

**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

March 20, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: **HB 2173-HD1 -- RELATING TO AMBULANCES**

HEARING: Monday, March 23, 2026 @ 1:40 pm; Conference Room 225

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 2173-HD1 with comments.

This bill proposes to purchase one advanced life support (ALS) ambulance and equipment for central Maui along with the personnel needed. As our island population grows, the need to meet the healthcare needs of the population is also necessary.

Central Maui, now facing substantial population growth, lacks an ALS ambulance. This leads to slower response times in medical emergencies, increasing risks of preventable death or long-term disability. An additional ambulance would fill this gap.

The measure's statewide air ambulance component also boosts equity and reliability across all islands. Flexible air coverage complements ground support, saving lives during time-sensitive emergencies.

Thank you for hearing HB 2173-HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2173 HD1

RELATING TO AMBULANCES

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Olakino a me ka Lawelawe Kanaka

(Senate Committee on Health and Human Services)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 23, 2026

1:40 PM

Lumi 225

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB2173 HD1** which appropriates funds to purchase one advanced life support ambulance and related equipment to be based in central Maui, fund personnel costs for state-certified emergency medical services personnel, and increase the predictability and stability of available air ambulance services for all islands in the State.

OHA supports this measure because reliable emergency medical access is a basic health equity issue, especially for rural and geographically isolated areas where distance, workforce shortages, and transportation constraints can significantly affect outcomes. Strengthening both ground ambulance capacity in central Maui and the stability of statewide air ambulance service will help improve timely access to higher levels of care when minutes matter most.

This need is especially important for Native Hawaiian communities. Native Hawaiians continue to experience disproportionate burdens in time-sensitive health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, and Hawai‘i’s own Heart Disease and Stroke Plan¹ identifies Native Hawaiians as a priority population for prevention and systems improvement. Improving response time, triage, transport capacity, and continuity of care can help reduce preventable death and long-term disability for OHA beneficiaries and communities across the pae ‘āina.

This bill also reflects sound statewide planning. Reliable and well-coordinated emergency systems are especially important for counties and islands where patient outcomes can depend on whether advanced care is available locally or whether air transport can be accessed quickly and consistently. Investments that improve ambulance

¹ Hawai‘i State Department of Health, Healthy Hawai‘i Strategic Plan, Heart Disease and Stroke, <https://hhsp.hawaii.gov/program-area/8>

readiness and air-medical stability support more equitable emergency care access across all islands.

For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs respectfully urges this Committee to **PASS HB2173 HD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.



Hawaii Medical Association

1360 South Beretania Street, Suite 200 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Phone: 808.536.7702 • Fax: 808.528.2376 • hawaiimedicalassociation.org

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

Date: March 23, 2026

From: Hawaii Medical Association (HMA)

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio MD - Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee

Christina Marzo MD and Robert Carlisle MD, Vice Chairs, HMA Public Policy Committee

RE HB 2173 HD1 RELATING TO AMBULANCES. Emergency Medical Services; Advanced Life Support Ambulance; Central Maui; Statewide Air Ambulance Network System; Department of Health; Appropriation.

Position: Support

This measure would appropriate funds to the Department of Health to purchase one advanced life support ambulance and related equipment to be based in central Maui, fund pay-related personnel costs for state-certified emergency medical services personnel, and increase the predictability and stability of available air ambulance services for all islands in the State.

Timely emergency care is essential to improving survival and health outcomes, particularly in growing communities facing rising call volumes. HMA supports this measure to strengthen emergency medical response capacity in Maui and across Hawaii by expanding advanced life support resources and reinforcing the stability of interisland medical transport. Investing in additional ground ambulance capacity and trained emergency personnel will improve response reliability and help ensure that patients receive rapid, appropriate care when minutes matter most. A coordinated statewide approach will also promote consistent clinical standards, clear oversight, and dependable readiness for disasters and other large-scale emergencies in our state.

HMA appreciates these efforts that prioritize patient access and safety for an essential component of Hawaii's emergency care continuum.

Thank you for allowing the Hawaii Medical Association to testify in support of this measure.

2026 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Elizabeth A Ignacio, MD, Chair • Robert Carlisle, MD, Vice Chair • Christina Marzo, MD, Vice Chair
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

2026 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President • Jerald Garcia, MD, President Elect • Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, Immediate Past President
Laeton Pang, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

Brittany Lyte. "Game Changer? Free Medical Flights Start For Some Neighbor Island Residents." *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 20 Jan. 2026.

"Life Flight Network Brings Critical Air Transport Services to Hawai'i Island." *Hawaii News Now*, 11 Nov. 2025.

Wu N. State selects REACH for Maui County's aeromedical transport services. [Honolulu Star Advertiser July 11 2024.](#)

Hawaii Department of Health. [DOH issues notice of award for emergency aeromedical ambulance transport service for Maui county.](#)

Hawaii Air Ambulance and Medical Escort Costs. <https://airambulance.com/locations-served/hawaii-air-ambulance/> Accessed Feb 1, 2026.

Consillio, K. Charges for Medevac Flights Soar in Hawaii. <https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/emsworld/news/12111684/charges-for-medevac-flights-soar-in-hawaii> Accessed Feb 1, 2026

Hawaii residents complain of high prices for medevac flights. <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/29981390/hawaii-residents-complain-of-high-prices-for-medevac-flights/> Accessed Feb 1, 2026

2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, President • Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President Elect • Angela Pratt, MD, Immediate Past President
Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Beth England, MD, Chair
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

HB-2173-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 4:01:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/23/2026 1:40:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Kingdon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legislators:

I am submitting this testimony representing only myself and my community as a citizen, though it is relevant that I am a working paramedic and also have a background in public health and EMS system design.

I am writing in support of HB2173 (and companion bill SB2934) with the following corrections/amendments that I understand are in progress:

* Currently, Central Maui (Wailuku, Kahului, Waikapu, Waiehu, Waihee, Puunene, Sprecklesville) only has *one* state-contracted 9-1-1 ambulance, based in Wailuku. Until corrected/amended, the current language of the bill indicates there are two. A second ambulance currently based in Kahului is a private ambulance that focuses on inter-facility transfers and cannot be relied upon for 9-1-1 EMS coverage. Thus, Maui's most populous and high call-volume district has only (1) 9-1-1 ambulance, whereas other highly populated districts such as West, South, and Upcountry Maui each have two. Even Molokai now has two. Other than Central Maui, the only other districts with only one state-contracted 9-1-1 ambulance in Maui County are the rural areas of Lanai and Hana.

* Current language in this bill referencing "air ambulance services" should be removed, as this statute should focus on improvements to our ground EMS coverage. For many years, our Maui County EMS system did in fact include Maui Medevac helicopter services, however since rotor craft service was cleaved from our system by the State of Hawaii Department of Health in the last iteration of its RFP/contract process, air services should not be conflated with ground in this bill. We are fortunate to have a good working relationship with REACH 48, which has taken on sole responsibility for EMS helicopter services within Maui County.

Maui County is in desperate need of this additional asset in our Central district, and I do not use the term 'desperate' lightly. Again, this is the most populous and high-volume district within our system, where population growth and changes in population density are causing further strain. When out-of-district response and ambulance units are called into the 'vortex' of Central Maui, this has a repercussive effect, including depletion of paramedic resources in those other districts. Other first responders such as the Maui County Fire Department are valuable, but are strictly Basic Life Support (BLS) providers. Maui County EMS is the only Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider, with paramedics on each unit, bringing extensive training and scope of practice including advanced airways, vascular access, dozens of emergency medications, life-saving

cardiovascular interventions and cardiothoracic procedures, and other essential ALS assessment and treatment modalities to the patient's side.

An additional ambulance is needed not only for routine response, but also as a crucial asset in the event of multiple casualty incidents (MCI). From frequent moderate-scale MCIs, such as multi-vehicle collisions, to infrequent but large-scale MCIs, such as firestorms and tsunamis, Maui County residents and state legislators should be shocked that once the Wailuku ambulance is on a case, the next-closest state-contracted ambulances would be coming from Kihei and Haiku (over 8 miles and 12 miles from Kahului proper, respectively) - and that is only if those ambulances are in station and not already on calls of their own. We do have one paramedic special response unit based in Ma'alaea, which provides rapid response to districts including Central Maui, but as our only unit capable of and nationally recognized for special operations including marine ALS (launching with Coast Guard Station Maui), tactical paramedicine (embedding with Maui Police SRT), and medical incident command (such as at the August 2023 firestorms), this unit needs to be preserved as a non-transporting specialized asset - but does need plentiful ambulances to whom a response unit paramedic may delegate patients as they triage casualties.

****As I write this, in fact, Maui County EMS is in the midst of responding to the second in back-to-back Kona Low weather disasters. Our EMS personnel have been responding both in the field and behind-the-scenes in the county's Emergency Operations Center to ensure that the community receives the best medical response, care, and transport possible, in spite of extreme hazards and other challenges. In addition to 9-1-1 responses, our system has had to absorb other massive tasks, such as evacuating Kula Hospital of their long-term care patients due to storm damage. Doing all of this without an additional 9-1-1 ambulance in our busiest district has left us scrambling, with units from many miles away (such as Lahaina and Kula) pulled out of their districts to field calls for service in Kahului.****

The community will suffer longer response times and increased morbidity and mortality without improvement of our coverage via the crucial addition of this Central Maui ambulance.

Thank you for your serious consideration.

Sincerely,

David Kingdon, MPH, Paramedic
Wailuku, Hawaii

HB-2173-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 6:57:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/23/2026 1:40:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
NATHAN DANG	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legislators:

I am submitting this testimony representing only myself and my community as a citizen, though it is relevant that I am a working paramedic that spent my 10 years working at the central maui ambulance station.

I am writing in support of SB2934 (and companion bill HB2173) with the following corrections/amendments that I understand are in progress:

- Currently, **Central Maui** (Wailuku, Kahului, Waikapu, Waiehu, Waihee, Puunene, Sprecklesville) only has **ONE** state-contracted 9-1-1 ambulance, based in Wailuku. Until corrected/amended, the current language of the bill indicates there are two. A second ambulance currently based in Kahului is a private ambulance that focuses on inter-facility transfers and cannot be relied upon for 9-1-1 EMS coverage. Thus, Maui's most populous and high call-volume district has only (1) 9-1-1 ambulance, whereas other highly populated districts such as West, South, and Upcountry Maui each have two. Even Molokai now has two. Other than Central Maui, the only other districts with only one state-contracted 9-1-1 ambulance in Maui County are the rural areas of Lanai and Hana.
- Current language in this bill referencing "air ambulance services" should be removed, as this statute should focus on improvements to our ground EMS coverage. For many years, our Maui County EMS system did in fact include Maui Medevac helicopter services, however since rotor craft service was cleaved from our system by the State of Hawaii Department of Health in the last iteration of its RFP/contract process, air services should not be conflated with ground in this bill. We are fortunate to have a good working relationship with REACH 48, which has taken on sole responsibility for EMS helicopter services within Maui County.

Maui County is in desperate need of this additional asset in our Central district, and I do not use the term 'desperate' lightly. Again, this is the most populous and high-volume district within our system, where population growth and changes in population density are causing further strain. When out-of-district response and ambulance units are called into the 'vortex' of Central Maui, this has a repercussive effect, including depletion of paramedic resources in those other districts. Other first responders such as the Maui County Fire Department are valuable, but are strictly Basic Life Support (BLS) providers. Maui County EMS is the only Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider, with paramedics on each unit, bringing extensive training and scope of practice

including advanced airways, vascular access, dozens of emergency medications, life-saving cardiovascular interventions and cardiothoracic procedures, and other essential ALS assessment and treatment modalities to the patient's side.

An additional ambulance is needed not only for routine response, but also as a crucial asset in the event of multiple casualty incidents (MCI). From frequent moderate-scale MCIs, such as multi-vehicle collisions, to infrequent but large-scale MCIs, such as firestorms and tsunamis, Maui County residents and state legislators should be shocked that once the Wailuku ambulance is on a case, the next-closest state-contracted ambulances would be coming from Kihei and Haiku (over 8 miles and 12 miles from Kahului proper, respectively) - and that is only if those ambulances are in station and not already on calls of their own. We do have one paramedic special response unit based in Ma'alaea, which provides rapid response to districts including Central Maui, but as our only unit capable of and nationally recognized for special operations including marine ALS (launching with Coast Guard Station Maui), tactical paramedicine (embedding with Maui Police SRT), and medical incident command (such as at the August 2023 firestorms), this unit needs to be preserved as a non-transporting specialized asset - but does need plentiful ambulances to whom a response unit paramedic may delegate patients as they triage casualties.

****As I write this, in fact, Maui County EMS is in the midst of responding to the second in back-to-back Kona Low weather disasters. Our EMS personnel have been responding both in the field and behind-the-scenes in the county's Emergency Operations Center to ensure that the community receives the best medical response, care, and transport possible, in spite of extreme hazards and other challenges. In addition to 9-1-1 responses, our system has had to absorb other massive tasks, such as evacuating Kula Hospital of their long-term care patients due to storm damage. Doing all of this without an additional 9-1-1 ambulance in our busiest district has left us scrambling, with units from many miles away (such as Lahaina and Kula) pulled out of their districts to field calls for service in Kahului.****

The community will suffer longer response times and increased morbidity and mortality without improvement of our coverage via the crucial addition of this Central Maui ambulance.

Thank you for your serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathan Dang, Paramedic, RN
Makawao, Hawaii

Council Chair
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Councilmembers
Kauanoë Batangan
Tom Cook
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Tamara Paltin
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez
Shane M. Sinenci
Nohelani U'u-Hodgins




Director of Council Services
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

March 20, 2026

TO: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Alice L. Lee
Council Chair 

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF MARCH 23, 2026; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2173, HD1, RELATING TO AMBULANCES**

I support this measure to appropriate funds to the Department of Health for an advanced life support ambulance and related equipment and personnel to be based in Central Maui.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. Central Maui's growing population has a significant need for additional emergency services.
2. Funding this effort would help reduce death and disability among residents and visitors by ensuring more timely response to 911 calls.
3. This measure is consistent with Maui Island Plan policy 4.6.1.f: "Encourage expansion and improved access to emergency care in all communities."

Thank you for your consideration.

ocs:proj:legis:26legis:26testimony:hb2173hd1_paf25-331(14)_ebm



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

LATE

**Testimony in SUPPORT of (HB2173 HD1)
RELATING TO AMBULANCES**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, VICE CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Monday, March 23, 2026 at 1:40 PM | Room Number: 225

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) respectfully requests
2 \$1,750,000.00 and recurring funding to support the ambulance unit, staffing, station
3 operations, and related needs, and requests that this measure be considered as a vehicle to
4 provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and requests outlined
5 in the Governor's executive budget request.

6 **Department Position:** The Department in strong supports this measure offering testimony with
7 proposed amendments.

8 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Systems Branch
9 (EMSIPSB), on behalf of the Department, respectfully submits this testimony in strong support
10 of this measure, while respectfully requesting a targeted amendment to ensure alignment with
11 related legislation and statewide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) planning efforts.

12 In partnership with county EMS leadership, EMSIPSB has conducted a comprehensive review
13 and primary needs assessment of ground ambulance resources statewide, with a forward-
14 looking analysis of system needs over the next five years. This assessment was informed by
15 current and historical 911 EMS response data, operational demand, population growth,
16 geographic access, and system performance benchmarks.

1 **Data:** Statewide 911 EMS data clearly demonstrate that Maui County is experiencing sustained
2 and increasing demand for emergency medical services, particularly within Central Maui. Based
3 on calendar year 2025 Maui County EMS data, there were more than 15,790 total 911 EMS
4 responses countywide. Of these, over 5,342 emergency responses originated from Central Maui
5 alone, accounting for more than 34 percent of all EMS responses in the county. The Kahului and
6 Wailuku service areas, along with the broader Central Maui region, represent the highest
7 concentration of EMS demand and consistently experience significant resource strain.

8 The EMSIPSB recognizes that in calendar year 2025, approximately 90 percent of 911 emergent
9 EMS calls across Maui County were responded to in less than 19 minutes. EMSIPSB also
10 monitors quality benchmarks that measure first patient contact time, with a target that 90
11 percent of emergent responses achieve first patient contact in less than 11 minutes.

12 Additionally, national EMS benchmarks recommend transport times from scene to hospital of
13 less than 25 minutes. In Maui County, the current median transport time is approximately 34
14 minutes, reflecting the county's geographic challenges and the presence of remote and rural
15 areas that are not within close proximity to acute care hospitals.

16 While the EMS system continues to perform at a high level given these constraints, EMSIPSB
17 recognizes that sustained call volume, increasing demand in Central Maui, and longer transport
18 times place ongoing pressure on unit availability and response reliability. EMSIPSB believes that
19 the addition of an advanced life support 911 ambulance and associated staffing resources will
20 improve system resilience, reduce unit hour utilization, and enhance overall quality of care for
21 Maui County's 911 EMS system.

22 EMSIPSB strongly supports the portion of House Bill 2173 House Draft 1 (HB2173 HD1) that
23 appropriates funding for an additional 911 advanced life support ambulance to be based in
24 Central Maui. This request aligns with the Department's strategic, data-driven plan for the
25 placement of additional 911 EMS resources over the next five years.

1 **Amendment Request:** While supporting this measure, EMSIPSB respectfully requests that
2 HB2173 HD1 be amended to focus solely on the 911 EMS ground ambulance request for Central
3 Maui and that the air medical services provisions within the bill be removed or amended.

4 EMSIPSB makes this request to avoid duplication and to maintain alignment with parallel
5 legislation addressing air medical services. Specifically, Senate Bill 3203 (SB3203) and its
6 companion measure House Bill 2508 (HB2508), relating to air medical services, have been
7 introduced based on the recommendations of 2025 Senate Concurrent Resolution 86 (SCR86),
8 which established the Air Medical Working Group. These measures support the intent of the air
9 medical provisions currently included in HB2173 HD1.

10 The Air Medical Working Group produced a comprehensive report exceeding 100 pages that
11 outlines statewide recommendations for governance, oversight, integration, and sustainability
12 of air medical services. SB3203 and HB2508 propose to provide resources to EMSIPSB to
13 formally establish an Air Medical Section within EMSIPSB. This section would be responsible for
14 implementing and integrating the Working Group's recommendations into a coordinated,
15 statewide air medical system.

16 EMSIPSB believes that addressing air medical services through SB3203 and HB2508 provides a
17 more appropriate and comprehensive framework for this complex system-level work, while
18 allowing HB2173 HD1 to remain focused on the immediate and critical need for additional 911
19 ground ambulance resources in Central Maui.

20 For these reasons, EMSIPSB strongly supports HB2173 HD1, with the requested amendment to
21 focus exclusively on the 911 EMS ambulance resource for Central Maui. The EMSIPSB believes
22 that the addition of this resource will improve response reliability, operational efficiency, and
23 overall quality of emergency medical care for the residents and visitors of Maui County.

24

25

1 **Offered Amendments:**

2 (1) Purchase one advanced life support ambulance and related equipment to be based in
3 the central Maui area of the county of Maui and fund pay-related personnel costs for state-
4 certified emergency medical services personnel. ~~and~~

5 ~~(2) Increase the predictability and stability of available air ambulance services for all islands in~~
6 ~~the State.]~~

7 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued
8 commitment to strengthening Hawaii's EMS system.

LATE

HB-2173-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 10:24:34 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/23/2026 1:40:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Speedy Bailey	Testifying for AMR	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support.