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Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, February 19, 2025
10:02 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211 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 offers the following comments and concerns.**

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 fire safety or emergency response in other states. 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.