

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 3, 2025

The Honorable Luke Evslin, Chair
Committee on Housing
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 427
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evslin:

Subject: House Bill (HB) 415 Relating to Public Safety

I am Kazuo Todd, Chair of the State Fire Council (SFC). The SFC strongly supports HB 415, which repeals Section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and allows the counties to regulate the installation of residential fire protection sprinkler systems.

The current statute prevents the four counties from incorporating safe building codes particular to their counties or "home rule." The proper forum for national, model building codes to be reviewed, vetted, and adopted at the state level is the State Building Code Council (SBCC), which is represented by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the building industry, architects, structural engineers, building, and fire code officials.

Act 53, 2017 Legislative Session, extended the prohibition of the adoption of any codes or regulations by the counties that require the installation of residential fire sprinklers in one- and two-family dwellings. Act 53 passed the Legislature despite robust evidence that such fire sprinkler systems save lives; reduce injury, property damage, and environmental harm; and have little or no detrimental impact on construction of town homes and one- and two-family dwellings. A review of testimony submitted in support of Act 53 exposed general conjecture that mandatory provisions for the installation of fire sprinkler systems in new town homes and one- and two-family dwellings will substantially raise the cost of construction for these structures. Recent research conducted by the SFC in collaboration with plumbing and fire sprinkler contractors produced estimates \$8,000 - \$15,000 for sprinkler system installation in a new 1,800 square foot single-family residence.

Eighty-five percent of fire deaths occur in the residential structures. Working smoke alarm reliability ranges from 50% to 78%, depending on the study, and may alert occupants in time to escape, but do nothing to suppress a fire. The reliability of a

residential fire sprinkler system is 96.6%. A fire sprinkler system is designed to extinguish or hinder a fire until fire fighters arrive. It will do this 84% of the time with only one activated sprinkler head using 15 gallons per minute (gpm) in contrast to a fire department hose stream which delivers 150-250 gpm.

There is no equivalent alternative as effective in stopping fires as an automatic fire sprinkler system. Although modern homes have safety building provisions, they are also constructed of lightweight structural components that are susceptible to collapse within a short time from exposure to fire. While gypsum board helps protect floor joists from collapse in a fire, joists unprotected by gypsum board are found in balconies and covered recreation or laundry areas below the second floor. The addition of modern furnishings also contribute to rapid fire acceleration and spread in residences that result in reduced escape times for homeowners and their family.

There is little to no maintenance for a residential fire sprinkler system. A separate domestic and fire sprinkler system is maintained by a visual pressure gauge check and an annual flow test, which can be accomplished using a garden hose. A combined system will not need a flow test since the system operates in conjunction with the domestic system.

According to the publication Fire Safety in the United States since 1980 from the National Fire Protection Association (2021), sprinklers not only reduce fatalities by 86 percent — compared to smoke alarms, which decrease risk of death by half — they also cut down on property damages by 70 percent. There's also environmental benefit: Sprinklers flow water typically at 20 to 25 gallons per minute as soon as they're heat activated, decreasing structural damage, harmful fumes and danger to firefighters when they arrive. On the other hand, a fire hose flows at about 150 gallons per minute after the fire has had time to grow, which in itself releases more noxious fumes and hydrocarbon emissions.

Out of 101 deaths in single-family and townhouse fires between 1992 and 2007 in Prince George's County, MD, where fire sprinklers are required in new construction, not one occurred in a dwelling equipped with a sprinkler system, according to a study by Home Fire Sprinkler Initiative. Homes with a fire sprinkler also accounted for less than 2 percent of people injured in a fire. In the 245 sprinkler activations during a 15-year study, Prince George's Fire Department estimated approximately \$1.3 million in fire damages, versus a potential loss of over \$42 million with no sprinkler system. There were no relative declines in the issuance of single-family construction permits in either Prince George's County in 1992 when sprinkler requirements were imposed on detached homes, or in Montgomery County when detached homes were covered in 2004. In fact, in both instances, the issuance of single-family construction permits surged, in absolute terms and relative to neighboring counties. Although it is unlikely that the sprinkler ordinances actually stimulated construction activity, there is absolutely no indication from the permit data that the fire sprinkler requirements negatively impacted single-family housing construction.

The Honorable Luke Evslin, Chair
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Automatic fire sprinkler systems may also reduce the potential for a residential dwelling or business building fire will ignite surrounding vegetation and propagate a conflagration to nearby structures and wildland.

Life, safety, property conservation, and environmental protection are priorities for the SFC. Allowing the passage of this bill to require the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler in new one- and two-family homes substantially decreases the risk to the public, property, environment, and fire fighters.

The SFC strongly urges your committees' support on the passage of HB 415.

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 in a cursive style.

KAZUO TODD
Chair

KT/GL:

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA
Deputy Fire Chief



DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 DAIRY ROAD
KAHULUI, MAUI, HAWAII 96732
www.mauicounty.gov

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Luke Evslin, Chair
Committee on Housing
House of Represe
State Capitol, Room 427
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Evslin,

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL (HB) 415 RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. The SFC strongly supports HB 415, which repeals Section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and allows the counties to regulate the installation of residential fire protection sprinkler systems.

The current statute prevents the four counties from incorporating safe building codes particular to their counties or “home rule.” The proper forum for national, model building codes to be reviewed, vetted, and adopted at the state level is the State Building Code Council (SBCC), which is represented by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the building industry, architects, structural engineers, building, and fire code officials.

Act 53, 2017 Legislative Session, extended the prohibition of the adoption of any codes or regulations by the counties that require the installation of residential fire sprinklers in one- and two-family dwellings. Act 53 passed the Legislature despite robust evidence that such fire sprinkler systems save lives; reduce injury, property damage, and environmental harm; and have little or no detrimental impact on construction of town homes and one- and two-family dwellings. A review of testimony submitted in support of Act 53 exposed general conjecture that mandatory provisions for the installation of fire sprinkler systems in new town homes and one- and two-family dwellings will substantially raise the cost of construction for these structures. Recent research conducted by the SFC in collaboration with plumbing and fire sprinkler contractors produced estimates \$8,000 - \$15,000 for sprinkler system installation in a new 1,800 square foot single-family residence.

Eighty-five percent of fire deaths occur in the residential structures. Working smoke alarm reliability ranges from 50% to 78%, depending on the study, and may alert occupants in time to escape, but do nothing to suppress a fire. The reliability of a residential fire sprinkler system is 96.6%. A fire sprinkler system is designed to extinguish or hinder a fire until fire fighters arrive.

It will do this 84% of the time with only one activated sprinkler head using 15 gallons per minute (gpm) in contrast to a fire department hose stream which delivers 150-250 gpm.

There is no equivalent alternative as effective in stopping fires as an automatic fire sprinkler system. Although modern homes have safety building provisions, they are also constructed of lightweight structural components that are susceptible to collapse within a short time from exposure to fire. While gypsum board helps protect floor joists from collapse in a fire, joists unprotected by gypsum board are found in balconies and covered recreation or laundry areas below the second floor. The addition of modern furnishings also contribute to rapid fire acceleration and spread in residences that result in reduced escape times for homeowners and their family.

There is little to no maintenance for a residential fire sprinkler system. A separate domestic and fire sprinkler system is maintained by a visual pressure gauge check and an annual flow test, which can be accomplished using a garden hose. A combined system will not need a flow test since the system operates in conjunction with the domestic system.

According to the publication Fire Safety in the United States since 1980 from the National Fire Protection Association (2021), sprinklers not only reduce fatalities by 86 percent — compared to smoke alarms, which decrease risk of death by half — they also cut down on property damages by 70 percent. There's also environmental benefit: Sprinklers flow water typically at 20 to 25 gallons per minute as soon as they're heat activated, decreasing structural damage, harmful fumes and danger to firefighters when they arrive. On the other hand, a fire hose flows at about 150 gallons per minute after the fire has had time to grow, which in itself releases more noxious fumes and hydrocarbon emissions.

Out of 101 deaths in single-family and townhouse fires between 1992 and 2007 in Prince George's County, MD, where fire sprinklers are required in new construction, not one occurred in a dwelling equipped with a sprinkler system, according to a study by Home Fire Sprinkler Initiative. Homes with a fire sprinkler also accounted for less than 2 percent of people injured in a fire. In the 245 sprinkler activations during a 15-year study, Prince George's Fire Department estimated approximately \$1.3 million in fire damages, versus a potential loss of over \$42 million with no sprinkler system. There were no relative declines in the issuance of single-family construction permits in either Prince George's County in 1992 when sprinkler requirements were imposed on detached homes, or in Montgomery County when detached homes were covered in 2004. In fact, in both instances, the issuance of single-family construction permits surged, in absolute terms and relative to neighboring counties. Although it is unlikely that the sprinkler ordinances actually stimulated construction activity, there is absolutely no indication from the permit data that the fire sprinkler requirements negatively impacted single-family housing construction.

Automatic fire sprinkler systems may also reduce the potential for a residential dwelling or business building fire will ignite surrounding vegetation and propagate a conflagration to nearby structures and wildland.

Life, safety, property conservation, and environmental protection are priorities for the SFC. Allowing the passage of this bill to require the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler in new

The Honorable Evslin, Chair

Page 3

February 4, 2025

one- and two-family homes substantially decreases the risk to the public, property, environment, and fire fighters.

The SFC strongly urges your committees' support on the passage of HB 415.

If you have any questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at (808) 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Ventura", written in a cursive style.

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

**HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA KINAI AHI O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

636 SOUTH STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 723-7139 • FAX: (808) 723-7111 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



SHELDON K. HAO
FIRE CHIEF
LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

JASON SAMALA
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF
HOPE LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Luke Evslin, Chair
Committee on Housing
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 427
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Evslin:

Subject: House Bill (HB) 415 Relating to Public Safety

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The HFD strongly supports HB 415, which repeals Section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and allows the counties to regulate the installation of residential fire protection sprinkler systems.

The current statute prevents the four counties from incorporating safe building codes particular to their counties or "home rule." The proper forum for national, model building codes to be reviewed, vetted, and adopted at the state level is the State Building Code Council (SBCC), which is represented by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the building industry, architects, structural engineers, building, and fire code officials.

In the 2017 Legislative Session, Act 53 extended the prohibition of the adoption of any codes or regulations by the counties that require the installation of residential fire sprinklers in one- and two-family dwellings. Act 53 passed the legislature despite robust evidence that such fire sprinkler systems save lives; reduce injury, property damage, and environmental harm; and have little or no detrimental impact on construction of town homes and one- and two-family dwellings. A review of testimony submitted in support of Act 53 exposed general conjecture that mandatory provisions for the installation of fire sprinkler systems in new townhouses and one- and two-family dwellings will substantially raise the cost of construction for these structures. Recent research conducted by the Hawai'i State Fire Council in collaboration with plumbing and fire sprinkler contractors produced estimates of \$8,000-\$15,000 for sprinkler system installation in a new single-family residence which is 1,800 square feet.

Eighty-five percent of fire deaths occur in residential structures. Working smoke alarm reliability ranges from 50% to 78%, depending on the study and may alert occupants in time to escape, but do nothing to suppress a fire. The reliability of a residential fire sprinkler system is 96.6%. A fire sprinkler system is designed to extinguish or hinder a fire until fire fighters arrive. It will do this 84% of the time with only one activated sprinkler head using 15 gallons per minute (gpm) in contrast to a fire department hose stream which delivers 150-250 gpm.

There is no equivalent alternative as effective in stopping fires as an automatic fire sprinkler system. Although modern homes have safety building provisions, they are also constructed of lightweight structural components that are susceptible to collapse within a short time from exposure to fire. While gypsum board helps protect floor joists from collapse in a fire, joists unprotected by gypsum board are found in balconies and covered recreation or laundry areas below the second floor. The addition of modern furnishings also contribute to rapid fire acceleration and spread in residences that result in reduced escape times for homeowners and their family.

There is little to no maintenance for a residential fire sprinkler system. A separate domestic and fire sprinkler system is maintained by a visual pressure gauge check and an annual flow test, which can be accomplished using a garden hose. A combined system will not need a flow test since the system operates in conjunction with the domestic system.

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Out of 101 deaths in single-family and townhouse fires between 1992 and 2007 in Prince George's County, Maryland where fire sprinklers are required in new construction, not one occurred in a dwelling equipped with a sprinkler system according to a study by Home Fire Sprinkler Initiative. Homes with a fire sprinkler also accounted for less than two percent of people injured in a fire. In the 245 sprinkler activations during a 15-year study, Prince George's Fire Department estimated approximately \$1.3 million in fire damages versus a potential loss of over \$42 million with no sprinkler system. There were no relative declines in the issuance of single-family construction permits in Prince George's County in 1992 when sprinkler requirements were imposed on detached homes or in Montgomery County when detached homes were covered in

The Honorable Luke Evslin, Chair
Page 3
February 5, 2025

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Automatic fire sprinkler systems may also reduce the potential for a residential dwelling or business building fire that will ignite surrounding vegetation and propagate a conflagration to nearby structures and wildland.

Life, safety, property conservation, and environmental protection are priorities for the HFD. Allowing the passage of this bill to require the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler in new one- and two-family homes substantially decreases the risk to the public, property, environment, and fire fighters.

The HFD strongly urges your committee's support on the passage of HB 415.

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

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Fire Chief

SKH/GL:cn

HB-415

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 10:08:56 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/5/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kazuo Todd	Hawaii Fire Department	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of House Bill 415

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kazuo Todd, and I serve as the Fire Chief of the Hawai‘i Fire Department. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support** of House Bill 415, which would repeal statutory prohibitions on county authority to require residential fire sprinklers.

Fire sprinklers are one of the most effective tools available in fire prevention and suppression, drastically reducing fire deaths, injuries, and property losses. National data consistently demonstrates that the presence of residential fire sprinklers can reduce fire-related fatalities by 80% and property damage by more than 50%. Yet, despite these proven benefits, Hawai‘i’s counties have been restricted from implementing life-saving residential fire sprinkler requirements tailored to their specific community risks.

The unique challenges we face in the County of Hawai‘i—long emergency response times in rural areas, limited water supply for firefighting, and the increasing use of synthetic building materials that burn hotter and faster—make it clear that we must maximize fire protection measures. The decision to require residential fire sprinklers should be made locally, where we understand our risks and resources best, rather than through a statewide prohibition.

Furthermore, the State Building Code now requires fire sprinklers in new state residential construction, recognizing their necessity in modern fire protection. Yet, without HB 415, counties remain unable to extend these protections to the private residential sector, leaving residents at unnecessary risk.

Repealing this restriction aligns Hawai‘i with best practices already adopted in 20 other states that allow local governments to make informed decisions regarding fire safety. Fire sprinklers do not replace the need for trained firefighters, but they buy time, preventing flashover and giving residents a greater chance to escape safely before the fire department arrives.

For the safety of Hawai‘i’s families, I respectfully urge the Legislature to pass House Bill 415 and restore county authority to implement proven fire protection measures. Mahalo for your time and commitment to public safety.

Kazuo Todd
Fire Chief
Hawai'i Fire Department

HB-415

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 11:38:52 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/5/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roseann Freitas	BIA Hawaii	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

BIA Hawaii is in opposition to HB 415. Testimony to follow.



PACIFIC
HOME and APPLIANCE
DISTRIBUTION

99-1305 Koaha Place - Aiea, HI 96701

ADDRESS

(808) 564-2430

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pacifichomeandappliance.com

WEBSITE

February 4, 2025

Aloha,

Please accept this testimony In Opposition to HB 415 which proposes to repeal section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, thereby allowing counties to mandate the installation of a residential fire sprinkler system in all new one and two-family dwellings.

In 2017, the Legislature extended for ten years the law that prohibited the counties from mandating the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in all new one and two-family dwellings (Act 53, 2017 SLH). There is simply no need to even address this issue during the legislative session.

1. Builders today provide various options in new and remodeled home construction, allowing owners to add fire sprinklers if they desire.
2. Most fire loss occurs in older homes, built before today's building codes were implemented to provide the protection they do.
3. Fire sprinkler systems are quite costly so mandating them will drive up housing costs in a market that can ill afford any more increases.

Having fire sprinklers available as an option is fine for any home buyer who wants that feature in their home. But mandating fire sprinklers is a bad idea for Hawaii.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Washofsky", is written over a large, faint background watermark of a globe with appliance icons.

Craig Washofsky
President,
Pacific Home and Appliance Distribution



February 4, 2025

Representative Luke Evslin, Chair
Representative Tyson Miyake, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Housing

RE: **HB 415 – RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY**
Hearing date – February 5, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake and members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing NAIOP Hawaii to submit testimony in **OPPOSITION** to HB 415 – RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY. NAIOP Hawaii is the Hawaii chapter of the nation's leading organization for office, industrial, retail, residential and mixed-use real estate. NAIOP Hawaii has over 200 members in the State including local developers, owners, investors, asset managers, lenders and other professionals.

HB 415 proposes to repeal section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, thereby allowing counties to mandate the installation of a residential fire sprinkler system in all new one and two-family dwellings. NAIOP opposes the repeal of HRS § 46-19.8 which will lead to a requirement to install fire sprinkler systems which are unnecessary and would have negative unintended consequences on housing projects.

Primarily, NAIOP is concerned that repealing HRS § 46-19.8 will allow the counties to mandate installation of a residential fire sprinkler systems that cost a significant amount of money and will raise the cost of affordable housing. Developers are required to build 30% of their development to be affordable housing. The increased cost associated with installation of residential fire sprinkler systems in all new one and two-family dwellings will be reflected in the cost of affordable housing units.

Moreover, most residential properties are privately owned or maintained by an association. Therefore, mandating installation of a fire sprinkler system will significantly raise the monthly maintenance costs for each homeowner. Alternatively, there are other safety measures including smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are much more economically feasible and address the safety concerns intended to be resolved by the measure. **Further, as of October 2023, the median home price on Oahu was \$1,090,000.** Adding the mandatory cost of an automatic fire sprinkler system in a new one or two-family dwelling will further raise the cost of housing in Hawaii and increase the cost of living for Hawaii residents.

Representative Luke Evslin, Chair
Representative Tyson Miyake, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Housing
Page 2

Most importantly, the rising costs associated with installing the required fire sprinkler systems may prevent projects from penciling out. Ultimately, in order for projects to be constructed developers will need to pass on the costs to buyers. In conjunction with the rising interest rates, an increase in price of affordable housing will result in less residents that can afford to buy a house or unit. Accordingly, this bill would be inconsistent with addressing the need to create more affordable housing which is a priority of the legislature.

For these reasons we urge you to defer HB 415. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Mahalo for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reyn Tanaka', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Reyn Tanaka, President
NAIOP Hawaii



**HAWAII STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference
State Capitol
9:00 AM**

FEBRUARY 5, 2024

Subject: HB 415 - RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the Committee:

My name is Roseann Freitas, CEO of the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA-Hawaii). Chartered in 1955, the Building Industry Association of Hawaii is a professional trade organization affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders, representing the building industry and its associates. BIA-Hawaii takes a leadership role in unifying and promoting the interests of the industry to enhance the quality of life for the people of Hawaii. Our members build the communities we all call home.

HB 415, Relating to Public Safety proposes to repeal section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to allow the counties to determine the proper requirements for fire sprinkler systems in residences.

BIA-Hawaii is in strong opposition to HB 415, which proposes to repeal section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, thereby allowing counties to mandate the installation of a residential fire sprinkler system in all new one and two-family dwellings.

In 2017, the Legislature extended for ten years the law that prohibited the counties from mandating the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in all new one and two-family dwellings (Act 53, 2017 SLH). The information provided in the bill does not include the following information:

- Builders provide various options for new homes and renovations/remodeled homes. Fire sprinklers are provided at the owner's request as an "option," and depending on the location, could cost a considerable amount of money.
- Most of the fire damage and loss occur in homes built prior to upgrades and revisions to the building codes that require the installation of fire walls, smoke detectors and other construction techniques and materials that are intended to minimize losses due to fires.

Simply put, BIA-Hawaii is not anti-sprinkler, but pro-affordable housing, and pro-consumer choice. **As of December 2024, the median new home price in Hawaii was \$975,000.** Adding the cost of an automatic fire sprinkler system in a new one or two-family dwelling will further raise the cost of housing in Hawaii.

We are in **strong opposition** to HB 415, and appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments on this matter.



800 Bethel Street, Suite 500
Honolulu, HI 96813

FEBRUARY 5, 2024
Subject: HB 415 - RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the Committee:
My name is Fred Moore, Principal RME, Ameresco. Ameresco, Inc. is a leading cleantech integrator and renewable energy asset developer, owner and operator.

HB 415, Relating to Public Safety proposes to repeal section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to allow the counties to determine the proper requirements for fire sprinkler systems in residences.

Ameresco is in strong opposition to HB 415, which proposes to repeal section 46-19.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, thereby allowing counties to mandate the installation of a residential fire sprinkler system in all new one and two-family dwellings.

In 2017, the Legislature extended for ten years the law that prohibited the counties from mandating the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in all new one and two-family dwellings (Act 53, 2017 SLH). The information provided in the bill does not include the following information:

- Builders provide various options for new homes and renovations/remodeled homes. Fire sprinklers are provided at the owner's request as an "option," and depending on the location, could cost a considerable amount of money.
- Most of the fire damage and loss occur in homes built prior to upgrades and revisions to the building codes that require the installation of fire walls, smoke detectors and other construction techniques and materials that are intended to minimize losses due to fires.

Simply put, BIA-Hawaii is not anti-sprinkler, but pro-affordable housing, and pro-consumer choice. **As of December 2024, the median new home price in Hawaii was \$975,000.** Adding the cost of an automatic fire sprinkler system in a new one or two-family dwelling will further raise the cost of housing in Hawaii.

Customer Name

Date

Page 2

Ameresco is in **strong opposition** to HB 415, and appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments on this matter.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Fred Moore


Senior Business Development Manager

Principal RME

Email: fmoore@ameresco.com

Cell: 808-478-8482

Office: 808-400-3784





February 4, 2025

The Honorable Luke A. Evslin, Chair, and Members
House Committee on Housing
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

SUBJECT: H.B. 415 RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY
Hearing: Wednesday, February 5, 2025; 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430, State Capitol

Dear Chair Evslin and Members of House Committee on Housing:

My name is Debbie Luning, testifying on behalf of Gentry Homes, Ltd. and its development subsidiaries, in **strong opposition** to H.B. 415. This bill proposes to repeal Section 46-19.8, HRS. In effect, this repeal would allow the counties to mandate the installation of fire sprinklers in new and existing single-family and duplex residences.

While we are not opposed to fire safety, we believe that mandatory installation of fire sprinklers in single family and duplex homes, while well-intentioned, will not necessarily achieve the desired results of saving lives due to home fires. We are also concerned about the added cost to new homebuyers and existing homeowners if it becomes a mandate.

Homes built nowadays are much safer in terms of fire prevention because of the types of materials, construction design, and methods that are used. Examples include safer electrical wiring, double wall drywall construction, fire-rated garages, draft stops, cement siding, and integrated smoke detector alarm systems that are very sensitive.

Additionally, fire sprinklers will be ineffective unless there is a direct source of heat that triggers the sprinklers. Smoke and noxious gases are the biggest threats in a home fire, and suffocation by poisonous fumes in the air outweighs burning as cause of death by a 3:1 ratio. A fire sprinkler, unless triggered by heat, will be ineffective in these circumstances.

Also of concern is that fire sprinklers will be ineffective unless they are regularly maintained. One cannot merely install a fire sprinkler system; it has to be regularly maintained in order for the system to work effectively. It is our contention that many homeowners will be negligent in regularly maintaining their fire sprinkler systems, thereby rendering them ineffective.

Finally, of grave concern to us as a homebuilder is that mandating the installation of fire sprinklers in new homes would affect affordability. Whenever additional requirements are placed on the development of newly constructed homes, there is usually an increased cost associated with the additional requirements,

and more people get priced out of the housing market. If one of the goals of the Legislature and government is to provide more affordable homes for Hawaii's people, it doesn't make sense to place additional requirements that add to the cost of a home, especially when a requirement has not been proven to be necessary. We are by no means advocating placing people's lives at risk, but we do have concerns about mandating fire sprinklers which may not be needed in newly constructed homes.

We prefer that the installation of fire sprinklers continue to be optional and respectfully request that this bill be held in Committee. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

GENTRY HOMES, LTD.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D. Luning'.

Debra M. A. Luning

Director of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations



February 4, 2025

LATE

Chair Luke A. Evslin
Vice Chair Tyson K. Miyake
Members of the House Committee on Housing
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2025

RE: **HB 415 – RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY**

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of D.R. Horton Hawaii in **OPPOSITION of HB 415 – RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY.**

D.R. Horton Hawaii is proud to be one of Hawaii's largest homebuilders, serving local families for more than 50 years. We specialize in providing affordable housing and first-time homebuyer opportunities across Oahu and the state. Through quality home and condominium designs, including at our Ho'opili master-planned community in Ewa Beach/East Kapolei, we remain committed to addressing critical housing needs for Hawaii's families.

HB415 proposes to repeal HRS 46-19.8, thus giving the Counties the ability to require automatic fire sprinkler systems in one and two-family dwellings. This would significantly increase the cost of building homes. While we absolutely agree that safety is a top priority, we believe a balance with rising housing costs must be considered.

We respectfully urge the committee to stop this bill from moving forward. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,

Lee Tokuhara
Vice President of Government and Community Relations
D.R. Horton Hawaii

HB-415

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:09:20 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/5/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaili	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am in strong support of this measure beacuse public safety is almost a top priority in public facilities including fire prevention system to mitigate to prevent the fire spread more larger please pass this bill thank you