

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Finance

Monday, February 24, 2025

10:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

With Comments

H.B. No. 1064 H.D. 2 Relating to Fire Protection

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance.

The Office of the Governor provides the following **comments** for H.B.1064 H.D. 2, Relating to Fire Protection. This bill amends the laws concerning the Office of the State Fire Marshal to best effectuate the recommendations of the "Phase 3" Forward-Looking Report by Fire Safety Research Institute on the August 2023 Maui wildfires.

The Maui wildfire resulted in unbearable loss of lives, homes, infrastructure, and businesses. This tragic event is a wake-up call that due to climate changes, the risk of catastrophic wildfires, along with other natural disasters in Hawaii has increased.

Currently, the State Fire Council is administratively attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR). However, the evolving nature of fire-related emergencies, including wildfires and other large-scale incidents, necessitates a more integrated approach with the state's emergency management and response infrastructure. The Department of Defense (DOD), which encompasses the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, is better positioned to provide the necessary support and coordination for statewide fire prevention and response efforts.

In the committee report for H.B.1064 H.D. 2 there are several amendments we find problematic.

Referenced below:

(1) Deleting language that would have established the Office of the State Fire Marshal in the Department of Defense and instead temporarily establishing the Office in the Office of the Governor;

(2) Deleting language that would have required the State Fire Council to appoint the State Fire Marshal and instead requiring the Governor to appoint the State Fire Marshal from a list of three names submitted by the State Fire Council;

These two amendments compromise the original framework of H.B. 1064 by shifting authority from specialized oversight to a more politically influenced structure. Originally, the bill intended for the Office of the State Fire Marshal to be housed within the Department of Defense, where technical expertise and disciplined management would ensure robust fire safety oversight. Additionally, allowing the State Fire Council to appoint the State Fire Marshal was designed to keep the process in the hands of experts. Changing these provisions to temporarily place the office in the Governor's office and vesting the appointment power in the Governor—even if limited to a selection from a list—risks infusing the process with greater political influence, thereby diluting the technical integrity that was central to the bill's intent.

(7) Deleting language that would have transferred the State Fire Council from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to the Department of Defense;

This amendment, which blocks the transfer of the State Fire Council to the Department of Defense, further deviates from the original design by maintaining the Council under the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. This decision undermines the prospect of aligning the Council with the more structured and specialized environment of the Department of Defense, potentially limiting its effectiveness in overseeing fire safety and mitigation matters.

Together, these amendments disrupt the careful balance of resources and expert oversight envisioned in H.B. 1064, replacing a system designed to safeguard fire safety standards with one that may be more susceptible to external influence and less capable of upholding the rigorous standards originally proposed.

We respectfully request this Committee amend H.B.1064 H.D. 2 to reflect the original intent of the bill.

The proposed transfer of the State Fire Marshal and State Fire Council to the Department of Defense represents a strategic enhancement of Hawaii's fire protection and mitigation capabilities. By aligning these entities with the state's primary emergency management agency, we can ensure a more coordinated, efficient, and effective approach to safeguarding our communities from fire-related hazards.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

February 24, 2025

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair,
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Date: Monday, February 21, 2025
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: H.B. 1064, H.D. 2, RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION.

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The **DLIR offers comments** to this proposal to effectuate the recommendations of the "Phase 3" forward-looking report and transfers the Office of State Fire Marshal from the DLIR to the Office of the Governor.

II. CURRENT LAW

Act 209 (SLH, 2024) established the Office State Fire Marshal within the DLIR. The State Fire Council has been administratively attached to the DLIR since Act 241 (SLH, 1978).

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

The DLIR supports the previous versions of this bill wherein the permanent placement of the State Fire Council and State Fire Marshal is transferred to the Department of Defense (DOD) and defers to other agencies on the other substantive revisions involving fire safety.

The DLIR focuses on labor-related issues, such as worker well-being and labor-management relations, which are distinct from disaster preparedness and emergency response. The DOD has a mission centered on disaster readiness, response coordination, and public safety, making it a more appropriate home for fire protection and emergency management functions. Moreover, housing fire protection efforts in the DOD aligns fire safety responsibilities with the state's broader emergency response framework.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 321
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
www.labor.hawaii.gov

February 21, 2025

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Committee on Finance
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita:

Subject: In Support of House Bill (HB) 1064, Relating to Fire Protection

I am Kazuo Todd, Chair of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC). The SFC in general supports HB 1064, which amends the laws concerning the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to establish a funded office and establish many of the statutes necessary to build a stable foundation to make this office a success.

The SFC still has concerns over where the OSFM will be housed, and subsection (1) of 132-Q which offers an appeal to map classification. However in general we think this bill is needed and will move forward the establishment of the OSFM. The SFC is in support.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kazuo Todd", written over a horizontal line.

KAZUO TODD
Chair

KT/GL

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495

STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

PHILLIP L. MALLORY
BRIGADIER GENERAL
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA HOPE 'AKUKANA KENELALA

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1064 HD2
RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

BY

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN F. LOGAN
ADJUTANT GENERAL AND
DIRECTOR OF THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee:

I am Major General Stephen Logan, Adjutant General and Director of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 1064 HD2**.

This measure adds twenty-nine new sections to chapter 132, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS); adds a new section to part IV of chapter 193, HRS; and amends sections 26-21, 76-16(b), 107-26, 132-1, 132-2, 132-3, 132-4, 132-4.5, 132-5, 132-6, 132-9, 132-10, 132-11, 132-12, 132-13, 132-16, 132-18(c), 170-28, 185-4(a), 291C-1, HRS, and section 2 of Act 209, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024. The purpose of this bill is to amend the laws concerning the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to best effectuate the recommendations of the "Phase 3" Forward-Looking Report by Fire Safety Research Institution on the August 2023 Maui wildfires.

In the aftermath of the August 2023 Lahaina wildfires, the Department of the Attorney General initiated an investigation and retained the independent, third-party Fire Safety Research Institute, part of UL Research Institutes, to assess the performance of state and county agencies in preparing for and responding to the August 2023 Maui wildfires.

The investigation led to three reports — a "Phase 1" Comprehensive Timeline report, a "Phase 2" Incident Analysis Report, and a "Phase 3" Forward-Looking Report.

The "Phase 3" Forward-Looking Report organized these findings and provided a prioritized list of action items for the State and all counties for changes to be made to improve Hawaii's response to wildfires. The report calls for changes and improvements to the OSFM, which was established by Act 209, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024. Changes included bolstering the statutory authority of the OSFM to address the wide spectrum of fire safety issues and delineating responsibilities and reporting structures between the State Fire Marshal and the State Fire Council; creating an organizational structure to immediately address the State's fire-safety priorities effectively; and substantially increasing the budget for the staffing of the OSFM.

This bill will align the OSFM's mission and responsibilities under the Department of Defense. The State Fire Marshal is currently located in the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR). DLIR's focus on labor related issues is distinctly different from disaster preparedness and emergency response. The Department of Defense mission aligns with disaster readiness, response coordination and public safety making it a more appropriate location for fire protection and emergency management functions. It further co-locates the State Fire Council (SFC) and the OSFM.

This bill seeks to improve consistency with National Best Practices, such as those of California, Florida and New York, which all house their oversight of fire safety under their emergency management or emergency services divisions. Additionally, it will enhance resource allocation and administrative synergy. The Department of Defense already provides logistical and administrative support for emergency response entities, allowing the SFC and OSFM to leverage existing infrastructure.

The one concern the department has at this time is a relative lack of experience and technical expertise in fire management until the OSFM organizational structure is established.

Wildfires are a growing threat and Hawaii's vulnerability to wildfires, as seen in recent events, necessitates a change. Passage of this bill would clarify the role of the State Fire Marshal and facilitate unity of effort with the State Fire Council thereby increasing the readiness and resilience of the State against fire related disasters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

MG Stephen F. Logan, Stephen.f.logan@hawaii.gov; 808-672-1001



Hawai'i Climate Advisory Team

To: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

From: The Climate Advisory Team

RE: **HB 1064, HD2 - Relating to Fire Protection - Support**
Monday, February 24, 2025, 10:00 a.m., Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify **in support** of HB 1064, HD2 relating to fire protection. The Climate Advisory Team (CAT) believes it is critical to support the Office of the State Fire Marshal in fulfilling its mission to protect Hawai'i's residents and improve how the state responds to wildfires.

The CAT is a volunteer group, convened by Governor Green to develop community-informed policy recommendations to help make Hawai'i more resilient to natural disasters. The CAT published its findings and recommendations in a [policy paper](#) in January 2025, which provides detailed context for the measures we are supporting this legislative session.

The devastating 2023 Maui wildfires exposed significant vulnerabilities and inadequacies in our state's ability to prepare for and respond to wildfires. One of our greatest vulnerabilities is that the state does not have a State Fire Marshal. While the Legislature created a fire marshal position in 2024, as of this writing, that person has not yet been hired and does not have any staff, budget, or an office. Establishing a fully functional Hawai'i State Fire Marshal Office was named the second highest priority in the Fire Safety Research Institute's (FSRI) "Phase 3" forward-looking report of actions to improve Hawai'i's response to wildfires.

The magnitude of work required by the Office of the State Fire Marshal cannot be overstated. This office must be supported, expanded, and appropriately resourced to ensure its stability and efficacy. This bill would appropriately clarify the role of the Office of the State Fire Marshal, bolster its ability to address fire safety issues across the state, and address the organizational structure of the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Additionally, the CAT supports further discussion between legislators and key stakeholders on the most strategic organizational placement for the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the selection process for the role of the State Fire Marshal.

The CAT underscores the urgent need for more funding for the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The amount currently allocated for the office is \$172,000; the CAT recommends annual funding of at least



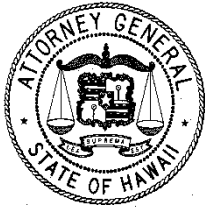
Hawai'i Climate Advisory Team

\$2 million for the office. The annual funding for the state fire marshal position and the staffed office should be increased substantially in the 2025 legislative session with appropriate long-term funding commitments made. These steps are necessary to fully execute the recommendations made by FSRI, the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Office (HWMO), and the attorney general and to ensure our state is better equipped to respond to wildfires. Please see [Section 3.2.3 of our Policy Recommendation on Climate Disaster Resilience, Recovery and Funding](#) for more information.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee in support of HB 1064, HD2.

With aloha,

The Climate Advisory Team



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1064, H.D. 2, RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

DATE: Monday, February 24, 2025 **TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 308

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**

(For more information, contact Danica L. Swenson,
Deputy Attorney General, at (808) 587-2992)

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) supports this bill and provides proposed amendments for clarity and consistency.

On Friday, August 11, 2023, the Department initiated an independent, third-party investigation to assess the performance of state and county agencies' preparation and response to the August 2023 Maui wildfires, including the Lahaina wildfire-initiated urban conflagration that killed 102 people. The Department retained the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI), a part of UL Research Institutes, to conduct the investigation, which was completed in approximately one year. Based upon this investigation, FSRI published three reports, which were released in phases: the Lahaina Fire Comprehensive Timeline Report (Phase One), the Lahaina Fire Incident Analysis Report (Phase Two), and the Lahaina Fire Forward-Looking Report (Phase Three).¹ The Phase Three report outlined specific actions that the State and counties should take to improve future wildfire preparedness and response.

¹ The Department's Maui Wildfire Investigation Resource Page contains links to all three reports, a comprehensive Minute-By-Minute Timeline of the event, and a database with approximately 850 gigabytes of video, photographs, audio files, and documents obtained during the investigation, which are available at ag.hawaii.gov/maui-wildfire-investigation-resources-page.

This bill is in accord with the Phase Three report,² and would effectuate the priorities in the report that require legislative action, including: Priority 2 (Office of the State Fire Marshal), Priority 3 (Wildfire Education Programming), Priority 7 (Evacuation), Priority 8 (Codes and Standards), Priority 9 (Wildfire Response Preparedness), and Priority 10 (Vegetation and Land Management).

Recommended Amendments

The Department offers the following amendments for clarity and consistency:

1. Add the following definition of “structure hardening” to section 132-A after page 2, line 19 (the term is used in section 132-Q(b)(3) (page 17, line 15)):

"Structure hardening" means the installation, replacement, or retrofitting of building materials, systems, or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of existing structures with the primary purpose of reducing risk to structures from wildfire and in compliance with the provisions of the state fire code relating to structure or home hardening.
2. Add three items to the enumerated directives of the OSFM as additional paragraphs to section 132-C(a) (page 3, line 14, to page 5, line 6) to be consistent with certain amendments added to H.D. 2:
 - a. "Prepare a statewide wildfire hazard map on a biennial basis" to be consistent with section 132-Q(a) (page 17, lines 3-6);
 - b. "Administer the community risk reduction program" to be consistent with sections 132-L and -M (page 11, line 4, to page 12, line 15); and
 - c. "Establish state-wide minimum defensible space requirements" to be consistent with section 132-P (page 14, line 10, to page 17, line 2)
3. Rename the title of section 132-G (page 9, lines 1-2) to “Utilization of firefighting resources,” as the current title does not align with the amended content of the section.

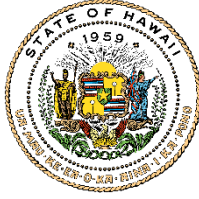
² <https://fsri.org/research-update/lahaina-fire-forward-looking-report-released-attorney-general-hawaii>.

4. Amend section 132-M (page 12, lines 1-14) to:
 - a. Identify the OSFM as the agency responsible for administering the Community Risk Reduction Special Fund created in section 132-M(a) (page 12, lines 1-4).
 - b. Delete "continuously" on page 12, line 9, as the continuous appropriation may be deemed to violate article VII, section 5 ("[n]o public money shall be expended except pursuant to appropriations made by law"), or article VII, section 11 ("all appropriations for which the source is general obligation bond funds or general funds shall be for specified periods"), of the State Constitution.
5. Delete section 132-Q(g)(4) (page 20, lines 5-7), as it appears to essentially duplicate section 132-Q(g)(1) (page 19, lines 16-19).
6. Add the word "fire" between the words "state" and "marshal" in the title of section 132-R (page 22, line 10).
7. Make further amendments to section 132-16 (section 13 of this bill—page 50, line 12, to page 52, line 12), as follows:
 - a. Amend subsection (b)(4) (page 52, line 12) to read: "Coordinate with the state building code council on matters pertaining to fire safety"; and
 - b. Add subsection (c)(4) to read: "Review any conflicts that may arise in the adoption, amendment, or implementation of the state fire codes at the state and county levels or in the adoption, amendment, or implementation of rules proposed or adopted by the office or the counties pursuant to this chapter."
8. Add separate appropriation sections to specifically appropriate funds into and out of the Community Risk Reduction Special Fund, which is created under section 132-M (page 12, lines 1-14).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important bill. We respectfully ask that it be passed.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
FINANCE

Monday, February 24, 2025
10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308, and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1064, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION

House Bill 1064, House Draft 2 proposes amending the laws concerning the Office of the State Fire Marshal to best implement the recommendations of the "Phase 3" Forward-Looking Report prepared by the Fire Safety Research Institute regarding the August 2023 Maui wildfires. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources provides the following comments on this measure.**

The Department appreciates the intent of this measure, which defines and expands the roles of the State Fire Marshal and redefines the roles of the State Fire Council. By combining the Fire Marshal's enforcement power with the State Fire Council's advisory expertise, Hawai'i will establish a more proactive and effective fire safety framework that aligns with national best practices.

The Department suggests that language be inserted in the measure stating the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) reports directly to the Governor. The OSFM must function as a centralized authority, independent of local jurisdictions but in close collaboration with county and state fire and emergency management departments. Centralized oversight is essential to address systemic risks and ensure consistency across all islands. Reporting directly to the Governor's Office will provide the OSFM with the executive support needed to fulfill its statewide mandate, oversight, and coordination.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and comment on this measure.

TESTIMONY OF LESLIE DOOR

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Monday, February 24, 2025
10:00 a.m.

HB 1064, HD2

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance, my name is Leslie Door, Director of Product, Risk & Regulatory Compliance for Zephyr Insurance Company and Chair of the Property Policy Committee for Hawaii Insurers Council. The Hawaii Insurers Council is a non-profit trade association of property and casualty insurance companies licensed to do business in Hawaii. Member companies underwrite approximately forty percent of all property and casualty insurance premiums in the state.

Hawaii Insurers Council (HIC) **supports** this bill with one friendly amendment. HB 1064, HD2 implements Phase 3, a forward-looking report, from the Fire Safety Research Institute, which conducted a study after the Lahaina Wildfires in 2023. We believe this bill adopts measures that will reduce fire risk to our community. Defensible space, assistance for vulnerable persons, and a statewide building code all contribute to a community that is safer from fire.

HIC respectfully requests the language contained in proposed section 132-D(8)(A) on page 6, lines 18-20 through page 7, lines 1-2, be amended to read as follows, so that coordination with the insurance industry is done through the State Insurance Commissioner. The language we suggest would read as follows:

“(8)(A) The insurance commissioner, as defined in Section 431:2-102, regarding insurance policy coverage provisions, underwriting standards, insurance rates, and any other insurance-related topic relevant to enhancing the protection of property from wildfire at a reasonable cost; ...”

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Kamehameha Schools®

House Committee on Finance

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Date: February 24, 2025

Where: Conference Room 308

TESTIMONY

By: Kā'eo Duarte

Vice President, 'Āina Pauahi

RE: HB1064, HD2, Relating to Fire Protection

Aloha e nā Luna Ho'omalū Yamashita, nā Hope Luna Ho'omalū Takenouchi, a me nā Lālā o nā Kōmike.

Kamehameha Schools appreciates this opportunity to support HB1064, HD2.

We are in support of this bill which aims to implement the recommendations in Phase 3 of the Fire Safety Research Institute. As stewards of our 'Āina Pauahi, we mālama this 'āina for the education of Native Hawaiian children in perpetuity. An essential part of this vision is to work with local governments and the community to ensure the safety of our keiki and kaiāulu.

Founded in 1887 by the legacy of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, Kamehameha Schools (KS) is a private, educational, charitable trust committed to improving the capability and well-being of Native Hawaiian people through education. KS envisions a thriving lāhui where learners, grounded in Christian and Hawaiian values, grow into 'ōiwi leaders who inspire and contribute to their communities, both locally and globally.



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[Twitter.com/aarphawaii](https://twitter.com/aarphawaii) | facebook.com/aarphawaii

**The State Legislature
House Committee on Finance
Tuesday, February 24, 2025
Conference Room 308, 10:00 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director
RE: Support for H.B. 1277, HD1 Relating to Fire Protection

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

I am Keali'i Lopez, State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, social impact organization dedicated to empowering people fifty and older to choose how they live as they age. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families. On behalf of our nearly 135,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony.

AARP supports H.B. 1064, HD2 which effectuates the recommendations of the "Phase 3" Forward-Looking Report by Fire Safety Research Institute on the August 2023 Maui wildfires and further clarifies the role of the State Fire Marshal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 1064 HD2. As you know, more than two-thirds of the victims in the Maui wildfire were 60 and older. Kūpuna are the most vulnerable population in every kind of natural disaster from wildfires to hurricanes to tsunami.

AARP believes policymakers should create and implement plans to address the needs of vulnerable populations like kupuna and people with disabilities. The State Fire Marshall's Office is one of the agencies that is in the best position to regularly conduct specific, comprehensive and evidence-based planning to address the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers in wildfires. They should be given the authority and tools to do this.

Hawaii's leaders need to encourage disaster resilience and reduce the number of kupuna deaths in natural disasters. H.B. 1064 HD2 is a step in this direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 1064 HD2.





Testimony of **Lahaina Strong**
Before the House Committee on
Finance

In Consideration of House Bill No. 1064 HD2
RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION

To Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the honorable members of the committee,

We are writing on behalf of Lahaina Strong, an organization deeply rooted in our community's resilience and advocacy. Originally formed in 2018 following the Hurricane Lane fire in Lahaina and revitalized after the devastating fires of August 8, 2023, Lahaina Strong has become the largest grassroots, Lahaina-based community organization, with over 35,000 supporters. Our mission is to amplify local voices and champion community-driven solutions, which are more critical than ever as we continue rebuilding and recovering.

Lahaina Strong, stands in **full support of House Bill 1064 HD2**, which builds on the progress made with the establishment of the State Fire Marshal position last year. This bill is essential for outlining the duties and staff responsibilities necessary to ensure the office is effective in preventing and mitigating wildfires statewide.

The devastation of the August 8, 2023, Lahaina wildfires made it painfully clear that our state must take proactive and thorough action to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. Strengthening the Fire Marshal's authority and ensuring proper oversight, enforcement, and mitigation efforts are critical to reducing fire risks across Hawai'i. From land management to fire code enforcement, the Fire Marshal's role is essential in ensuring our communities are protected before disasters strike. We cannot afford to delay—this bill is a necessary step toward a safer, more fire-resilient Hawai'i.

This measure addresses critical gaps in fire protection and coordination. It reflects many of the concerns raised since the tragedy and represents a meaningful step toward

ensuring that communities across Hawai'i are better protected. We fully **support House Bill 1064 HD2** and are committed to ensuring that what happened in Lahaina never happens elsewhere in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Lahaina Strong



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

HB 1064, HD2 Relating to Fire Protection

Monday, February 24, 2025
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Jimmy D. Alberts
Senior Vice President & Chief Operations Officer
Hawaiian Electric

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jimmy D. Alberts and I am submitting written testimony on behalf of Hawaiian Electric in **support** of HB 1064, HD2, Relating to Fire Protection.

Hawaiian Electric supports this bill, which aims to implement safety priorities from the Fire Safety Research Institute Phase 3 Forward-Looking Report. Wildfires and other climate change impacts are whole-of-society issues that must be addressed collectively with a holistic approach by the State, counties, and private sector.

Hawaiian Electric recently submitted its 2025-2027 Wildfire Safety Strategy to the Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission, which details Hawaiian Electric's plans to deploy new technology, fortify infrastructure, minimize fire hazards and expand community partnerships to significantly reduce the risk of a wildfire started by its equipment. One aspect of this comprehensive bill is that it would give the State Fire Marshal's office discretionary power to explore additional opportunities to reduce wildfire risk, including engaging with electric utilities regarding further actions to protect public safety, reduce risk to electric company customers, and promote electrical system resilience to wildfire damage. Hawaiian Electric would welcome the opportunity to work

with the State Fire Marshal's office and as a member of the advisory board, as we continue our work with many State, county, and local stakeholders to create a safer and more resilient Hawai'i.

Accordingly, Hawaiian Electric supports HB 1064, HD2. Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony.