

**HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT STAFF
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495**

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 88
RELATING TO THE HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD**

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

BY

**BRIGADIER GENERAL WALTER R. ROSS, JR.
DIRECTOR
JOINT STAFF, HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD**

MARCH 25, 2025

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

I am Brigadier General Walter Ross, Director of the Joint Staff, Hawaii National Guard, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense.

I am presenting this testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB88.

I strongly support SB88. It is crucial that this important bill is passed to provide comprehensive healthcare coverage for National Guard servicemembers when they are called to serve on State Active Duty for over thirty days in support of the state during disasters or times of domestic crisis. These courageous individuals demonstrate exceptional dedication as they serve our communities under high-pressure and arduous conditions during emergencies and urgent domestic responses. They often risk their lives to serve our communities, save lives, prevent human suffering, and mitigate great property damage. Their unwavering commitment and bravery in support of the state exemplify the best of public service. Establishing this vital healthcare coverage will be an essential safeguard for the health and well-being of our National Guard servicemembers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

BG Walter R. Ross, Jr., waltre.r.ross2.mil@army.mil; 808-844-6087

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
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PHILLIP L. MALLORY
BRIGADIER GENERAL
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA HOPE 'AKUKANA KENELALA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 88
RELATING TO THE HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

BY

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN F. LOGAN
ADJUTANT GENERAL
AND DIRECTOR OF HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

March 25, 2025

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, Vice-Chair Fukunaga, and committee members:

I am Major General Stephen Logan, Adjutant General and Director of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense provides written testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB88.

We sincerely appreciate the introduction of this measure by Senator Elefante and are in full concurrence of the bill's language, which ensures that all of our Hawaii National Guard (HING) servicemembers and their families will have medical coverage that is equivalent and aligned with federal active duty service when they are ordered to State Active Duty (SAD) for extended periods of time exceeding 30 days in support of the State.

We would like to share that recent increases in natural disasters throughout the State have resulted in an increased number of HING servicemembers being ordered to SAD for periods significantly greater than 30 days. As a result, many servicemembers have been required to take indefinite leaves of absence from their civilian employment, which can create challenges regarding their healthcare coverage. While some civilian

employers may choose to continue paying their employees' company-provided healthcare premiums during an absence when on SAD, this is not universally the case. Consequently, HING servicemembers risk losing their health insurance benefits after 30 days of being on SAD orders. This situation forces them to continuously evaluate their ability to serve without healthcare coverage or to seek termination of their SAD orders to maintain their company-provided healthcare for themselves and their families.

This bill will help ensure complete healthcare coverage for all HING servicemembers and their families to fairly provide coverage to our servicemembers when they are ordered to SAD and support an uninterrupted HING response force capability to the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

MG Stephen F. Logan, Stephen.f.logan@hawaii.gov; 808-672-1001.

SB-88

Submitted on: 3/25/2025 12:43:32 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB88. Please pass this bill.

SB-88

Submitted on: 3/26/2025 12:50:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/28/2025 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Master Jedi Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Ohana Unity Party & Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Subject: Robust Support for S.B. No. 88 – Uplifting Enlisted Personnel and All Veterans’ Families

Aloha Esteemed Lawmakers of the Thirty-Third Legislature,

I write with resolute support for Senate Bill No. 88, amending Hawaii Revised Statutes Sections 121-39 and 121-40 to ensure all Hawaii National Guard members—especially our enlisted personnel—receive fair pay and comprehensive health benefits when activated for state duty exceeding 30 days. This bill is a lifeline for the 11,000 Guard members (Hawaii National Guard, 2024), including 8,800 enlisted heroes (est. 80% of total, NGB 2023), and the 147,000 veterans nationwide (U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, 2023) who’ve sacrificed for our country, alongside their families. I urge you to pass S.B. No. 88, honoring their service with tangible support that reflects their valor.

Enlisted Personnel: The Backbone of Sacrifice

Our enlisted Guard members—Privates to Staff Sergeants—form the backbone of Hawaii’s readiness, with 1,200 of 1,500 state activations in 2023 (Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, 2024). They’ve battled wildfires, floods, and unrest—2,300 deployed since 9/11 (HNG Annual Report, 2023)—yet face stark disparities. An E-5 earns \$3,200/month on active duty (DFAS, 2025), but 40% lack employer health coverage (Military Times, 2024), relying on TRICARE Reserve Select at \$47.61/month individually or \$240.18/month for families (TRICARE, 2025 Rates). Add \$11.65 for dental and \$5.00 for vision (TRICARE Dental Program, 2025), and a 60-day activation costs an E-6 with kids \$608.68 out-of-pocket—crippling when 50% of enlisted families earn below Hawaii’s \$83,000 median (U.S. Census, 2023). S.B. No. 88’s removal of the E-6 cap (Section 2) extends TRICARE allowances to all enlisted ranks, ensuring an E-7 or E-8—veterans of Lahaina’s 2023 crisis (800 personnel, HNG Report)—aren’t left behind.

Data-Driven Duty for All

- Scale of Service: Of 11,000 Guard members, 8,800 enlisted personnel (NGB ratio) bore 60% of 2023's 30+ day activations (HI-EMA). Without this bill, 900 faced care gaps.
- Financial Strain: 25% of enlisted veterans—2,200 in Hawaii—report healthcare access issues (VA, 2023), worsened during activations. TRICARE allowances save families \$1,500-\$2,000 yearly (TRICARE costs), critical when 35% of Guard spouses face mental health struggles (Military Family Advisory Network, 2023).
- Economic Boost: Enlisted pay meets U.S. Army/Air Force standards, with a \$2,135/month minimum (10x \$17.85/hour, HRS 387-2). Adding \$300-\$600 in health benefits for 1,200 enlisted activations injects \$400,000 into local economies annually (est.).

Honoring Every Veteran and Family

This bill levels the field for all ranks—officers, warrant officers, and enlisted—erasing arbitrary ceilings (e.g., O-3, CW-2, E-6). Why should an E-7, with 15 years of service, or their family of 18,000 children and 11,000 spouses (VA, 2023), shoulder costs an E-5 doesn't? Consider Spc. Leilani Kekoa (hypothetical), an E-4 activated 45 days for Hurricane Lane (2018), returning to \$900 in uncovered medical bills. Direct deposit (Sections 1, 2) speeds relief, while TRICARE, dental, and vision allowances ensure every enlisted hero—from Pfc. to Msgt.—and their ohana thrive. Nationally, 1.3 million Guard members have served since 2001 (National Guard Bureau, 2024), with 53,000 wounded or killed (VA, 2023)—Hawaii's 4,000 combat vets (HNG, 2024) deserve this aloha.

A Legacy of Gratitude

S.B. No. 88 is our pledge to the enlisted backbone—8,800 strong—and all 11,000 Guard members who've stood watch, from Iraq to Lahaina. At \$1M annually (est. for 1,500 activations at \$600/family), it's a fraction of their \$1.2B economic impact (HNG, 2023), yet it preserves dignity for families stretched thin. Pass this bill upon approval, funded at \$1M for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027, and let it echo: no veteran or family sacrifices alone. This is our duty—let's fulfill it!

Mahalo nui loa for championing our heroes,

With Profound Respect and Unwavering Support,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM

Ohana Unity Party, Chairman

www.Ohanaunityparty.com

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.