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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

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2543  
RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

Before the Senate Committee on  
Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs  
Wednesday, January 31, 2024; 3:01 p.m.  
State Capitol Conference Room 225, Via Videoconference

Testifier: Michael Vincent

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

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) **supports**, Senate Bill 2543.

This bill changes the circumstances when an agency may seek reimbursement for search and rescue costs by providing guidance on when such costs can be recovered and requiring agencies to seek reimbursement.

State law enforcement is regularly called upon to participate in search and rescue operations for people who have ignored posted warnings, left defined hiking trails, and ventured into closed areas that have been posted. These situations typically do not involve standard search and rescue of lost or injured persons which are anticipated and part of expected operations of first responders. These are situations created by reason of an individual's choice to ignore posted warnings and efforts of government agencies or private landowners to keep them safe. When first responders are called upon to engage in these types of extensive search and rescue operations, ongoing operations must be put on hold and agencies often incur additional unbudgeted costs and expense through overtime, calling in additional responders, and costs of equipment and supplies. Requiring agencies to pursue reimbursement in these situations is a reasonable requirement.

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

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:58:21 PM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rosemarie Johnson	Testifying for Pono Consulting	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Reimbursement; Search and Rescue; Hiking Trails; Trespassing; Closed to the Public Requires government entities to seek reimbursement for search and rescue expenses from persons who require rescue after ignoring warning signs, leaving a hiking trail to enter a prohibited area, or hiking on a trail closed to the public.

Dear Chairs,

My name is Rosemarie Johnson. Findings from data collected by my firm, PONO Consulting, over the last 5 years, were presented at the capital on August 9th, showing a gross lack of resources for safety and prevention in the state. It also showed that Hawai'i is one of the few states in the nation that does not have a formalized state Search And Rescue (SAR) system, it is also one of the few states in the country without a:

- State SAR Coordinator
- State SAR Plan
- State SAR fund
- State SAR board to distribute any funds

Last year, this bill was presented as well as othes. Issues surrounding bills are implementation and enforcement.

During the meeting, the above solutions were provided to improve safety and decrease the number of callouts and SAR incidents in Hawai'i. Safety and prevention are the initial steps toward reducing the number of incidents.

In order for this and other bills this session regarding SAR to be fully implemented and enforced during this legislative session, it is crucial to establish a solid foundation for a State SAR System to build upon.

As Hawai'i is tied for second in the nation for Missing Persons, along with the eyes of the world on us after the wildfires, we cannot afford to ignore this any longer.

The ADVANTAGE of having no foundation for a SAR system is that we can utilize the best practices from around the country to create a robust one! We don't have to start from scratch.

Every year, bills are proposed and lots of time, resources, and energy are exhausted for the same results. Let's learn from the best and honor our police and firemen/women who work so hard to protect us and create a safer Hawai'i together!

I request that everyone seriously considers HB 2300, which is proposing an entire statewide system, similar to what other states have. Then we will have the ability to enforce and impliment bills such as SB2543

In order for Hawai'i to be on par to other states with similar and fewer threats, these bills are a way to accomplish complete implementation without impacting the already stretched resources of the DLNR, Police, & Fire departments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Rosemarie Johnson

Maui, Hawai'i

Rosemarie@Pono-consulting.com

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/26/2024 6:31:27 PM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill.

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 11:28:32 AM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a no brainer. I am in full support. Taxpayers should not be paying for the intentional misbehavior of locals and visitors who require rescue because of their misdeeds. Please move this bill forward.

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 7:17:09 PM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Julia Estigoy-Kahoonei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I absolutely support this bill making those who violate or ignore warning sign be held responsible for the cost of search and rescue. Others should not foot the bill for the stupid choices of others, especially if they are tourists who complete disregard the dangers of certain places. And as more places are being violated due to social media, even moreso they need to be the one to pay up. This should also go for violations of sacred sites and culturally sensitive areas. Fines should be steep

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 8:19:04 AM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kenneth Faborito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Completely agree, responsibility is theirs for disobeying laws and rules.

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 8:27:11 AM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lu Ann Mahiki Lankford-Faborito	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Complete agreement. Person's who disobey laws, warning signs, etc should be held responsible for the ignorance of the laws and blantant disregard.



**LATE**

**SB-2543**

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:46:40 AM

Testimony for PSM on 1/31/2024 3:01:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Todd Yukutake	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am opposed to SB2543.

I am against mandatory Search and Rescue reimbursement as it may cause hesitation with those being rescued, not calling for help or delaying the call. Rescues are usually easier the sooner they are made. A lost hiker delaying a call for help may get further lost into more difficult terrain or become injured, both of which make rescue harder and more hazardous.

The current law should stand which still allows for collection of search and rescue costs but gives the government entity the discretion in collecting it. There may be various reasons the counties may not collect the reimbursement due to their position on it or the particular circumstance of the hiker.

Please oppose SB2543

Mahalo

Todd Yukutake  
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