



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'ŌIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1541
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

REPRESENTATIVE GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 4, 2026, 9:00 AM Room Number: 329

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (Department) strongly supports this measure.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Hawaii State Hospital (HSH) provides the following testimony on
3 behalf of the Department and the Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD).

4 The Department supports this measure, which exempts certain positions from Chapter
5 76, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

6 This measure is essential to ensuring the Department can effectively manage and deliver
7 critical services for individuals with mental health needs and developmental disabilities by
8 allowing the Department greater flexibility in hiring for key positions, including the Federal
9 Initiatives Operations Coordinator in the DDD and five associate administrators, two project
10 managers, one security manager, two security officers, one building manager, and two
11 investigators in the HSH. All of these positions are budgeted, and the Department appreciates
12 the Legislature's action in recognizing the importance of these roles.

13 The HSH and the DDD serve some of our most vulnerable populations and operate in
14 complex environments that require rapid decision-making, specialized expertise, and strong
15 leadership. These exempt positions do not fit into existing civil service classes because their
16 duties and responsibilities are highly specialized, often requiring advanced professional
17 knowledge, unique skill sets, and flexibility beyond the scope of standardized classifications.

1 Many of these roles involve strategic planning, federal compliance, security oversight in
2 forensic settings, and implementation of complex initiatives that cannot be adequately
3 addressed within the fixed structure of civil service position descriptions. Additionally, the
4 evolving nature of behavioral health and developmental disability services demands
5 adaptability and innovation, which are difficult to achieve under traditional classification and
6 recruitment systems.

7 By exempting these positions, the Department can fill critical leadership and operational
8 roles quickly, improve continuity of care and compliance with federal and state mandates,
9 enhance security and risk management in high-risk clinical settings, and strengthen DDD's
10 ability to implement federal initiatives and improve outcomes for individuals with intellectual
11 and developmental disabilities.

12 HB1541 is a practical and necessary step to support the Department's mission of
13 protecting and improving the health and well-being of Hawaii's residents.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The House of Representatives
Committees on Health and Human Services & Homelessness

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 4, 2026

H.B. 1541 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO opposes the purpose and intent of H.B.1541, which allows for civil service exemptions within the Department of Health.

The HGEA raises concerns for the need to grant the Department of Health the flexibility to exempt positions. Exempt employees do not have the same rights compared to civil service employees as they are considered “at-will” by the employer. We have consistently opposed the creation of more exempt positions in government and more recently have advocated that exempt employees that are included within a collective bargaining unit receive *just-cause* protections, just like civil service employees.

This proposal is part of a larger issue, which is that the civil service system and SOH HR must become more flexible, competitive, and adaptive to the current job market and public demands. There are methods the SOH can implement to streamline its hiring and recruiting while keeping employees within civil service. The SOH should look to adequately price these civil service positions to appropriately reflect a competitive salary, comparable to similar positions within the public and private sector, and in general, the market rate. The SOH should also look to reform its civil service hiring process to create a more efficient and effective system, so prospective employees are not waiting to hear back from a job they applied to months ago. The solution to streamline hiring and recruiting is not to exempt positions which would be at the expense of an employee's job-security, but to re-think the way we compensate and hire civil service positions. Likewise, exempting positions may hinder the SOH's ability to recruit and retain employees because the civil service benefits are one of the reasons why a prospective employee may look to seek employment within government.

Accordingly, the Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO opposes H.B. 1541.

We appreciate your consideration of our testimony in opposition to H.B.1541.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director