

SB 396

RELATING TO POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Specifies that citizen complaints against a police officer that involve allegations of domestic abuse against a family or household member on the part of the police officer shall not be required to be in writing or sworn to by the complainant.

PSM, JDL

HAWAII
STATE
COMMISSION
ON THE
STATUS
OF
WOMEN



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February 9, 2015

To: Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and
Military Affairs

From: Cathy Betts, Executive Director
Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in Support, SB 396, Relating to Police Departments

The Commission supports SB 396, which would allow a safe mechanism for citizen complaints against a police officer regarding domestic violence. As testified to at the HPD informational briefing in September of 2014, the Commission received over thirty complaints from women in the community, alleging inappropriate response to an array of domestic violence incidents. These responses included, responding police officers not taking a report of domestic violence, refusing to arrest an abuser because of his relationship to the police department, ordering a victim to provide her confidential address to the abuser, and making light of officer involved domestic violence allegations. Many of the victims who came forward did so anonymously or through a domestic violence service provider. Most were afraid that their complaints would not be taken seriously, but felt compelled to share their stories.

To further compound this problem, when I inquired with HPD's command about citizen complaints, I was informed that the complaints had to be notarized and written, in person. Not only is this process frightening to victims, it acts as a deterrent on future complaints. Victims of domestic violence or any other citizen wishing to make a complaint about an officer should not have to go through such a stringent process with little anonymity or mechanism to prevent retaliation. SB 396 would allow victims a mechanism for their voices to be heard, without fear that their name be publicized throughout the department and without fear of retaliation for making the complaint.

The Commission requests that you pass SB 396. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.



TO: Chair Will Espero
Vice Chair, Roz Baker
Members of the Committee on Public Safety

FR: Nanci Kreidman, M.A.

RE: SB 396 Support

Aloha and thank you for considering the importance of strengthening our community's law enforcement response to domestic violence. This Bill is one measure that will help achieve that.

As public servants charged with the critical and life altering role of responding to domestic violence in our community's homes, it is essential that our law enforcement officers are accountable to those they serve in their professional capacity. Minimizing the seriousness of domestic violence committed by police is a serious and dangerous error.

Given the current community discourse, and the efforts underway to improve police response, we support the Bill to eliminate any barriers that may prevent partners of police officers who have suffered harm from abuse from reporting the abuse.

The danger inherent in the lack of knowledge by police about officer involved abuse and the risk to the partner victimized by the abuse is potentially fatal. We cannot allow officers who engage in the behavior themselves to respond to others in need of protection. The bias, potential for responding inappropriately, minimizing the danger present at a scene, or conveying an inappropriate message to those at the scene all have significant consequences.

Thank you for your favorable action on SB 396.