

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Labor

Thursday, March 13, 2025

9:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 309 and Videoconference

With Comments

S.B. No. 436 S.D.1 Relating to the State Fire Marshal

Chair Sayama Vice Chair Lee and members of the House Committee on Labor

The Office of the Governor provides comments on S.B. 436 S.D. 1, Relating to the State Fire Marshal.

The role of the State Fire Marshal is critical to fire prevention, inspection enforcement, and emergency response coordination. Arbitrary term limits could undermine fire safety efforts by forcing out experienced leadership. We respectfully urge a focus on competency and performance-based reappointments rather than imposing unnecessary limits.

Key Points:

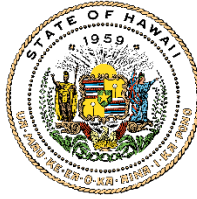
- **Continuity in Fire Safety Leadership:** Fire safety planning, wildfire mitigation, and code enforcement require long-term commitment. Leadership disruptions could hinder progress, delay key initiatives, and create vulnerabilities during critical fire seasons.
- **No Evidence Supporting Term Limits:** There is no data showing that long-serving Fire Marshals negatively impact fire safety or emergency response. Other states successfully retain experienced Fire Marshals without arbitrary restrictions.
- **Performance-Based Evaluation:** Instead of term limits, conducting a thorough performance review in the final year of each five-year term ensures accountability while retaining effective leadership.

The State of Hawaii should follow best practices and prioritize experience, effectiveness, and continuity in fire safety leadership.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

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STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
LABOR

Thursday, March 13, 2025
9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 309 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 436, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Senate Bill 436, Senate Draft 1 provides that no person shall serve as State Fire Marshal for more than three terms. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources opposes this measure.**

The role of the State Fire Marshal requires specialized knowledge and extensive experience in fire prevention, inspection enforcement, and emergency response coordination. Arbitrarily limiting the tenure of an effective Fire Marshal may unduly force out a qualified leader. Fire safety planning, wildfire mitigation, and code enforcement efforts are long-term undertakings that require consistent leadership. A forced transition could disrupt key fire prevention programs, hinder code development progress, and create leadership gaps during critical fire seasons. No evidence has been presented that long-serving Fire Marshals negatively impact other states' fire safety or emergency response. Evaluating the Marshal in the last year of the five-year term should address job performance concerns. Hawai'i should follow best practices and focus on competency and performance-based reappointments rather than arbitrary term limits.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.