

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
KAHU HO'OMALU PŌULIA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
4204 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4420

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO 37
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & KUPUNA

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS &
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

APRIL 11, 2025

Aloha Chairs Elefante and Buenaventura, Vice-Chairs Wakai and Aquino, and Members of both Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony to **SUPPORT** HCR 37.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) recognizes the critical importance of providing accessible information about evacuation centers during emergency events, particularly for our kūpuna (elderly population). We understand that the availability of these centers can vary based on multiple factors, including the severity of the event, facility readiness, and logistical considerations set by the counties.

To better serve our elderly community, HIEMA is committed to collaborating with the counties, as well as non-profit organizations to develop initiatives and outreach programs focused on emergency preparedness for kūpuna.

HIEMA is actively working to identify communities as part of our Hawai'i Hazards Awareness and Resilience Program (HHARP). This initiative has established a comprehensive framework to structure and guide all-hazard preparedness training. One of the key goals of HHARP is to empower senior citizens and their support systems by equipping them with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate emergencies safely. The benefits of this program extend significantly to the communities it serves.

Being prepared enhances the safety and well-being of individuals and families during any crisis, particularly for those with elderly members. By prioritizing preparedness, we not only protect our loved ones but also strengthen the resilience of our entire community.

HIEMA encourages you to support this resolution. Investing in the long-term resilience of our state means prioritizing the safety and welfare of our kūpuna. Together, we can ensure that every senior citizen has the resources they need to feel secure and supported during emergencies.

Thank you for your commitment to safeguarding our treasured elder community and for the opportunity to provide a testimony on HCR 37.

James Barros: james.barros@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300



1001 Bishop Street #625 | Honolulu, HI 96813
866-295-7282 | aarp.org/hi | hiaarp@aarp.org |
[Twitter.com/aarphawaii](https://twitter.com/aarphawaii) | facebook.com/aarphawaii

**The State Legislature
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Friday, April 11, 2025
Conference Room 225, 3:01 p.m.**

TO: The Honorable Brandon Elefante, Chair
The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
FROM: Keali'i Lopez, State Director AARP Hawai'i
Re: Support for H.C.R. 37

Aloha Chairs Elefante, and San Buenaventura and Members of the Committees,

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 strongly supports H.C.R. 37 which would encourage the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to collaborate with relevant agencies to develop initiatives and outreach programs to inform kupuna about emergency preparedness.

The Lahaina fire and, in fact, every major natural disaster for the last several decades has made clear that kupuna are more likely to perish in a natural disaster than younger people. People over 60 made up more than two-thirds of the deaths in Lahaina.

The Lahaina Fire Final Phase Three report acknowledges the number of deaths of kupuna, but none of its detailed recommendations include initiatives that focus specifically on reducing kupuna deaths.

We know that the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency is doing its best with the resources that they have to help all of us survive the next disaster and AARP has worked with HIEMA staff on promoting disaster resilience in communities – organizing communities and neighborhoods in advance of a disaster so they can help each other out before, during and after a disaster.

AARP worked with FEMA to develop a Disaster Resilience Toolkit, a 44-page booklet for community leaders with tips and tools to develop disaster resilience in their neighborhoods. AARP Hawai'i also worked with the nonprofit disaster organization the Saint Bernard Project to develop a checklist for

managers of senior independent living facilities so they can create emergency plans and practice what to do in a disaster. We are beginning to introduce the checklist to senior affordable housing communities throughout the state.

AARP does these things because we see a need. Too many kupuna do not know what to do in a disaster. Caregivers of kupuna also need information on how to develop their emergency plans. It's especially important for caregivers of kupuna with dementia or who have mobility and other health issues to build a team of people who can help and to know what to do if they need to shelter in place or if they have to evacuate.

Too few kupuna know how to tell if they have to evacuate or if they are better off sheltering in place in a disaster. And some kupuna do not have familiarity with or access to technology to notify them about what to do in a disaster.

AARP can play a role as an educational resource for disaster management. But we are not a disaster management agency. A focused effort to help kupuna survive a disaster must come from the communities themselves – from friends, family and neighbors with government support and leadership.

That's why this resolution is needed and appreciated by AARP and other kupuna groups. Government is overwhelmed during a disaster. It can't do everything and be everywhere all at once. But government can do better before a disaster in preparing people, especially kupuna and family caregivers, to survive a disaster and to survive in the immediate aftermath of a disaster with the help of family and neighbors.

Thank you for the opportunity to support HCR 37.

Note: Included is a link to [aarp.org article](#), written after the Lahiana fire, that includes interview with disaster experts and information on what other communities are doing to increase disaster preparation with the aim of reducing kupuna deaths. It provides the committee with good background information



To: The Honorable Brandon J. C. Elefante, Chair
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Friday, April 11, 2025, 3:01 PM, Conference Room 225

RE: **HCR37 Requesting the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency to Collaborate with Relevant Agencies to Develop Initiatives and Outreach Programs to Inform Kūpuna about Emergency Preparedness.**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HCR37**. This measure requests the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency to collaborate with relevant agencies to develop initiatives and outreach programs to inform kūpuna about emergency preparedness.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai‘i’s community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai‘i’s only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare supports the emergency preparedness outreach initiatives for kūpuna as described in this measure. Both the Maui wildfires and COVID-19 pandemic caused significant devastation and fear, as well as long-term physical and mental health outcomes, many of which are unknown. In collaboration with the Med-QUEST Division and other stakeholders, AlohaCare provided services and outreach to members in both of these emergencies and is prepared to be a resource for future events. By equipping our State with emergency resources and guidance, we are improving our community’s chances of survival and health outcomes associated with disasters, which is especially important for vulnerable populations such as kūpuna.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HCR37**.



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs and the
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Friday, April 11, 2025
3:01 p. m.
State Capitol Conference Room 225 and via videoconference

Re: HCR 37 Requesting the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to collaborate with relevant agencies to develop initiatives and outreach programs to inform kupuna about emergency preparedness.

Dear Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Wakai, Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Gary Simon, a member of the board of the Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition, whose mission is to improve the quality of life of those who give and receive care by increasing community awareness of caregiver issues through continuing advocacy, education, and training. I am offering testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition.

The Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition strongly supports HCR 37.

Kupuna are particularly vulnerable in a disaster. Education and outreach on emergency preparedness will significantly enhance the safety and welfare of kupuna and caregivers of kupuna during an emergency.

We urge you to support HCR 37, and we urge you to recommend its passage.

Mahalo for seriously considering the resolution.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Simon".

Gary Simon



Email garysimon@hawaii.rr.com

HCR-37

Submitted on: 4/9/2025 7:48:01 AM

Testimony for PSM on 4/11/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dotty Kelly-Paddock	Testifying for Hui o Hauula	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hui O Hauula strongly supports HCR37. HOH works closely with Kupuna in Koolauloa to assist them to access services they need to age in place and to prepare Kupuna for emergencies and disasters.... especially the most vulnerable who lack mobility and a support system currently. Much more needs to be done especially for Kupuna in rural and remote areas of the state. Than you!

HCR-37

Submitted on: 4/10/2025 12:22:54 PM

Testimony for PSM on 4/11/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Flomi Esah	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee

My name is Flomi Esah and I am testifying in support of this resolution to request Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to collaborate with other county agencies to develop programs focused on emergency preparedness for our kūpuna.

As a fellow Pacific Islander, I am deeply aware of the value that our elders or kūpuna bring to our communities. It is through them that traditions, language, and culture are able to be passed down through generations. In Pacific Island culture, we are taught to value and respect our kūpuna. I believe it is our kuleana and responsibility to take care of them as much as they have taken care of us.

We must remember that Hawaii is a very tiny island compared to other states, and it is because of this that makes us more vulnerable to natural disasters and sudden emergencies like sudden fires or accidents. Our elderly adults are a vulnerable population when it comes to these emergencies because of certain factors such as living alone, delayed response due to aging, decreased strength, relying on medication and limited mobility. I believe that having these programs will help teach and prepare our elders for future emergencies, empowering them to stay safe with the knowledge and tools that these programs provide. I respectfully encourage you to support this resolution, showing aloha and kuleana to the population that needs it most.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Flomi Esah

HCR-37

Submitted on: 4/9/2025 2:37:06 PM

Testimony for PSM on 4/11/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frank Schultz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this initiative.

The State Legislature
Support of HCR 37

To Whom It May Concern

I am a 90 year old widowed senior living alone in an area that would be greatly damaged and probably inaccessible should there be a serious flooding, hurricane, or tsunami.

Each year I dread the hurricane season for fear that we will be hit by one. It is a very stressful, fearful time for me. I need the information to survive so I wholeheartedly support the idea of HCR 37.

Barbara Tatsuguchi

54-144 A Puuowaa St.

Hau'ula, Hi. 96717

HCR-37

Submitted on: 4/10/2025 6:43:32 AM

Testimony for PSM on 4/11/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Evelyn Lane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Elefante and Chair San Buenaventura

My name is Evelyn Lane, I was born on Oahu and I live in HUD housing for Kupuna and disabled individuals in Kahuku town. Our community is a fire trap, surrounded by Ironwood and there are rundown, old plantation houses that should be fixed or torn down. In the past some of our Kupuna had to evacuate due to smoke, inhalation as a wooded area was extinguished in the middle of the night. We have only one way in and one way out. We do not have an official Emergency evacuation plan for elderly, especially those living in subsidized housing. Most of the Kapuna who live in the 64 unit, duplex, community adjacent to Kahuku city golf course do not drive, they have physical disabilities, live alone and are using wheelchairs and walkers. As you are all well aware when hazards occur, at least 50% of the population who parish will be elderly. We need to increase equity for our Kupuna by requiring Hawaii Emergency Management to work with agencies and organizations to support Kupuna safety.

it has been my experience on the Windward side, Kapuna are extremely challenged by technology. Even a flip phone can be difficult, trying to create passwords, trying to open programs, trying to find the news on the Internet, etc. Many Kupuna lack the financial means to prepare for a disaster. In 2019 the mean income of older adults was \$27,398 and 12% of the population makes less than \$10,000 a year.(AARP Disaster Resilience Tool Kit, income statistics.)

It's very hard to save disaster funds when you live in a place where it cost so much to buy food and pay rent. Kupuna struggle to make doctors appointments, get rides, acquire, food, and now they need to help in preparing for the future in the event of a disaster due to climate change. But we need governmental support. We can all see now after the Maui disaster how important it is that we not wait until the incident is over to prepare, but to do so in advance. The great amount of loss of life and property and comparison is worth the investment.

We don't have much time, the government doesn't have any storm rated shelters. Not even a category one storm shelter on the island. Let alone a safe space on the island to shelter our population in a hurricane disaster. This should be a call for all hands on deck. We have no time to lose studying the situation and then implementing a plan over a long period of time will leave us vulnerable with our pants down.

it is time to learn from everyone else across the world and use new best practices for the future. We need to be creative, collaborative, and approach resilience as an opportunity to secure our future. Keeping the surroundings as safe as possible for all who, live, and visit our communities by supporting this measure to provide disaster equity to Kupuna, thereby giving Kapuna a chance to live through the next disaster.

I myself when I was a single parent, experienced a huge natural disaster in October 1989! The San Francisco earthquake. I was working in the financial district when I was stranded for the evening leaving my eight-year-old son on the other side of that then collapsed Bay Bridge. Also, I lived near the Oakland fire. I could see the smoke, heading our direction, but for the mountains we were saved. Every day I rode to work. I looked at the chimneys and foundations that were left behind in front of the landmark Fremont hotel. I knew people personally, who lost their loved ones in that disaster. Today, our state is not prepared for a category one let alone a category five hurricane. We have not figured out how to support the most vulnerable in a crisis. We know the largest portion of people who are left behind to die in these natural disasters are Kupuna.

As a community member, and as a Kapuna with disabilities since I was 29 years old. Now I have made it my goal to become as healthy as possible. So if we have a disaster, I can walk out on my own steam. I came to that decision when I witnessed Kupuna being left behind in assisted-living and nursing homes and disaster after disaster. Since then I have joined the community of Hui O Hau'ula where the community is working on resilience for our district. However, Kahuku Kukuna might not be able to make it to Hau'ula in the event of a natural disaster. Joining with the Hui O Hau'ula community has enabled me to join their Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). My town needs to make emergency preparation's for the Kahuku community. We need help with organizing, funding, planning, preparing training, cleaning and reorganizing.

We need leadership to facilitate education along with training and preparation.

It takes time to get prepared for something we have never experienced before. Most Kupuna believe the government will take care of them and they don't want to leave the security of their home or be asked to leave a pet behind.

So for all these reasons, I pray you all, will support this measure for your Kupuna!

Mahalo plenty

TESTIMONY OF
LARRY S VERAY

COMMITTEE'S ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
&
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

LATE

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HCR37

REQUESTING THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY TO COLLABORATE WITH RELEVANT AGENCIES TO DEVELOP INITIATIVES AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO INFORM KUPUNA ABOUT EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

April 10, 2025

Aloha, Chair's Elefante and Buenaventura and Vice Chair's Wakai and Aquino and committee members. I am Larry Veray, Chairman for the Pearl City Neighborhood Board No. 21. I am submitting this testimony representing our board as a whole. In our 2025 legislative priorities stating a requirement for HIEMA to develop and improve emergency preparedness for our residents, in particular, our Kupuna. The Pearl City Neighborhood Board No. 21 has made it a priority for Pearl City to be prepared for natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

I am in STRONG SUPPORT OF HCR37.

Our greatest concerns during HIEMA ordered emergency evacuations and preparedness:

- We have a large elderly population in Pearl City and our Kupuna are extremely vulnerable in emergency situations due to their physical limitations, chronic health conditions and lack of access to communication technology resources
- We have numerous elderly care homes in Pearl City and throughout the islands and the care and safety of our Kupuna is paramount when we have to evacuate due to a disaster
- We require a HIEMA outreach program to make sure our Kupuna are well-informed about emergency procedures and evacuation plan for the location care home they are residing. We need to make sure each care home has a solid emergency and evacuation plan.

The Pearl City Neighborhood Board No. 21 requires the State Legislature and HIEMA need to collaborate and build solid relationships with all emergency agencies at the Federal, State and City levels agencies. The State Legislature and HIEMA needs to make sure all Kupuna Care Homes have a solid emergency evacuation plan.

Please approve HCR37. Mahalo!

Larry S. Veray