



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

February 6, 2025

To: The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Chair,
The Honorable Mike Lee, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor

Date: Thursday, February 6, 2025
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol

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

Re: H.B. 827 RELATING TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION MEDICAL BENEFITS

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The **DLIR supports** this measure that amends Chapter 386-21.9, (HRS), to expand workers' compensation medical benefits as defined in Chapter 386-21 for firefighters to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, colon, pharynx, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma unless an employer proves that the cancer or disease was not associated with the firefighting duties.

II. CURRENT LAW

Section 386-21.9, HRS defines medical care, services, and supplies for firefighters suffering from cancer. If a claim for leukemia, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, or cancer of the lung, brain, stomach, esophagus, intestines, rectum, kidney, bladder, prostate, or testes filed by an employee with five or more years of service as a firefighter is accepted or determined to be compensable, section 386-21 shall remain applicable; provided that the employer shall be liable for medical care, services and supplies for a minimum of one hundred ten per cent, and not to exceed one hundred fifty per cent of fees prescribed in the Medicare Resource Based Relative Value Scale applicable to Hawaii as prepared by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Section 386-21, HRS, defines medical care, services, and supplies and provides that immediately after a work injury sustained by an employee and so long as reasonably needed the employer shall furnish to the employee all medical care, services, and supplies as the nature of the injury requires.

Section 386-73.5, HRS, states that the DLIR Director has original jurisdiction over all controversies and disputes arising out of workers' compensation.

Section 386-85, HRS, states the presumption of employment and compensation for a work-covered work injury in the absence of substantial evidence to the contrary.

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

The DLIR supports this measure to ensure that first responders receive timely and appropriate medical treatment to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, colon, pharynx, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma when determined that said cancer or disease was associated with firefighting duties.

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, HAWAI'I 96732
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February 5, 2025

The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Committee on Labor
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 309
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Sayama,

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL (HB) 827 RELATING TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION

I am Bradford K. Ventura, Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. I support HB 827 which expands the workers' compensation benefits to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, colon, pharynx, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma.

Over the last decade, the fire profession has experienced an increase in fire fighter deaths related to cancer. The University of Cincinnati and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health conducted studies as a result of the initial findings. They are the most comprehensive investigations into cancer-related disease incurred by career fire fighters to date and support the initial findings.

A State of Hawaii (State) cancer taskforce performed an investigative study with assistance from medical insurance companies and found that fire fighters in the State are also experiencing elevated levels of exposure to the effects of cancer-related disease, correlating Hawaii's information with the national studies.

I urge your committees' support on the passage of HB 827.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of the Fire Chief at (808) 270-7561 or via email at bradford.ventura@mauicounty.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Ventura".

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief



HAWAII FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 1463, AFL-CIO
1018 PALM DRIVE, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814-1929
TELEPHONE (808) 949-1566 FAX: (808) 952-6003
WEBSITE: www.hawaiifirefighters.org

House of Representatives
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025
February 3, 2025

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thursday, February 6, 2025

9:00 AM

Conference Room 309

Testimony by

Hawaii Fire Fighters Association

H.B. No. 827 RELATING TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION MEDICAL BENEFIT LAB, FIN

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee on Labor,

The Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA), Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO represents more than 2,000 active-duty and 1,000 retired professional fire fighters throughout the State of Hawaii. The HFFA, on behalf of all our members, **strongly supports H.B. 827**, which expands medical benefits for firefighters under workers' compensation to include additional types of cancers.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study identified, "that fire fighters have a 9% greater chance of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% greater chance of dying from cancer than the general U.S. population." Fire fighters are exposed to carcinogenic agents from fire combustion products that can be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through dermal exposure, fire fighting foam, diesel exhaust from fire apparatus, and even the turnouts, which provide thermal stability, contain PFAS. The Grace LeMasters' study found a direct correlation occupational exposure and the increased risk for cancer.

H.B. No. 827 provides the workers' compensation coverage for our fire fighters diagnosed and require cancer treatment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we ask the Committee to pass H.B. No. 827 for further action in the House.

HB-827

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 8:14:32 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanoa Shannon	Maui division chair, Hawaii Firefighters Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kanoa Shannon and I am a 22 year FF with the County of Maui, Dept of Fire and Public Safety and also the Maui division chair for Hawaii Firefighters Association.

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill (H.B.) 827. The intention of the bill, is to expand health and medical benefits for FF's under worker's compensation (WC) language and laws to include additional types of cancers.

Many different cancers are now becoming more prevalent in the fire service and is also a higher contributing factor to FF deaths during active duty as well as after retirement. Carcinogen exposures in many different incident situations hugely contribute through absorption, ingestion, and inhalation. We have many different levels of PPE that protect us in the different environments, but none of them protect us at a 100%, in fact most structural firefighting gear (aka turnouts) contain Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (aka PFAS). These 'forever chemicals' can lead toward serious health problems that include liver damage, thyroid disease, obesity and cancer.

The fire service commitment and dedication in public safety to our communities is hard to quantify and in this situation we ask for proactive support in progressing and including language and laws that protect FF health and medical benefits to all members in the fire service.

The usual generic mission statement for the fire service states, 'we are committed and dedicated to protect and preserve life, environment and property' with LIFE starting as the top priority. We are asking in return nothing different, simply to support everything that it will take to commit and dedicate to protect and preserve our lives as FF's.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 828 as we ask the committee to pass this bill

A hui hou

