

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



KENNETH S. HARA
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

STEPHEN F. LOGAN
BRIGADIER GENERAL
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA HOPE 'AKUKANA KENELALA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4495

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 3085
RELATING TO THE HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY,
AND COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH S. HARA
ADJUTANT GENERAL
AND DIRECTOR OF HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBURARY 7, 2024

Aloha Chairs Aquino and Wakai, Vice-Chairs Moriwaki and Elefante, and members of both committees:

I am MG Kenneth S. Hara, Adjutant General and Director of Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense (DEF) provides written testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB3085.

This measure amends Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), Chapter 121 and authorizes the use of State funds to pay for TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) coverage for Hawai'i National Guard (HING) Servicemembers in the junior grades for officers in the grade of O-3 and below and warrant officers in the grades of CW-2 and below, and for enlisted in the grades of E-6 and below while serving on State Active Duty (SAD) for more than thirty days in service to the State. TRS coverage would include the individual officer, warrant officer or enlisted and their family, should they have eligible dependents.

The HING places great value on selfless service to the State of Hawai'i, as well as the well-being of the dedicated women and men of the HING who support the State during times of need.

We have seen a recent increase in natural disasters throughout the State, which has caused numerous HING Servicemembers to be ordered to SAD in response for extended periods. HING Servicemembers have been asked to serve in an indeterminate timeframe, requiring them to take a leave of absence from their civilian employers for longer periods of duty. While some civilian employers may elect to pay for the HING Servicemembers' ongoing company-provided healthcare premiums while on a leave of absence status, many civilian employers will not. As a result, many HING Servicemembers will lose their civilian company-provided healthcare coverage after 30 days on SAD orders. This requires HING Servicemembers serving the State on SAD to constantly reconsider whether they should continue serving without any healthcare coverage or request for termination of their SAD orders to keep their company-provided healthcare coverage for themselves and their families. To require HING Servicemembers to support the State on SAD without any healthcare coverage is an unfair request, especially since the State is already asking them to take an indefinite leave of absence from their civilian employer to support the State's emergency.

When HING Servicemembers exceed 90 days on SAD orders they would be entitled to certain benefits from the State of Hawai'i as a temporary State employee, such as access to the Employer-Union Trust Fund (EUTF). However, the cost of enrollment in the EUTF would be substantially more than the premium cost for enrollment in TRS coverage.

TRS provides the most fiscally responsible solution for the State to offer healthcare coverage to HING Servicemembers serving on SAD for more than 30 days. The individual plan premium cost for TRS is approximately \$50 per month and the family plan premium cost is approximately \$240 per month. Comparatively, the State of Hawaii employer-sponsored monthly cost for an individual plan is approximately \$450 per month and for a family plan is approximately \$1,500 per month.

If passed, the bill will authorize the use of State funds, such as the Major Disaster Fund (MDF), to compensate HING Servicemembers that require healthcare coverage for their enrollment cost in TRS during their activation on SAD for more than 30 days. This will help ensure healthcare coverage for HING Servicemembers and their eligible dependents, an uninterrupted HING response force capability to the State, and the most cost-effective stewardship of State funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB3085.

MG Kenneth S. Hara, Kenneth.s.hara@hawaii.gov; 808-672-1001

HEADQUARTERS
HAWAII' I ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
91-1227 ENTERPRISE AVENUE
KAPOLEI, HAWAII' I 96707-2150

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SENATE BILL 3085
RELATING TO THE HAWAII ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY,
AND COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

COLONEL TYSON Y. TAHARA
CHIEF OF STAFF, HAWAII' I ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

February 9, 2024

Chairs Aquino and Wakai, Vice-Chairs Moriwaki and Elefante, and members of both committees:

I am Colonel Tyson Tahara, Chief of Staff of the Hawaii' i Army National Guard (HIARNG) in the State Department of Defense.

The HIARNG provides written testimony **IN SUPPORT OF** SB 3085.

The HIARNG takes great pride in serving the people and government of the State of Hawaii' i during times of need. Our recent service history includes our response during the Puna lava flow, our state-wide support during COVID-19, and our deployment to Maui following the wildfires there.

While our Soldiers quickly respond to calls from the community and place themselves in harm's way, they do not receive comprehensive health insurance coverage for their periods of State Active Duty (SAD) service. Many of our Soldiers have and use health insurance coverage provided through their civilian employment, but a sizeable minority do not have health insurance coverage. Additionally, for periods of absence exceeding 30 days, many employers suspend health insurance coverage. The result is that Soldiers and their families may lapse insurance coverage when they are called to serve their State for periods exceeding 30 days.

This bill would grant an allowance for TRICARE Reserve Select coverage for Hawaii National Guard (HING) Servicemembers in the junior grades, for officers in the grade of O-3 and below, warrant officers in the grades of CW-2 and below, and for enlisted in the grades of E-6 and below while serving on SAD service for more than 30 days. This allowance will alleviate the stress placed on our Soldiers and their families during service to our State. Removing the Soldiers' concerns about health insurance coverage will increase the available volunteer pool and improve the HING's response to future emergencies within the State.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony **IN SUPPORT OF** SB 3085 providing an allowance for Tricare Reserve Select.

Colonel Tyson Tahara; tyson.y.tahara.mil@army.mil; 808-672-1456

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 4:06:20 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ricardo A. Namoca	Testifying for 154th Security Forces Squadron, Hawaii Air National Guard	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As the Senior Enlisted Leader of the 154th Security Forces Squadron and President of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chiefs' Executive Council, I support SB3085 because it addresses a fundamental need for the health and welfare of service members and their families during state active duty. The bill's focus on providing medical coverage for these individuals acknowledges the unique challenges faced by service members who may be the sole providers for their families. In times of state active duty, which can involve responding to emergencies or participating in critical operations, ensuring access to medical care becomes paramount. The physical and mental well-being of service members directly impacts their ability to fulfill their duties effectively. By extending medical coverage, SB3085 not only prioritizes the health of those in service but also recognizes the ripple effect on their families. Service members serving as sole providers face increased responsibilities, and having medical coverage alleviates the burden of potential healthcare costs, contributing to the overall stability and security of their households. Supporting this legislation aligns with the principle of honoring and safeguarding the well-being of those who selflessly serve their communities during times of need. It reflects a commitment to the holistic care of service members and their families, recognizing that their health is integral to the resilience and effectiveness of our armed forces.

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 1:59:16 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Horton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB3085

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

As President of the Hawaii National Guard Association, I represent the dedicated service members of the Army and Air National Guard in our state. It is from this position of advocacy and responsibility that I express our support for SB3085. This bill is critical as it authorizes the provision of TRICARE Reserve Select health insurance allowances to junior officers, warrant officers, or enlisted personnel of the Hawaii National Guard who are ordered to active duty for periods exceeding 30 days.

The absence of a mechanism to provide health insurance for our service members when activated for state duties presents a significant challenge. Currently, when called to state active duty for more than a month, many do not have medical insurance to cover routine healthcare or emergencies for themselves or their families, unless directly related to their service duties. This gap in coverage can lead to substantial personal and financial hardship in the event of medical needs.

Moreover, civilian employers are not required to maintain health coverage for employees who are on active duty. This situation can leave our service members without necessary health care protection, adding undue stress and financial burden, which could detract from their mission focus and effectiveness.

SB3085 addresses this issue by enabling the payment of health insurance allowances, safeguarding the health of our service members and their families during their active duty service. This provision is a practical step that ensures our National Guard can maintain their readiness and capability to serve our state effectively.

Passage of this bill would demonstrate the Hawaii State Legislature's support for our Hawaii service members' welfare and readiness, enabling them to serve without the added concern of healthcare coverage for themselves and their families.

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter and for supporting the men and women of the Hawaii National Guard.

Sincerely,

Kevin Horton President, Hawaii National Guard Association

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:07:40 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J. Chun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:11:46 AM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bradley Spencer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As the Senior Enlisted Leader for 116 members of the Hawaii Air National Guard assigned to my unit, and an Executive Council Member for the Hawaii Air National Guard's Chiefs Council responsible for the career development, well-being and advocacy of more than 2000 Airman. I am in full support of this bill for the reasons stated within the Justification Sheet for SB. NO. 3085.

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:23:00 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamielyn Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 3085, a crucial measure relating to the Hawai‘i National Guard (HING). This bill addresses a vital need for our HING members ordered to support the state.

Ensuring access to TRICARE Reserve Select, especially for junior enlisted and officers, is not only a matter of military preparedness but also a commitment to the well-being of those who selflessly serve our state. Several Guardsmen struggle to find affordable health insurance and many remain uninsured, receiving no health benefits from their civilian employers. By approving SB 3085, we are safeguarding the health and security of the individuals who answer the call to protect our communities.

I urge you to consider the invaluable service these men and women provide and to pass SB 3085 reinforcing our commitment to their health and ensuring they can carry out their duties--"Always Ready, Always There"--with confidence..

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 3085.

Jamielyn Thompson

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:48:01 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Rosner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having access to TRICARE Reserve Select while serving on State Active Duty during an emergency will ensure Soldiers' health needs are fully supported and provide them and their family members great confidence and peace of mind.

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:44:49 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Ulep	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I support the Hawaii National Guard enlisted and officers.

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:33:45 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marlon Rimando	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This Senate Bill will improve the experience and benefits when serving on State Active Duty (SAD) and directly impacts recruitment and retention of Guard members.

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:34:46 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Hernandez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This medical coverage under TRICARE would provide much needed support for Soldiers serving for more than 30 days. Ty

SB-3085

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:58:37 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/9/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ROY T. YAMADA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3085 as I feel will increase the readiness of the Hawaii National Guard by providing medical coverage to our junior members and their families during prolong state activations. I have witnessed on our most recent state activation to support the Maui wildfires relief efforts how medical coverage became a concern to our force. Our junior Service Members would have peace-of-mind knowing they and their families would be taken care of and be able to concentrate on their assigned mission in supporting the state's needs in crisis.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



KENNETH S. HARA
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
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 SENATE BILL 3085,
RELATING TO HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY AND GOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBURARY 9, 2024

Aloha Chair Wakai, Vice-Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to **SUPPORT** on SB3085.

This bill would authorize the payment of allowances and appropriate funds to cover TRICARE Reserve Select coverages for all servicemembers of the Hawaii National Guard ordered to Active Duty Status for more than 30 days in service and support to the State

It would be beneficial to have funds allocated for this as servicemembers within the Hawaii National Guard are often called to support the State of Hawai'i in a myriad of events. This would be beneficial to all servicemembers, their families, and communities throughout Hawai'i.

HI-EMA recognizes the value that each individual servicemember gives in commitment to the supporting the State and feels this is a small token of appreciation for the countless sacrifices they make. HI-EMA fully supports the Hawaii National Guard effort in providing comprehensive coverage via TRICARE Reserve Select to servicemembers when answering the call to support the State, County, and their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 3085.

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