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LATE

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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2292
RELATING TO THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

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

February 10, 2026

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Defense provides written testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB2292**.

This bill will authorize the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) to convert temporary exempt special project positions to permanent positions exempt from civil service.

Instability within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), including leadership changes, funding disruptions, and shifting priorities, create significant risk for Hawai'i. These temporary exempt special project positions are a critical component in recovery operations as the disaster recovery process often takes years to secure full federal reimbursements. HIEMA remaining dependent on temporary special project positions puts the state at risk of losing key personnel and continuity.

This bill will authorize conversion of temporary exempt positions to permanent exempt positions, ensuring continuity regardless of federal changes; provide long-term stability for disaster recovery operations, which often last 5 to 10 years for large disaster, and in cases such as the Kilauea Lava disaster can even extend beyond a decade; and strengthen Hawai'i's emergency management workforce, enabling rapid and effective response to all-hazard incidents.

In our meeting with HGEA, they indicated that they were not opposed to the intent of this bill, and we are hopeful there is a path and room to move this bill forward.

For these reasons, I humbly ask for your support with this measure.

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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2292,
RELATING TO THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

February 11, 2026

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

I am submitting testimony in strong **SUPPORT** of House Bill 2292, which authorizes the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) to convert temporary special project positions into permanent positions exempt from civil service.

This measure is critical for ensuring operational stability and continuity in Hawai'i's emergency management efforts. Hawai'i faces unique vulnerabilities due to its geographic isolation, reliance on fragile lifelines, and exposure to natural and human-caused hazards. HIEMA's current reliance on temporary positions risk losing highly trained personnel and institutional knowledge during prolonged recovery efforts.

By allowing HIEMA to establish permanent exempt positions, this bill will:

- Ensure workforce stability and reduce turnover, promoting continuity in emergency management operations.
- Preserve institutional expertise necessary for effective disaster response and mitigation.

- Reduce administrative burden associated with repeatedly refilling temporary positions.

Importantly, this proposal will enhance the state's ability to safeguard lives, property, and the environment. I urge the committee to pass this measure to strengthen Hawai'i's resilience and preparedness.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 2292.

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HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

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The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Public Safety

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 11, 2026

H.B. 2292– RELATING TO THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The Hawai'i Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO (HGEA), submits the following comments on H.B. 2292 which authorizes the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to convert temporary special project positions created for Federal Emergency Management Agency funded disaster recovery operations into permanent positions exempt from civil service, subject to certain limitations.

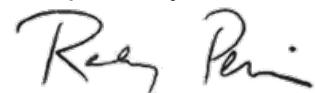
HGEA recognizes the critical mission of the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) and the need for a stable, experienced workforce to support disaster preparedness, response, and long-term recovery operations. We acknowledge that many of the responsibilities currently carried out by HIEMA's temporary exempt special project positions extend well beyond short-term needs, and while we can appreciate that the intent of this bill which is to convert temporary exempt project positions into permanent exempt positions, we have concerns about the need to grant a blanket permanent exemption for all covered positions.

While some positions within HIEMA may fit the criteria for permanent exemption given their highly unique and specialized duties, support service positions and positions that already have an existing civil service classification should not be permanently exempted. **Therefore, we would like to request the following changes in this measure:**

- Section 2, page 13 lines 1 to 3, be amended to include specific positions that are deemed highly specialized and unique, rather than a blanket civil service exemption.
- Section 3, page 19, be amended to include all positions not explicitly exempted from Section 2 (Chapter 76-16) be converted to a civil service position within three years, and if an incumbent employee's position is converted to a civil service position, that employee shall experience no loss in position, rights and benefits, and salary. Furthermore, newly created position shall be hired with regard to chapter 76, unless the chapter 76-16 explicitly states otherwise.

If these positions are essential to HIEMA's permanent operations, HGEA believes they should be evaluated and, if appropriate, be converted to an appropriate civil service classification. **HGEA recommends that the bill be amended to require that.** This would allow for operational continuity while ensuring long-term alignment with Hawai'i's civil service system, classification structure, and employee protections. Furthermore, this would help with HIEMA's recruitment and retention of employees, since employment security is a core benefit that makes the state an attractive employer.

Respectfully submitted,



Randy Perreira
Executive Director