



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB.474
RELATING TO FALL PREVENTION**

REPRESENTATIVE GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 5, 2025 @ 9:30 AM

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (Department) requests that this measure be
2 considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governor's executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department appreciates the intent of this measure and offers
5 comment.

6 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch
7 (EMSIPSB) provides the following comments on behalf of the Department.

8 EMSIPSB recognizes the critical importance of falls prevention among seniors, particularly given
9 the alarming statistics related to unintentional falls. As highlighted in the bill, unintentional falls
10 among seniors aged sixty-five years and older in Hawaii are the leading cause of fatal injuries
11 and injury-related emergency room visits. Act 153, Session Laws of Hawaii 2014 established a
12 fall prevention and early detection coordinator position within the Department of Health.

13 EMSIPSB has an existing position is dedicated to addressing senior falls prevention at the state
14 level and enables a coordinated statewide approach. EMSIPSB supports the appropriation of
15 funds to assist the existing fall prevention and early detection coordinator in enhancing and

1 expanding statewide programs and services that address falls prevention, thereby ensuring the
2 safety and well-being of Hawaii's aging population.

3 **Offered Amendments:** None.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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Testimony in SUPPORT of HB474
Relating to Fall Prevention

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
REP. GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR
REP. SUE L. KEOHOKAPU-LEE LOY, VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing Date: February 5, 2025
9:30 A.M.

Room Number: 329
Via Videoconference

1 **EOA's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department
2 of Health, **supports HB474.**

3 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure appropriates funds for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same
4 sum for fiscal year 2026-2027 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) fall prevention and early
5 detection coordinator position within the Department of Health (DOH).

6 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to the DOH for the
7 full-time equivalent fall prevention and early detection coordinator position. Falls are a serious
8 health risk for older adults, as it can lead to fractures, pain, medication complications, loss of
9 mobility and long-term care admission. According to the CDC in 2020, 36,000 fall related
10 deaths in adults, ages 65 and older was reported, making it the leading cause of injury death for
11 that age group. Older adult falls cost \$50 billion in medical costs annually, with 3/4 of those
12 costs paid by Medicaid and Medicare.

1 Act 153 established a fall prevention and early detection coordinator position within the
2 DOH's emergency medical services and injury prevention system branch. This position enabled
3 DOH to implement a coordinated statewide approach to prevent and reduce the impact of falls
4 among older adults and resulted in Hawai'i having the lowest fall and injury rate in the nation.
5 Appropriating funds for this position will allow DOH to continue that work and help older adults
6 to protect their health and live a longer, better quality of life.

7 **Recommendation:** EOA supports this measure to fund a falls prevention and early detection
8 coordinator position.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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**The State Legislature
House Committee on Health
Wednesday, February 5, 2024
Conference Room 329, 9:30 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair
FROM: Keali'i Lopez, State Director, AARP Hawaii
RE: Support for H.B. 474- Relating to Falls Prevention

Aloha Chair Takayama and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez, and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 135,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families.

AARP supports H.B. 474 which appropriates funds to the Department of Health to fund one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) fall prevention and early detection coordinator position

According to the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "falls among adults aged 65 and older are common, costly, and are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults. In the United States, over 14 million, or one in four, adults ages 65 and older (older adults), report falling each year. While not all falls result in an injury, about 37% of those who fall reported an injury that required medical treatment or restricted their activity for at least one day, resulting in an estimated nine million fall injuries." In most cases, falls are preventable especially if people take steps to reduce the risks by making their homes safer, proper medications and health management, and engage in strength and balance exercises such as tai chi. The Hawaii Department of Health has had a successful fall prevention program that included certified tai chi classes, and it has expanded these classes to over thirty locations and all YMCA5 statewide. Exercise programs like Tai-chi and other falls prevention education and awareness efforts should be continued and supported to reduce the risk of fall-related injuries especially among Hawaii's older residents. A statewide falls prevention program should be available with the necessary staff to operate it.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in **support of H.B. 474.**

HB-474

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:15:09 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Murakami Akatsuka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the passage if HB 474 tooappropriate funds to the Department of Health (DOH) for the full-time equivalent fall prevention and early detection coordinator position established by Act 153. This will enable the DOH to support a coordinated statewide approach to prevent and reduce the impact of falls among older adults.

The need is now as our state has an increasing aging population. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in strong support of HB 474's passage this session.