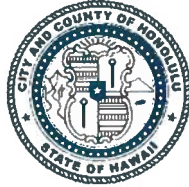


HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT
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OUR REFERENCE RV-LS

August 6, 2025

The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Bill 46 (2025), Relating to the Honolulu Police Department

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong opposition to Bill 46, which would require the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) to enter into written agreements with local media outlets to provide them with access to the HPD's radio dispatch communications.

While the intent of the bill to enhance public safety through timely access to emergency-related information is commendable, the bill as drafted raises serious legal, operational, and ethical concerns that cannot be overlooked.

Our first concern is the violation of state and federal privacy laws. HPD radio dispatch communications frequently contain highly sensitive, personal information, including names, addresses, medical conditions, and criminal history data. Granting the media real-time access to these communications risks violating:

- Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 138, which prohibits disclosure of location and database information obtained through the 911 system without the provider's prior written consent;
- Federal and state privacy laws, which protect against the unauthorized interception and dissemination of electronic communications; and

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- Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy, which strictly limits the use of criminal justice information to law enforcement purposes only.

Additionally, we are concerned for our officers' safety. The prohibition of broadcasting sensitive, personal information on our main police channels will necessitate our officers to manually switch to alternate channels on their radios. These alternate channels will have to be staffed with additional police communications officers (dispatchers), which will only exacerbate our current staffing challenges. More importantly, our officers will be requesting criminal history data and transmitting other personal information on these alternate channels while still engaging with potential uncooperative suspects. If officers are attacked physically, the inability to immediately broadcast a call for assistance on the right channel that will allow other officers to hear and respond to assist makes this a very serious officer safety issue. This is a risk that cannot be mitigated with more training.

Across the country, the majority of law enforcement agencies have moved toward full encryption of their radio communications to protect sensitive information and comply with privacy laws. This is due to the constant flow of Criminal Justice Information (CJI) and Personally Identifiable Information (PII) over radio systems, information that media personnel are neither background-checked nor credentialed to access. Honolulu should continue these best practices so that public safety can be properly maintained.

In anticipation of these calls for increasing transparency with the public and the media, the Honolulu Police Department has proactively been implementing the following changes to our internal systems, personnel, and communications.

1. **Expanded Media Staffing:** The HPD has hired a communications director and two information specialists and is in the process of growing the team. The hiring of these personnel will enhance our ability to notify the public and the media in a timely manner of high-priority incidents that may affect public safety. The HPD has established departmentwide core messaging pillars, which are accountability, transparency, partnership, and

humanity; we speak with one voice and ensure every message reflects our values, especially in high-stakes situations.

The HPD also implemented new systems and protocols for the Public Affairs Office, including a guidebook and standardized processes to make sure our responses to the media and public are accurate, consistent, and fast; particularly in the critical first hour of a major event.

2. **Increased Social Media Output:** With the expanded team, the HPD has significantly increased its social media presence that has grown from approximately 30 posts in January 2025 to over 80 posts by June 2025. These posts include Investigative updates, case dispositions, informational alerts, community events, and departmental highlights.
3. **Media Text Alert System:** A new alert system is ready for deployment to notify media outlets of high-priority incidents such as aggravated assaults, bomb threats, homicides, robberies, and weapons-related offenses. Media personnel will receive timely text alerts that are similar to what they currently receive from the Honolulu Fire Department.
4. **Upcoming Public Affairs Portal for Media:** The HPD is developing a dedicated media page on its public website. This portal will include calls for service within the past 24 hours, social media feeds, traffic highlights, wanted persons, arrest logs and highlight summaries, news releases, and email contact for our Public Affairs Office for all media inquiries.

The media alert system will include a link to this portal, ensuring timely and centralized access to public safety information.

Bill 46, as is currently drafted, does not enhance public safety and transparency as seemingly intended. Instead, it exposes the HPD to significant risks to the safety of our officers and undermines individual privacy rights. The HPD's existing and evolving transparency measures will provide meaningful public access to emergency information without compromising legal or ethical standards.

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I urge the Council to reconsider this measure and support alternative approaches that uphold both transparency, safety of officers, and the rights of the individuals we serve.

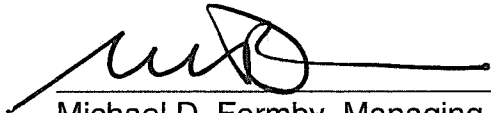
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Rade K. Vanic
Interim Chief of Police

APPROVED:



Michael D. Formby, Managing Director
Office of the Managing Director