential immigration consequences of criminal proceedings. Access to qualified, timely counsel is critical to protecting constitutional rights and ensuring individuals can make informed decisions about their cases.

SB2919, SD1 strengthens the Office of the Public Defender's staffing capacity to provide timely and effective representation. This measure is an important investment in fairness, due process, and public confidence in Hawai'i's legal system, and we urge the Committee's support.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of The Legal Clinic
and Board President Amefil Agbayani,

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



Committee: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 2:00 PM
Place: Conference Room 325 & via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of SB2919, SD1, Relating to the Office of the Public Defender**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The ACLU of Hawai'i (ACLU-HI) is in **support of SB2919, SD1**, which appropriates funds for an additional full-time employee at the Office of the Public Defenders: specifically, the bill would fund a full-time attorney assigned to “provide counsel on constitutional and related legal matters.”

The ACLU of HI strongly supports SB2919, SD1 because it strengthens Hawai'i's public defense capacity by supporting counsel on constitutional and related legal matters, an essential safeguard for fairness and due process. In 2010, the United State Supreme Court held in *Padilla v. Kentucky* that criminal defense attorneys have a Sixth Amendment duty to advise noncitizen defendants about the immigration consequences of their criminal convictions. 559 U.S. 356 (2010). In doing so, the Supreme Court recognized that many criminal convictions—including misdemeanors and lesser offenses—are grounds for deportation and other severe consequences under federal immigration law.

Noncitizens who live in Hawai'i and are accused of crimes therefore have the constitutional right to receive adequate counsel when navigating decisions throughout the pendency of their cases. Adding capacity to the Public Defenders' Office helps to ensure that this constitutional right is fulfilled, and that noncitizens are informed of their legal rights and options, including the potential immigration consequences of criminal proceedings.

The ACLU-HI strongly supports the passage of this measure because it strengthens the Office of the Public Defender's staffing capacity to provide timely and effective representation. This measure is an important investment in fairness, due process, and public confidence in Hawai'i's legal system, and we urge the Committee's support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Mandy Fernandes
Policy Director
ACLU of Hawai'i

With more than 4,000 Hawaii-based members, the mission of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the United States and Hawai'i State Constitutions through legislative, litigation, and public education work. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving our communities in Hawai'i for over 60 years.

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2026 10:25:56 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kat Brady	Community Alliance on Prisons	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Members of the JHA Committee!

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to express our **STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 2919 SD1.**

Our community **NEEDS** these dedicated attorneys now more than ever before. Their caring for our community shines a light of hope for the rights of all our neighbors who cannot afford an attorney.

THIS IS WHAT JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY IS ALL ABOUT!

Please support this bill with a strong recommendation for passage when it goes to FIN.

Mahalo piha,

Kat Brady, Coordinator

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 12:10:40 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Ann Shirota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members, I am writing in strong support of SB2919 SD1 Relating to the Office of the Public Defenders.

For years, the Office of the Public Defender has been underfunded, understaffed and underpaid. Even when Public Defenders were finally appropriated salary increases, the State of Hawai'i withheld their paychecks for months. This is egregious - and would have never been tolerated by the Department of the Attorney General, Prosecuting Attorneys and other law enforcement staff.

It's time for our State to fully fund the Public Defender' office, including staffing capacity to ensure that persons accused of crimes are afforded legal counsel protected under the federal and Hawai'i Constitutions with specialized knowledge of immigration law.

Please pass SB2919 SD1.

Mahalo,

Carrie Ann Shirota, Esq.

Honolulu, Hawaii

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 2:57:02 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine L. Andrews, J.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully request your support of this measure.

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 11:14:48 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tina Even	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

- Tina Marie Even
Indivisible Member

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2919 SD1

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 19, 2026

Dear Chair David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I submit this testimony in **support of SB2919 SD1**, which appropriates funds to the Office of the Public Defender for one full-time equivalent Deputy Public Defender III position.

I work closely with the immigrant community and have seen the detrimental effects of a guilty plea to even the smallest of offenses. This wasn't the case under previous presidential administrations. A non-citizen with legal status who has any kind of record is often not allowed to reenter the country if they go abroad. Many times, defendants are encouraged by overburdened public defenders to take a plea deal when facing charges. It might seem like the best option at the time, but that guilty plea can effectively ban them from re-entering the country, separating families and causing unnecessary suffering. A well-staffed public defender office may help avoid such unfortunate events.

The constitutional right to counsel is only meaningful when public defenders have the capacity to provide genuinely effective representation. For immigrant defendants, the stakes of criminal cases go beyond sentencing, a conviction or even a guilty plea can trigger deportation, bars to re-entry, or loss of legal status. Overburdened public defenders may not have the time to fully advise each client of these severe and often irreversible immigration consequences before critical decisions must be made. Investing in one additional Deputy Public Defender III position is a practical, targeted step toward ensuring every client gets the representation they are constitutionally entitled to. SB2919 SD1 also reflects Hawai'i's broader commitment to equal justice. Low-income defendants, who are disproportionately immigrants and people of color, deserve the same quality of legal defense as those who can afford private counsel. Adequate staffing leads to better outcomes: more time per case, more complete advisement, and stronger protection of due process rights. The Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs is the right place to champion this investment in access to justice for all.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS SB2919 SD1** and fully fund the position. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 1:59:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy J. Budd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 13, 2026

Testimony In SUPPORT of SB2919 SD1

Hearing Date: March 19, 2026

Time: 2:00 pm

To: Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair

Representative Mahira Poepoe, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Tarnas and Vice Chair Poepoe,

I am writing to express my strong **support of SB2919 SD1**, which appropriates funds to the Office of the Public Defender for one full-time equivalent Deputy Public Defender III position.

I have been a resident of Kaua`i since 1979 and practiced law in Hawai`i for more forty years, retiring in 2000. During my career I worked as the Managing Attorney for the Kaua`i Office of Legal Aid Society of Hawai`i until opening my practice in Lihu`e. Over the years I have been engaged in a variety of legal projects and organizations including working with the Judiciary Self-Help Centers to support self-represented litigants, serving as an arbitrator in the CAAP program, and serving on the Task Force on Civil Justice Improvements which led to new court rules aimed at reducing costs and delays.

The constitutional right to counsel is only meaningful when public defenders have the capacity to provide genuinely effective representation. For immigrant defendants, the stakes of criminal cases go beyond sentencing — a conviction or even a guilty plea can trigger deportation, bars to

re-entry, or loss of legal status. Overburdened public defenders may not have the time to fully advise each client of these severe and often irreversible immigration consequences before critical decisions must be made.

Investing in one additional Deputy Public Defender III position is a practical, targeted step toward ensuring every client gets the representation they are constitutionally entitled to. SB2919 SD1 also reflects Hawaii's broader commitment to equal justice. Low-income defendants — who are disproportionately immigrants and people of color — deserve the same quality of legal defense as those who can afford private counsel. Adequate staffing leads to better outcomes: more time per case, more complete advisement, and stronger protection of due process rights. The Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs is the right place to champion this investment in access to justice for all.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS SB2919 SD1** and fully fund the position. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Nancy J. Budd

njbudd@gmail.com

SB-2919-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 2:32:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Justice, M.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair; Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

I am a retired physician, a resident of Kapolei, and a member of the Indivisible Hawai`i Statewide Network. I am writing to submit testimony in strong support of SB2919 SD1. The Bill appropriates funds to the Office of the Public Defender for one full-time equivalent Deputy Public Defender III position.

The constitutional right to counsel is only meaningful when public defenders have the capacity to provide genuinely effective representation. For immigrant defendants, the stakes of criminal cases go beyond sentencing, a conviction or even a guilty plea can trigger deportation, bars to re-entry, or loss of legal status. Overburdened public defenders may not have the time to fully advise each client of these severe and often irreversible immigration consequences before critical decisions must be made. Investing in one additional Deputy Public Defender III position is a practical, targeted step toward ensuring every client gets the representation they are constitutionally entitled to. SB2919 SD1 also reflects Hawai`i's broader commitment to equal justice. Low-income defendants, who are disproportionately immigrants and people of color, deserve the same quality of legal defense as those who can afford private counsel. Adequate staffing leads to better outcomes: more time per case, more complete advisement, and stronger protection of due process rights. The Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs is the right place to champion this investment in access to justice for all.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee pass SB2919 SD1 and fully fund the position. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Justice, M.D.