

SB-130

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 11:07:42 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Becky Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of this bill to stop putting our First Responders at risk and to protect Hawaii's lands from people not adhering to designated hiking trails then require assistance to be evacuated. It's a waste of time and our resources to provide search and rescue services to people who disregard our laws and have no respect for our lands and culture. These people are using our tax monies to cover the expenses, when they should be billed. In fact, they should be billed for 100% of all charges incurred by providing search and rescue services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-130

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 12:23:42 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Philip Fernandez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a resident of Oahu and an avid hiker and ocean user. Most outdoor recreation users are very compliant to rules of using public natural areas, including making sure to stay on trails and abiding the rules for use of state lands and ocean. There are a few who break rules, disregard weather forecasts, and are not prepared for outdoor activities. When these people break rules, then have to be rescued, they should pay for that rescue service.

Please pass this bill.

Mahalo,

Phil Fernandez

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB130 RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

Report Title:	Hiking Trails; Search and Rescue; Trespassing; Reimbursement; Signage
Description:	Requires government entities to seek reimbursement for all or a portion of search or rescue expenses for persons who require rescue after leaving a hiking trail to enter an area closed to the public or hiking on a trail closed to the public, and there is a sign giving notice of the closure.

Friday, January 31, 2025

To: Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair, Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on water and Land;

To: Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair, Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair, , and Members of the Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Hearing Date: Monday, February 3, 2025 @ 1:05PM

PLACE:

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

From: Ronnie Inagaki

Subject: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB130 RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

Aloha Chair Inouye, Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committees,

I am writing in strong support of **SB130**, which requires partial reimbursement for search and rescue operations when an individual intentionally disregards safety by entering closed areas or hiking trails marked with signage indicating closure. This legislation is a necessary step toward alleviating the financial strain on government resources and promoting responsible and safe behavior among hikers.

Reason for Support: Alleviating Financial Burden

Hawaii's natural beauty attracts both residents and tourists to its outdoor spaces, but with this comes a significant increase in search and rescue operations. As the bill highlights, these operations are often needed when individuals disregard safety warnings, enter closed trails, or leave designated hiking areas. The costs of these rescues are borne entirely by government agencies, diverting critical resources from other public safety needs. Implementing a partial reimbursement system, as proposed by SB130, will ensure that those who engage in risky and irresponsible behavior bear some of the financial responsibility for the consequences of their

actions. This policy is not only fair but also essential to preserving state and county resources for emergencies that are truly unavoidable.

Encouraging Responsible Behavior

Requiring reimbursement for search and rescue operations will serve as a deterrent to reckless behavior. When individuals know there are financial consequences for ignoring closure signs or entering dangerous areas, they are more likely to prioritize their safety and follow posted rules. This legislation aligns with existing policies in other states such as New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont, which have successfully implemented similar measures to reduce unnecessary rescues and promote accountability among hikers. By adopting this approach, Hawaii will join these states in setting a standard for responsible outdoor recreation.

Addressing Public Concerns

Some may argue that charging individuals for rescue operations could deter people from seeking help in emergencies. However, SB130 specifically targets cases in which the individual acted in direct violation of clearly posted warnings and closures. This ensures that the reimbursement requirement is applied only in cases of intentional disregard for safety, not genuine accidents or unforeseeable situations. Furthermore, the bill wisely establishes a partial reimbursement model, requiring at least half of the costs to be covered. This balances accountability with compassion, recognizing that while individuals should bear responsibility for risky actions, the government still has an obligation to provide rescue services.

Recommendations for Strengthening SB130

While I strongly support SB130, I recommend the following additions to ensure its effectiveness:

1. **Ensure Clear and Consistent Signage:**
To avoid disputes about whether closures were properly communicated, all closed trails and areas should be clearly marked with standardized signage in multiple languages, reflecting Hawaii's diverse population and tourist base.
 2. **Implement a Public Awareness Campaign:**
Educating residents and visitors about the risks of hiking in closed areas and the potential financial consequences of search and rescue operations will further promote compliance and discourage reckless behavior.
 3. **Introduce a Cap on Reimbursement:**
To address concerns about fairness, particularly for individuals of lower income, consider implementing a cap on the amount reimbursed by individuals, ensuring it does not become overly punitive while still holding them accountable.
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Conclusion

SB130 represents an important step in promoting safer hiking practices, reducing the financial burden on government entities, and encouraging responsible enjoyment of Hawaii's natural resources. By requiring partial reimbursement for search and rescue operations, the state can deter reckless behavior while ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and equitably. I respectfully urge the Committees to pass SB130 and help ensure that Hawaii's beautiful trails remain safe and accessible for all who wish to enjoy them responsibly. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure.

Mahalo nui loa,

Ronnie Inagaki

SB-130

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 6:41:36 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry STRONGLY SUPPORT SB 130 hiker(s) who ignore warning signs, bad weather warnings, unprepared with hiking equipment, water, etc., physically unfit, and put city/state rescue team at risk should be imposed and responsible for the cost of rescue mission.

SB-130

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 7:37:30 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill SB130, the people who put themselves in a position that needs rescuing should have to pay for their rescue. Too many times our rescue workers have to risk their own lives to save someone who simple did not put enough thought into their actions. If they cannot think of their own safety, maybe having to pay for their own rescue will be a deterrent.

Mahalo,

Sue Alana

92-1250 #68 Makakilo Dr.

Kapolei, HI. 96707

808-551-1656

SB-130

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 8:00:29 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Oshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a local with generational roots here in Hawai'i I strongly support this bill. I am handicapped and use Tiktok as my social media connection to the local community. On almost a daily basis I see countless Hawai'i tourist posting their videos violations of illegal hikes, disregarding the federal law requiring safe distance of the turtles and sea monks. Please pass this bill and hold the violators fully accountable. We need to stop social media platforms influencers from sharing their Hawaii vacation videos including doing LIVES on TikTok revealing locals only beaches, off trail directions to dangerous spots to future visitors, and to the travel content creators who knowingly violate the laws while earning income.

SB-130

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:17:45 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

The burden of paying rescue costs for those who enter areas illegally should not be on the taxpayer but those who violated the law. Let word get out on social media that this law is in effect and how much miscreants are paying and the number of trespassers, etc. will be reduced. They need to be made an example.

SB-130

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 6:56:04 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Cole	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- 1.
2. **The taxpayers are beholden to the foolishness and inconsiderate actions of individuals and groups, financially enabling incautious behavior.**
3. **Personal responsibility:** By making individuals responsible for the costs of their own rescue, the proposal encourages people to be more mindful of their actions and take necessary precautions before venturing into closed areas.
4. **Improved safety for emergency responders:** When individuals are required to reimburse for their own rescue, they may be more likely to take necessary safety precautions and prepare for emergencies, which can reduce the risk of injury or death for emergency responders.
5. **Deterrent effect:** The proposal's requirement for reimbursement can serve as a deterrent to people who might otherwise enter closed areas, thereby reducing the number of search and rescue operations and the associated costs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robert Cole, Pukalani.

SB-130

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 8:04:09 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steve Robertson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Yes

the public taxpayer must not support these expensive efforts when irresponsible people get themselves into trouble.

SB-130

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 8:41:07 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2025 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha committee members of the Senate Committee on Water and Land and the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs,

I am testifying in support of this bill.

There have been an increasing number of hikers that have needed rescue services over the past decade, and as the utilization of social media continues to increase, more and more adventurers will continue to go off-trail to close into areas that are dangerous, not just for them, but for those who need to respond and rescue them. It seems that tourists, military, and sometimes even locals, are always being rescued.

I am from Kaneohe and grew up seeing helicopters rescuing hikers off the closed “Stairway to Heaven.”

Having also worked for DLNR in the Department of Forestry, I’ve seen many of the hiking trails that are maintained by the State of Hawaii. There are ample trails and areas for hikers to access to enjoy the nature they are in search for.

For a variety of reasons, be it ignorance (people get lost), lack of preparation (people take a wrong turn by mistake), or be it entitlement (people thinking the rules don’t, or shouldn’t, apply to them), adventurers get sometimes end up in situations where they need to be rescued while off-trail in areas they shouldn’t be. This puts our rescue personnel at risk and is not needed.

Ideally, I believe that rescue services shouldn’t be provided to someone who is off-trail, and only be provided to those who are injured (or need help) on trail. If we are going to keep rescuing people off-trail, they should be fined for trespassing as well as for the costs of the rescue, including the hourly cost burden of the employees, the supplies and materials (gas, helicopter use, etc).

Those who want to go out into nature need to be better prepared (by researching the trails ahead of time), as well as going with someone who knows the trails, and they should make sure they stay on trail. Going off-trail is inexcusable and should never happen.

Please consider supporting this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration.