

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EMERGENCY SERVICES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature understands that requiring
2 first responders to obtain commercial driver's licenses to
3 operate authorized commercial vehicles is not in the best
4 interest of public safety, because first responders receive
5 training provided by federal, state, and county government
6 agencies that would satisfy this requirement. Imposing this
7 requirement would only serve to create an administrative hurdle
8 for first responders and hinder the performance of their vital
9 public safety functions.

10 The legislature finds that although emergency medical
11 service personnel, who may be assigned to operate vehicles which
12 are classified as commercial motor vehicles in the performance
13 of essential public safety functions, receive the same levels of
14 rigorous training, they are still required to obtain commercial
15 driver's licenses, which slows down hiring, raises costs, and
16 creates administrative hurdles for emergency medical services
17 departments across the State.



1 The legislature further finds that exempting qualified
2 emergency medical services personnel from commercial driver's
3 license requirements may help to alleviate barriers to
4 recruitment and retention, and streamline essential functions,
5 while maintaining public safety standards.

6 The legislature also finds that the current definition for
7 "authorized emergency vehicle" in the Hawaii Revised Statutes is
8 insufficient, in that it does not include alternative emergency
9 service vehicles utilized by emergency medical service
10 departments in the State.

11 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

12 (1) Exempt emergency medical services personnel from
13 commercial driver's license requirements, similar to
14 other licensed first responders operating in the
15 State; and

16 (2) Amend the definition of "authorized emergency vehicle"
17 in section 291C-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to clarify
18 that all vehicles operated by licensed emergency
19 services personnel, not just ambulances, are included
20 in the definition.



1 SECTION 2. Section 286-235.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended to read as follows:

3 "**§286-235.5 Persons exempt from licensure.** The following
4 persons shall be exempt from licensure under this part:

5 (1) Individuals who operate commercial motor vehicles for
6 military purposes. This exception is limited to
7 active-duty military personnel, members of the
8 military reserves, members of the national guard on
9 active duty, including personnel on full-time national
10 guard duty, personnel on part-time national guard
11 training, and national guard military technicians
12 (civilians who are required to wear military
13 uniforms), and active-duty United States Coast Guard
14 personnel. This exception is not applicable to United
15 States reserve technicians; and

16 (2) Federal, state, and county firefighters, emergency
17 services personnel, and law enforcement officers who
18 drive federal, state, or county fire trucks, including
19 fire pumpers, aerial ladder trucks, and elevated
20 platform trucks, or authorized emergency vehicles;
21 provided that they are trained by the federal, state,



1 or county government and the commercial motor vehicles
2 are equipped with audible and visual signals and are
3 not subject to normal traffic regulation. For
4 purposes of this paragraph, "authorized emergency
5 vehicle" shall have the same meaning as in section
6 291C-1."

7 SECTION 3. Section 291C-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by amending the definition of "authorized emergency
9 vehicle" to read as follows:

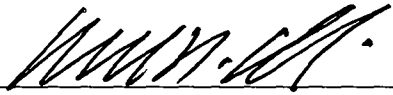
10 "Authorized emergency vehicle" includes fire department
11 vehicles, police vehicles, [~~ambulances,~~] emergency medical
12 services vehicles, ocean safety vehicles, law enforcement
13 vehicles, conservation and resources enforcement vehicles, and
14 office of the state fire marshal vehicles authorized and
15 approved pursuant to section 291-31.5 that are publicly owned
16 and other publicly or privately owned vehicles designated as
17 such by a county council."

18 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
19 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

INTRODUCED BY: 
By Request



S.B. NO. 2521

Report Title:

City and County of Honolulu Mayor's Package; Commercial Driver's License Exemption; Emergency Medical Services Personnel; Authorized Emergency Vehicle

Description:

Exempts emergency medical services personnel from commercial driver's license requirements. Amends the definition of "authorized emergency vehicle" under State Traffic Code to replace ambulances with emergency medical services vehicles.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

