



Senate Committee on Government Operations  
Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

**RE: Testimony in Support of H.B. 131, Relating to Research**  
Hearing: March 18, 2025 at 3:05 p.m.

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ben Creps. I am a staff attorney at the Public First Law Center, a nonprofit organization that promotes government transparency.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support** of H.B. 131. This bill amends chapter 92F of the Hawai`i Revised Statutes (HRS) to clarify the Office of Information Practices' (OIP) authority to create uniform rules for disclosure of records for research purposes, and has the support of OIP.

The Legislature recognized in 1989 that disclosing government records for research purposes serves an important public purpose, and delegated rule making authority to OIP for such disclosures. *E.g.*, HRS § 92F-42(15) (authorizing OIP to adopt rules governing the disclosure of records for research purposes); H. Stand. Comm. Rep. No. 1288 (bill "instructs [OIP] to adopt rules pertaining to the disclosure of records for research purposes."); Test. of the State Attorney General on S.B. 1799 (Feb. 21, 1989) at 7 ("the bill adds specific authority for [OIP] to adopt rules setting forth uniform standards for disclosure of records for research purposes in order that legitimate research is not jeopardized by the new laws.").

OIP, however, views the existing language under HRS § 92F-42(15) as insufficient authorization to create rules for disclosure of records to researchers beyond the level of access available to the general public. This construction denies the public of the benefit the Legislature intended to create decades ago by affording researchers *greater* access to government records than the general public.

Government agencies often have massive amounts of data but do not always have sufficient expertise or resources to use that data. Researchers in the public and private sector often have the expertise or resources, but lack sufficient access to the government's data to draw meaningful conclusions. H.B. 131 bridges that gap, consistent with the original intent of section 92F-42(15).



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This measure is the first step in a long road toward ensuring more consistent access to government data for researchers. That, in turn, will promote government improvement through data-driven decision-making.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 131.