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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai
715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 222
RELATING TO FIREWORKS
Before the Senate Committee on
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 3:15 PM
State Capitol Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
Testifiers: Mike Lambert or Jared Redulla

Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Wakai, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) strongly supports Senate Bill 222.

Act 67, Session Laws of Hawai'i, 2023, established the Illegal Fireworks Task Force to plan, coordinate, and engage in law enforcement operations to interdict illegal fireworks; develop a comprehensive strategic plan to stop the importation of illegal fireworks and explosives into Hawaii; promote compliance with the state fireworks control laws; and ensure the safety and security of the airports, harbors, and other facilities and institutions in the State against the discharge of illegal fireworks and explosives.

Since its establishment, the Illegal Fireworks Task Force has demonstrated success in its operations. Working collaboratively with partner agencies, the Task Force has successfully removed over 200,000 pounds of illegal fireworks from Hawaii's streets, with operations and investigations continuing to progress. The extension of the sunset date from June 30, 2025, to June 30, 2030, is crucial to maintain this momentum and ensure the long-term effectiveness of the Task Force's mission.

The appropriation of funds is also essential for the Task Force to continue its operations. These funds are necessary for administrative support staff, Task Force operations, and reimbursement to law enforcement agencies for Task Force-related law enforcement operations, including personnel costs, overtime, equipment, and the storage and disposal of confiscated fireworks.

DLE appreciates the Committee's consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA MĀKA'I O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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DEPUTY CHIEFS
HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE JP-HR

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
State Senate
415 South Beretania Street, Room 225
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Elefante and Members:

SUBJECT: Senate Bill No. 222, Relating to Fireworks

I am Jerome Pacarro, Captain of the Narcotics/Vice Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD supports Senate Bill No. 222, Relating to Fireworks.

The HPD supports all legislation that aims to reduce the use of illegal fireworks by strengthening current fireworks laws.

The HPD urges you to support Senate Bill No. 222, Relating to Fireworks.

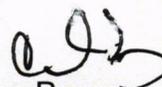
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

Sincerely,

for 

Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police

for 
Jerome Pacarro, Captain
Narcotics/Vice Division



Hawaii Representatives & Senators:

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Hawaii, I am writing to express our strong opposition to any prohibitions and enforcement measures targeting fireworks. We believe Hawaiians have the right to pursue and engage in any activities that bring them joy and fulfillment.

Fireworks prohibitions and regulations infringe upon the freedom of our citizens to partake in this time-honored custom, diminishing the spirit of celebration and unity that fireworks bring.

Implementing strict enforcement measures to crack down on fireworks usage would only serve to burden law enforcement resources, and divert needed attention away from more pressing issues. Prohibitions and heavy enforcement will lead to unnecessary conflict between police and citizens, eroding trust and creating an atmosphere of fear and animosity. Causing harm against another person is already illegal, and crimes can already be prosecuted without these new tyrannical enforcement measures.

The Libertarian Party of Hawaii stands firm in our support of individual freedom and opposes any measures that encroach upon our citizens' rights.

In Freedom,

Abbra Green

Executive Secretary, Libertarian Party of Hawaii

lphisecretary@gmail.com

SB-222

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:11:24 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/5/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of providing funds to the illegal fireworks task force for their enforcement activities. We are not providing enough support to enforcement and that must change.

SB-222

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:02:54 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/5/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gordon B. Lindsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of SB222

SB-222

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 2:53:16 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/5/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beverly Heiser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Wakai, and Committee Members,

I SUPPORT SB222 that Amends Act 67, SLH 2023, to appropriate funds for the illegal fireworks task force for FY 2025-2026 and FY 2026-2027 and to extend the sunset date of the Act from 6/30/2025 to 6/30/2030.

Act 67 established the Illegal Fireworks Task Force (IFTF) under the Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) on June 7, 2023. The IFTF has made the most progress thus far, to interrupt the supply chain and distribution that led to some areas on Oahu noting a slight reduction of illegal fireworks in 2023. This effort has accomplished more than any other initiative to reduce illegal fireworks use, and has resulted in ongoing criminal investigations, two felony indictments, and covert operations that resulted in twenty criminal citations. There is a need to continue this effort to reduce illegal fireworks at the ports so it will make it much easier for police to enforce end-users.

In the year 2024 illegal fireworks made a comeback. This is due to the IFTF members being able to commit only part-time due to other primary duties. Much of the IFTF's daily work is done by state narcotics investigators because the technique to interdict illegal fireworks are the same used to interdict illegal drugs. To continue the excellent work that has been done so far, Jordan Lowe's 2025 Report to the Legislature on the IFTF recommended the "creation of a full-time fireworks control unit comprised of criminal investigators". **SB227** would establish the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division under the Department of Law Enforcement that would identify and provide the full-time dedication and staffing needed instead of the current part-time commitment that **SB222** currently provides.

The Aliamanu tragedy was sad, and it is hopeful that the lives lost and those suffering from life-changing critical injuries were not in vain but will provide the wake-up call to take the use of illegal fireworks seriously. This all starts with legislators creating laws to invoke stiffer penalties and higher fines, and it allows enforcement to the fullest extent of the law to instill a fear of getting caught and induce deterrence. This may require more appropriations committed this year to be effective, but how do you put a price on lives lost, life-changing deformities, and psychological issues that may require medical attention for the rest of one's life? Yes, enough is enough.

Please provide your support for SB222.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-222

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 10:41:16 AM

Testimony for PSM on 2/5/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bronson Teixeira	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stand in opposition to this bill, it's a waste of taxpayer dollars and will not stop aerial fireworks.

SB-222

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 2:51:01 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/5/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe this is a waste of money. The problem is crystal clear. Therefore, I oppose this proposal.

SB-222

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:03:08 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/5/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Zehr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong OPPOSITION to this bill, which seeks to extend and further fund government enforcement measures against the use of fireworks in Hawai‘i. This bill expands the power of the state at the expense of personal freedom, responsible resource allocation, and community traditions.

1. Government Overreach and Erosion of Personal Liberties

This bill represents yet another example of government encroachment into the personal choices of individuals. Fireworks have long been a cultural and celebratory tradition in Hawai‘i, especially for New Year’s celebrations, Chinese New Year, and other significant events. The enforcement of fireworks bans disproportionately targets individuals exercising their right to celebrate in ways that do not infringe upon others’ rights. Penalizing peaceful celebrations in the name of "safety" is a slippery slope toward greater restrictions on personal freedoms.

2. Wasteful Use of Taxpayer Dollars

The bill seeks to appropriate an unspecified but presumably significant sum from the general revenues of the State to fund an expanded fireworks task force, including law enforcement overtime, storage, and disposal of confiscated fireworks. At a time when Hawai‘i faces pressing issues such as a housing crisis, rising cost of living, and failing infrastructure, it is unconscionable to allocate more taxpayer money toward policing what is, in most cases, a victimless activity.

Government resources should be directed toward real public safety concerns—violent crime, property crime, and economic stability—not used to fund enforcement measures against individuals engaging in voluntary celebrations.

3. Expanding Law Enforcement Powers Leads to Abuse and Overcriminalization

By extending the sunset date of the law from 2025 to 2030, this bill perpetuates a government task force with no clear endpoint. Historically, expanded police powers lead to unintended consequences, including selective enforcement, increased fines and penalties on working-class families, and unnecessary confrontations between law enforcement and citizens.

Hawai'i already has some of the strictest fireworks laws in the country. Additional crackdowns will not stop the underground market; they will only create more opportunities for selective enforcement while encouraging the rise of illicit sales and black-market activity.

4. A More Effective, Community-Based Approach

Instead of wasting taxpayer money on enforcement, the Legislature should consider alternative solutions that respect individual liberty while addressing legitimate concerns such as fire hazards and noise complaints. These could include:

- Designated community fireworks zones where individuals can legally use fireworks in a safe environment.
- Education and fire safety campaigns rather than increased criminal penalties.
- Decriminalization of consumer-grade fireworks while maintaining safety regulations on large commercial explosives. This will also ensure commercially available fireworks meet safety standards.

This bill is an unnecessary expansion of state power that will lead to wasted taxpayer money, government overreach, and further restrictions on individual freedoms. I urge this committee to reject this bill and instead pursue policies that respect personal responsibility, cultural traditions, and fiscal responsibility.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nick Zehr