



March 12, 2026

Dawn Szewczyk, Chair  
Honolulu Charter Commission

**Re: Testimony on Proposal P004 (Honolulu Police Department)**

My name is Brian Black. I am Executive Director of Public First Law Center, a nonprofit that promotes government transparency. I write in **support** of advancing proposal P004, concerning reforms to the Honolulu Police Department and Honolulu Police Commission.

There are several proposals that address reforms to Charter article VI, chapter 16 (P004, P018, P045, P062, P230, P232, P252, P288). Many of those proposals overlap, but also have differences. All are worthy of further consideration.

We would strongly recommend that the Commission engage in a process that brings together the stakeholders interested in this area – inviting HPD, SHOPO, those who have submitted proposals, and other experts. Even in the absence of agreement among everyone, real-time discussion and active engagement with all those folks would provide the Commission with the information it needs to craft a proposal for voters.

Public First has interacted with the Honolulu Police Commission for over a decade. During that period, we have observed changes – both positive and negative – at HPD and the Police Commission. Based on those observations, proposal P004 reflects our initial recommendations on how to make the Police Commission a place for meaningful oversight of police conduct in Honolulu.<sup>1</sup> While we are invested in improving the Police Commission, Public First does not believe that its initial recommendations are the only viable solution. Collaborative discussion among stakeholders would be productive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of proposal P004.

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<sup>1</sup> Responsive to preliminary comments made at an earlier Charter Commission meeting, nothing requires that the Charter have the same procedure, for example, for hiring the Police Chief and the Fire Chief. After the succession of police chiefs in recent years, it is apparent that the process for Chief of Police in the Charter does not work. That does not mean that the process for selecting the Fire Chief or other officials needs to change.