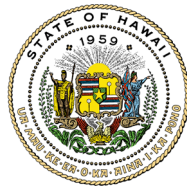


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
KAHU HO'OMALU PŌULIA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
4204 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4420

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2498,
RELATING TO CARE HOMES

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

February 6, 2026

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

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) respectfully submits testimony in **SUPPORT** of House Bill 2498, which establishes the Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program. This important legislation addresses a critical need to protect our most vulnerable and medically fragile persons – kupuna, residing in licensed care homes within the 96797 zip code areas in central O'ahu.

Care homes in our community often operate in aging facilities that are especially vulnerable to natural disasters, climate-related hazards, and prolonged utility outages. Strengthening the physical infrastructure and operational resilience of these care homes is essential to safeguarding resident health and safety, reducing emergency response burdens, and enabling quicker community recovery.

Key Benefits of the Pilot Program:

- Enables targeted structural improvements such as roof reinforcements, impact-resistant windows, and backup power systems to protect care homes from hurricanes, extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and power disruptions.

- Provides technical assistance, vulnerability assessments, and training to ensure preparedness and continuity of care during disasters.
- Prioritizes care homes serving low-income residents and those dependent on life-sustaining medical equipment, maximizing impact for the most at-risk populations.
- Requires each care home to adopt evacuation plans to further enhance resident and staff safety.
- Establishes a framework for data collection and reporting to the Legislature, which will inform future decisions on expanding resilience efforts statewide.

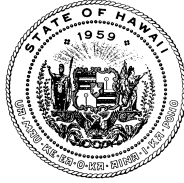
By supporting this bill, the Legislature empowers HIEMA and our partners to proactively reduce disaster risks and increase the resilience of care homes that serve vulnerable populations. HIEMA supports this measure, if it does not negatively impact the priorities of the Governor's executive budget.

We urge your favorable consideration of HB2498 to help protect our kūpuna and ensure safe, secure care environments in the face of growing climate and disaster challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 2498.

James Barros: james.barros@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'



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

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB2498
RELATING TO CARE HOMES.**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Hearing Date and Time: FRI, February 6, 2026, @ 10:15 am

Room Number: 411

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** No impact to the Department of Health (Department).
- 2 **Department Position:** The Department appreciates the intent of this measure and offers
- 3 comments and proposed amendments.
- 4 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health, Office of Health Care Assurance (OHCA)
- 5 establishes regulatory requirements to protect patients and licenses health care facilities,
- 6 including care homes. We defer to the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA)
- 7 regarding enhancements to physical structures beyond regulatory requirements for emergency
- 8 preparedness purposes.
- 9 We have concerns regarding the appearance of conflict of interest if the Department is directly
- 10 involved in implementing or administering this measure. While licensed care home
- 11 participation in the pilot may be optional, OHCA's regulations are not. OHCA's direct
- 12 involvement could potentially create confusion of requirements, feel coercive, or reduce
- 13 participation in the pilot from those seeking to avoid closer scrutiny from the regulator.
- 14 Should this measure be enacted, OHCA will commit to providing technical assistance to HIEMA
- 15 in interpreting the relevant sections of Hawaii Revised Statute (HRS) and Hawaii Administrative

1 Rules (HAR) that relate to the physical environment of licensed facilities to help ensure its
2 activities through this pilot do not conflict with regulatory requirements.

3 **Offered amendments:**

4 Page 2, lines 1-4:

5 **SECTION 2. (a)** The Hawaii emergency management agency, ~~in coordination with the~~
6 ~~office of health care assurance of the department of health,~~ shall establish the central Oahu
7 care home community resilient pilot program

8 and page 4, lines 11-13:

9 **SECTION 2. (g)** The Hawaii emergency management agency, ~~in collaboration with the~~
10 ~~office of health care assurance of the department of health,~~ shall submit a report to the
11 legislature

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

TESTIMONY OF LESLIE DOOR

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026
10:15 a.m.

HB 2498

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and members of the Committee on Public Safety, my name is Leslie Door, Director of Product, Risk & Regulatory Compliance for Zephyr Insurance Company and Property Chair for Hawaii Insurers Council. The Hawaii Insurers Council is a non-profit trade association of property and casualty insurance companies licensed to do business in Hawaii. Member companies underwrite approximately forty percent of all property and casualty insurance premiums in the state.

Hawaii Insurers Council **supports** this bill, which establishes the Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program.

This measure addresses a critical and increasingly urgent gap in Hawai'i's disaster preparedness framework: the resilience of licensed care homes serving kupuna, individuals with disabilities, and medically fragile residents. Many of these facilities operate in aging structures, have limited financial capacity, and serve residents who cannot safely evacuate or endure prolonged power outages without significant risk to life and health.

This bill takes a practical, targeted, and fiscally responsible approach by establishing a pilot program in a defined geographic area, allowing the State to evaluate effectiveness before considering broader expansion. Importantly, it emphasizes mitigation and preparedness rather than post-disaster response alone, which is both more humane and more cost-effective.

Coordination between the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency and the Office of Health Care Assurance will be key to aligning emergency preparedness with licensing and resident safety

oversight. The inclusion of evacuation planning requirements and a clear reporting obligation to the Legislature reinforces accountability while allowing flexibility in implementation.

Finally, the bill's rulemaking authority allows the administering agency to adapt technical standards as hazards, building practices, and mitigation technologies evolve, without the need for repeated statutory changes.

HIC believes that investing in care home resilience is not only a moral obligation to protect our most vulnerable residents, but also a sound public policy decision that can reduce emergency response costs, minimize displacement, and support faster community recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation.



February 6, 2026

**House Committee on Public Safety
Rep. Della Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair**

RE: HB2498, Relating to Care Homes

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and members of the committee –

Navian Hawaii is a nonprofit organization supporting the needs of Hawai'i's aging population, including through hospice, palliative care, and integrated support services. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony **in support** on HB2498, Relating to Care Homes. This bill would enhance the resilience of care home settings in Central Oahu against natural disasters, climate-related risks, and extended utility disruptions.

Navian Hawaii currently works with a number of care homes and patients throughout Oahu, including in the 96797 postal zip code, to provide hospice and palliative care. We are acutely aware of the operational and structural difficulties many of these facilities face.

Care homes often serve individuals with complex medical and social needs, making them particularly vulnerable during natural disasters or other emergencies. Many of these facilities are also decades old, which poses a significant risk particularly as the frequency and severity of natural disasters increase.

The proposed Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program emphasizes both physical infrastructure improvements and operational preparedness. This would reduce risks, maintain continuity of care, and ensure that kupuna can remain safely housed and supported even in adverse conditions.

The pilot program's focus on Central Oahu is a prudent initial step in making care home settings more sustainable, offering a model to inform statewide efforts in the long term.

Navian Hawaii is a nonprofit organization supporting the needs of Hawai'i's aging population, including through hospice, palliative care, and integrated support services. The name "Navian" blends "Navigator" and "Guardian," reflecting our mission to guide individuals and their families through the physical and emotional challenges that often accompany aging and serious illness.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Rep. Mark J. Hashem	Rep. Justin H. Woodson
Rep. Linda Ichiyama	Rep. Garner M. Shimizu
Rep. Dee Morikawa	Rep. Kanani Souza
Rep. Mahina Poepoe	

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Friday, February 6, 2026
TIME: 10:15 a.m.
PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 411
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Testimony of John G. McDermott, LSW, ACSW, M.Div.
State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Concerns regarding HB 2498

Purpose of HB 2498: Requires and appropriates funds for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to establish a Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program to assist eligible care home facilities to implement structural and operational resilience improvements. Requires a report to the Legislature.

Good morning, Chair Au Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and members of the Committee.

My name is John G. McDermott and I have been the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (SLTCO) since August, 1998. Part of my job is to advocate for the 12,895 residents living in our 1,779 long-term care facilities.

This pilot program is limited to those facilities within the 96797 (Waipahu) postal zip code. That would include approximately 258 CCFFHs, 45 ARCHs and 72 Expanded ARCHs for a total of 375 facilities. The LTCOP has no jurisdiction over DDD Homes, so I don't know the numbers, and if "intermediate care facility" means a nursing home, there are no nursing homes in Waipahu.

I suspect LTC homes in other postal zip code locations will question why only Waipahu (or why only Oahu) will be receiving this extraordinary gift? Other taxpaying kupuna living in Waipahu may also question why not include their older homes as well?

The list of improvements proposed sounds very expensive:

- 5 (b) The purpose of the pilot program shall be to assist
6 eligible licensed care home facilities within the 96797 postal
7 zip code on the island of Oahu to implement structural and
8 operational resilience improvements; provided that eligible
9 structural and operational resilience improvements may include
10 but are not limited to:
- 11 (1) Roof reinforcement, hurricane clips, and wind-
12 resistant materials;
13 (2) Impact-resistant windows, storm shutters, and
14 strengthened doors;
15 (3) Backup power systems and battery storage for essential
16 medical equipment;
17 (4) Air filtration or cooling enhancements for extreme
18 heat or wildfire smoke;
19 (5) Fire-resistant landscaping and defensible space; and
20 (6) Shelter-in-place or safe room modifications.
21 (c) The pilot program may provide, as funds permit:
- 1 (1) Grants, rebates, or contracted services for structure
2 hardening;
3 (2) Facility vulnerability assessments for wind, heat,
4 wildfire smoke, and power disruption risks;
5 (3) Technical assistance and training in preparedness and
6 continuity of operations; and
7 (4) Support for emergency power and cooling solutions for
8 medically fragile residents.

The bill prioritizes assistance to care home facilities that serve “low-income residents.” Unlike our CCFFHs which can only admit one private pay resident, most of our ARCHs only accept private pay residents and the average rate is about \$5,000/month. If a Type 1 ARCH has 5 residents, that’s \$25,000/month so I’m wondering why these care providers can’t pay for their own improvements?

And if the State does foot the bill, I see nothing in the bill prohibiting the *new and improved* home from being quickly sold at a huge profit.

Mahalo for giving me this opportunity to testify.