



SURF EQUITY

Website surfequity.org

Email sabrina@surfequity.org

Threads @SurfEquity

Instagram @SurfEquity

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

Mary Albitz, Chairperson
SMALL BUSINESS REGULATORY REVIEW BOARD
Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism
No. 1 Capitol District Building
250 S. Hotel Street, Fifth Floor, Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Rules & Regulations Governing Shore Water Events: Discrimination in Pro Surf Competitions

Dear Chair Mary Albitz and Members,

For the past 5-years, Surf Equity has requested parity in women's divisions and men's divisions in all professional surf competitions held on Honolulu City and County beaches, parklands, tidelands, shore water and Pacific Ocean. We are concerned that delays in correcting gender discrimination are negatively impacting girls and women. The World Surf League's (WSL) women's divisions and men's divisions continue to lack parity, this is evident at WSL events held on Oahu and on their [website](https://www.worldsurfleague.com).

Mindy Pennybacker's new book 'Surfing Sisterhood Hawaii' includes the following quote from former WSL CEO Erik Logan:

In 2023, there were thirty-four men and eighteen women admitted to the World Surf League championship tour. Asked about the disparity, Erik Logan said in his role as WSL CEO, "The CT competitor numbers are reflective of our membership base and as those grow, we'll continue to evaluate." (Page 121)

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN PRO SURF COMPS

Discrimination is the biggest challenge facing women professional surfers in Hawaii and globally. Gender discrimination results in the exclusion of women from athletic competitions. It is more difficult for women pro surfers to qualify for the Olympics than men, because women athletes have fewer opportunities to earn prize money and ranking points in WSL competitions held on Oahu and globally.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

To correct this problem, we request that the City and County of Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation amend the Shore Water Rules and event permit requirements to specifically prohibit gender discrimination. The rules and requirements should apply to all professional surf competitions.

Please require the following for all professional surf competitions:

- A women's division and a men's division with an identical number of participants in each gendered category and age division.
- An identical number of competition heats in each gendered category and age division.
- Identical playing time/heat time in each gendered category and age division.
- Equal prize compensation in each gendered category and age division.
- Additionally, professional surf competitions should be encouraged to include an equal number of women and men judges and women and men announcers.

INCLUSION NOW

The response to addressing concerns about gender discrimination has been slow. Please move quickly to prevent further damage to women athletes.

We suggest the following:

- Please include clearly written non-discrimination requirements in all event permits and commercial activity permits to prevent sexism, racism and LGBTQIA+ discrimination.
- Please demonstrate support for equality, access, and inclusivity. Public parks, beaches and the shoreline are for everyone.

HUMAN RIGHTS

On Aug 26, 2019, Surf Equity began the process of requesting an end to gender discrimination in surf competitions held on Oahu. That day, as cofounder of the Committee for Equity in Women's Surfing, I attended the annual North Shore Big Wave Contest Meeting held in a Parks and Rec conference room. During the meeting, I was not given an opportunity to speak, I interrupted and read this section from the [Hawai'i Constitution](#), "no person shall be denied the enjoyment of civil rights or be discriminated against in the exercise thereof because of race, religion, sex or ancestry."

This year, women surfed the Eddie for the first time. There is more work ahead, we hope you will help.

Thank you,



Sabrina Brennan (she/her)
Director, Surf Equity
Cofounder, Committee for Equity in Women's Surfing
Cell 415-816-6111

Copy: Rick Blangiardi, Mayor, City & County of Honolulu
Tommy Waters, Chair, District 4, City & County of Honolulu
Matt Weyer, Councilmember, District 2, City & County of Honolulu
Laura H Thielen, Director, Parks and Recreation, City & County of Honolulu