



March 15, 2023 at 9:45 am
Conference Room 329

House Committee on Health & Homelessness

To: Chair Della Au Belatti
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi

From: Robert Choy, MPH
Director, Post-Acute Care
Healthcare Association of Hawaii

Re: **Submitting Comments**
SB 1018 SD 1, Relating to Emergency Powers

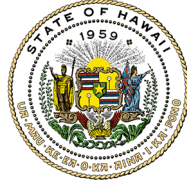
The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH), established in 1939, serves as the leading voice of healthcare on behalf of 170 member organizations who represent almost every aspect of the healthcare continuum in Hawaii. Members include acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, assisted living facilities and durable medical equipment suppliers. In addition to providing access to appropriate, affordable, high-quality care to all of Hawaii's residents, our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing over 30,000 people statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **comments** on this measure. Specifically, our members are concerned with the broad, yet unspecified, authority that would be afforded to the governor in any future emergency, including a pandemic. Throughout the COVID pandemic, the Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) and its members including hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical facilities worked extensively and collaboratively with federal, state and county officials to ensure the continuation of essential services. We appreciated that there was ample flexibility, communication and collaboration to respond to frequently-changing conditions, to ensure that residents and visitors had access to needed services. For example, the Department of Health, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency and FEMA all collaborated with HAH and its members to secure federal funding for surge staffing during the height of the delta and omicron surges.

Hawaii has experienced the lowest death rate in the nation from COVID for the entire duration of the pandemic, has the third lowest COVID infection rate in the nation, and stands as one of the highest-vaccinated populations in the country. This was achieved through incredible cooperation between public and private entities to ensure continuation of services without requiring additional regulations. Further, we would note that hospitals had the authority to suspend elective surgeries to address any capacity issues and did so when it was necessary to ensure that there were enough resources and beds available.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



KENNETH S. HARA
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
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STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1018 SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY POWERS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS**

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

MARCH 14, 2023

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee:

I am James Barros, Administrator of the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA).

HI-EMA provides written testimony to **SUPPORT** SB1018 SD1.

This measure would require the Governor to ensure continued operation of medical facilities upon declaration of a state of emergency and during times of a health or pandemic emergency; allows hospitals to suspend elective surgeries during a period of emergency to address bed capacity; and make other changes.

Hawaii's geographic isolation imposes high demands on the local health care system when an emergency occurs. The COVID-19 incident illustrated the importance of maintaining adequate capacity in Hawaii's healthcare system during an emergency, whether it is a pandemic or some other incident with the potential to cause casualties who would need medical care.

SB1018 would increase the flexibility of the healthcare system during emergencies, and we respectfully ask the committee to support it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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