

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 HOUSE BILL 2516,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
WATER AND LAND

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 9, 2024

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our **OPPOSITION** to HB 2516.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) acknowledges the importance of all emergency management agencies assessing their equipment requirements to effectively carry out their missions. However, HI-EMA **OPPOSES** HB 2516. Although the intention behind the act, which aims to provide equipment for addressing wildfires, is commendable - requesting a specific type of fire apparatus without input from those responsible for using and maintaining it - is premature.

HI-EMA has faith in the expertise of county fire departments, who are best suited to determine the appropriate equipment needed for their missions. Additionally, HI-EMA commends the sponsor for striving to make the best resources available – in the interest of public safety - to prevent incidents like the August Wildfires on Maui from recurring.

HI-EMA is in opposition of this measure, as the agency does not have firefighting capabilities and believes that allocating resources for a Striker fire truck would be considered nonessential and an extraneous cost for tax payers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2516.

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

HB-2516

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:21:24 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/9/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Honorable House Committee Members:

I respectfully present this testimony to support HB2516, which requests approximately \$1,000,000 for the Hawai`i Emergency Management Agency to purchase a Striker fire truck to be housed on a Department of Defense Facility on Maui. After the massive Leeward Coast O`ahu wildfires of August 4, 2018 and the Lahaina devastation on August 8, 2023, there is a HUGE need to upgrade fire-fighting equipment not only on Maui, but all islands in Hawai`i. However, we believe that in addition to funding a Striker fire truck, this bill should include funding for operation and maintenance of the ONLY fire helicopter that could have prevented the Lahaina burning (it flies in 70-80 mph winds, flies at NIGHT, and carries 1,000 gallons) – the Lockheed-Martin/Sikorsky FireHawk®.

My family and I have lived and worked on the Wai`anae Coast since 1989 and my relatives – many cousins – all grew up along this Coast. Since returning to farm in Wai`anae in 2012, we have personally fought – alongside the Honolulu Fire Department – wildfires in Wai`anae Valley in June 2012, in November 2016, on August 4, 2018 and again in July 2020. The 2018 fire completely surrounded our Wai`anae farm site and almost completely engulfed our farm structures – but for our family fighting the flames with hoses across the hillside and our son simultaneously enlarging our existing firebreaks as the flames surrounded our Wai`anae Ag. Park lot. I will try to attach photos below. AFTER that charring of Wai`anae and other Leeward Coast valleys, we were assured by then-Gov. Ige, that we farmers would obtain some type of lease-rent forgiveness for our losses (our crops were smothered by smoke and ash) – this NEVER happened. So in late 2018, we began intensely researching fire helicopters that could quickly respond to and extinguish wildfire blazes and the ONLY Fire Copter we located (also used by Cal-Fire) was the Lockheed-Martin/Sikorsky Firehawk®. Again, this can fly in high winds, fly at night, carry 1,000 gallons of water (it refills its tank with a nozzle – NO buckets are used) and can also carry 1 to 4 fully-equipped EMT personnel to quickly respond to medical field emergencies. Yes, this is an investment – about \$24 million for 1 fire copter. However, how many lives, historic lands/structures, AND billions of dollars could have been saved if Hawai`i had wisely invested in a Firehawk® and dispatched that to Maui BEFORE the devastating August 8, 2023 wildfire?

For all of the above reasons, we NEED HB2516 and we urge your committees to please SUPPORT this bill with funding (ideally with expanded funding for a Firehawk®) and allow it to move forward during this 2024 Legislative session – so that we can effectively combat

wildfires when they arise throughout the entire State of Hawai`i. Perhaps, in this way, you can prevent another Lahaina disaster that NEVER needed to occur in the first place. Just as the burning of Lahaina in the early 20th century caused Hawai`i to invest in upgrading fire-fighting equipment, we find that last August's disaster requires the same upgrades in equipment – not only with a Striker fire truck to battle fires on the ground, but also with a Firehawk® to combat fires by air.

Mahalo for this opportunity to present this testimony supporting HB 2516.

Nancy A. Jones

PO Box 1462, Wai`anae, HI 96792 / Email: nancyhydroalt@gmail.com

HB-2516

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:24:23 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/9/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zeb Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Ichiyama, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Honorable House Committee Members:

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wildfires when they arise throughout the entire State of Hawai`i. In doing so, perhaps you can prevent another Lahaina disaster that NEVER needed to occur in the first place. Just as the burning of Lahaina in the early 20th century caused Hawai`i to invest in upgrading fire-fighting equipment, we find that last August's disaster requires the same upgrades in equipment – not only with a Striker fire truck to battle fires on the ground, but also with a Firehawk® to combat fires by air. Mahalo for this opportunity to present this testimony supporting HB 2516.

Zebuel “Zeb” C. Jones

PO Box 1462, Wai`anae, HI 96792 / Email: zebbe3442@gmail.com