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LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committees on
LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Friday, February 7, 2025
3:00 PM**

State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 436
RELATING TO THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL**

Senate Bill 436 provides that no person shall serve as State Fire Marshal for more than 3 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 progress on code development, and create gaps in leadership during critical fire seasons. There has been no evidence presented that long-serving Fire Marshals negatively impact fire safety or emergency response in other states. Having an evaluation of the Marshal in the last year of the five-year term should address any concerns of job performance. 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.