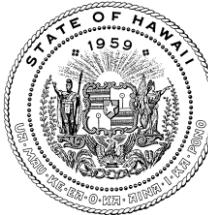


**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



**MIKE LAMBERT**  
Director

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT GOVERNOR  
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

**ERNEST J. ROBELLO**  
Deputy Director  
Administration

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**  
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai*  
715 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**JARED K. REDULLA**  
Deputy Director  
Law Enforcement

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair  
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs  
State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 216  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair  
Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts  
State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 219  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairs Fukunaga and Lee:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 2358 Relating to Search and Rescue

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Chair of the State Fire Council (SFC). The SFC offers comments regarding SB 2358, which requires government entities to seek reimbursement for all or a portion of search or rescue expenses for persons who require rescue after leaving a hiking trail to enter an area closed to the public or hiking on a trail closed to the public and there is a sign giving notice of the closure.

The SFC believes the search and rescue expense reimbursement requirement described in SB 2358 may deter or delay prompt notification of first responder agencies by persons in the aforementioned situation. Such a delay in requesting for assistance may exacerbate the situation, further endangering the lives of persons involved and their potential rescuers.

In addition, there is no existing system enabling the counties and the SFC to seek reimbursement for these situations. Development and implementation of such a reimbursement system will require significant administrative effort by the four county fire departments to establish and maintain.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

**SHELDON HAO**  
Chair

**HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT  
KA 'OIHANA KINAI AHI O HONOLULU  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

636 SOUTH STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
PHONE: (808) 723-7139 • FAX: (808) 723-7111 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



SHELDON K. HAO  
FIRE CHIEF  
LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

JASON SAMALA  
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF  
HOPE LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair  
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs  
State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 216  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair  
Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts  
State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 219  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairs Fukunaga and Lee:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 2358 Relating to Search and Rescue

The Honolulu Fire Department (HFD) offers comments regarding SB 2358, which requires government entities to seek reimbursement for all or a portion of search or rescue expenses for persons who require rescue after leaving a hiking trail to enter an area closed to the public or hiking on a trail closed to the public and there is a sign giving notice of the closure.

The HFD believes the search and rescue expense reimbursement requirement described in SB 2358 may deter or delay prompt notification of first responder agencies by persons in the aforementioned situation. Such a delay in requesting for assistance may exacerbate the situation, further endangering the lives of persons involved and their potential rescuers.

Additionally, seeking reimbursement may jeopardize the public use status of the HFD's aircraft. Public aircraft operations (PAO) engaged in search and rescue are generally exempt from many Federal Aviation Administration civil certification regulations; however, they are limited in their ability to receive monetary reimbursement. Generally, to maintain PAO status and the exemption from regulations, the aircraft must be owned

The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair

Page 2

February 3, 2026

and operated by a government entity and not engage in commercial purposes, which includes receiving payment for services.

Public safety and property protection remain the HFD's priorities. As such, the HFD opposes legislation to seek reimbursement of search and rescue expenses and strongly urges your committees to oppose SB 2358.

Should you have questions, please contact Assistant Chief Reid Yoshida of our Support Services division at 808-723-7104 or [ryoshida@honolulu.gov](mailto:ryoshida@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO

Fire Chief

SKH/RY:cn

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 11:48:55 AM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Antoinette M Davis	Testifying for Activities & Attractions Association of Hawaii, Inc.	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

DATE: Wednesday, February 4, 2026  
TIME: 3:01 PM  
PLACE: Conference Room 016 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

Aloha Chairs Fukunaga & Lee and Vice Chair Inouye,  
My name is Antoinette Davis, and it has been my honor to serve as Executive Director of the Activities and Attractions Association of Hawaii (A3H), a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) trade organization, since 1997. **A3H would like to provide a comment.**

**As we understand it, SB2358 establishes search-and-rescue reimbursement expectations tied to trail closures/trespass-type conditions.**

This could raise liability/insurance questions for guided activities and companies permitted to operate commercially on said property, as well as negative visitor messaging.

We would like to request amendments that include:

- Carve-outs for permitted operators that follow the rules.
- Clearly state "who pays and when" standards.
- A tragic unintended caveat to this measure, should it pass, will be to discourage emergency calls - when a serious "accident" occurs.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and the opportunity to testify.

Toni

Toni Marie Davis/Executive Director  
Activities & Attractions Association of Hawaii, Inc.  
*Statewide 501 (c) (6) not-for-profit Trade Association*

PO Box 598, Makawao, Hawaii 96768  
(808)871-7947

**LATE**

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:39:31 AM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Boyer	Testifying for The National Association For Search And Rescue	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB2358 is flawed legislation. It proposes to develop a system of SAR reimburessment from victims without a strategy, administrative coordinator, or authorities.

1 - Requires government entities - which entities have legislated authroity for SAR ? Does this include fire/rescue or law enfrocement or ligeguards.

2 - for all or a portion - who decides what the expenses are and if all or a portion is required and if a portion, what portion.

3 - Which government entity is responsible for the billing and collection of the fees.

4 - How will the fees be distributed to the legislated SAR response organizations.

5 - Who has authority to close trails and areas to the public.

6 - What are the size, language and content requirements for signage. Where must it be posted and for how long prior to the closure

7 - This leads to an acceptance of liability. Since you recognize that there are dangers that cause the closure of trails and areas to the public. If you don't close an area and someone requires search and rescue in that area, the authority that should hav eclosed the area is liable for injury and death.

8 - This bill is on conflict with SB2937, and their coexistence is questionable

9 - The number of search and rescue billes being presented are not part of a coordinated strategy that the proposed Search and Rescue Coordinator postion would be responsible for.

10 - SB 2358 and SB 2937 both seek to collect funding and seem to be money grabs before a State SAR Coordinator can be announced to manage the SAR system

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 7:19:18 PM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2358 SB RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE.	WLA/PSM	CR 016 & Videoconference	Feb 4, 2026 3:01 PM
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**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 7:20:05 PM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*I support this measure.*

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 9:04:16 PM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 8:43:47 AM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Taxpayers should not have to bear the cost of search and rescue expenses for persons who leave a hiking trail to enter an area closed to the public or hiking on a trail closed to the public and there is a sign giving notice of the closure. Please move this bill forward.

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:29:40 PM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I fully support this bill! This is long needed and should be passed!

As a former employee of the Department of Land and Natural Resources on Oahu in the Division of Forestry and Wildlife, I have hiked most of the trails maintained by the State (Na Ala Hele). I fully believe that there is sufficient State maintained trails for any avid hiker. As such, anyone who is off-trail, in a closed area, or trespassing onto private property shall heavily be fined if they need any type of rescue services.

I feel that rescue services should not occur in closed areas, private property, or off-trail areas, unless they are permitted to hike there. We should not be putting our rescue personnel in harms way to save someone who did not follow the rules. But since we probably won't be passing that bill any time soon, having those who are rescued pay for their errors when trespassing or entering closed areas is the next best thing.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Keoni Shizuma

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:43:09 PM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael A. Wee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

I strongly SUPPORT this legislation. If someone intentionally trespasses, gets into trouble, and then needs to be rescued, that's on them, not the taxpayers! As for the law discouraging people from calling for help, that's their problem, not ours! Also, require that fines be levied for trespassing in the first place!

**LATE**

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 4:38:07 PM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anastasia Reventlow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair and Chair Chris Lee, Vice Chair Lorraine R. Inouye, and members of the Public Safety and Military Affairs and Water, Land, Culture and the Arts committees.**

**I am a student at the University of Hawaii and I strongly support SB2358, which requires persons in need of rescue after entering closed or private lands, to reimburse the government entity who saved them.**

Many people enter closed trails regardless of posted signage in hopes of good views or pictures. In doing so, they not only put themselves at risk on unmaintained trails, but they put native wildlife. Entering closed areas increases the likelihood of native plants and seedlings getting trampled. It also increases the possibility of the spread of invasive species or diseases, as seeds or infected plants are often transported on boots and other gear. Additionally, as some trails are unmaintained, users may cling to ungulate control fences for stabilization, potentially damaging the fences and allowing invasive predators to cross.

Currently, search and rescue initiatives cost about \$2,700 an hour.

This bill would introduce this expense for search and rescue in trails and lands closed to the public. The reimbursement adds an extra deterrent from entering these closed or private lands and creating such damages on the trails.

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:13:45 AM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle R Stefanik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. If a person takes the risk by going where they are not supposed to, then they should also take the risk of the cost to be rescued if necessary.

**LATE**

**SB-2358**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 11:33:54 AM  
Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rosemarie Johnson	Testifying for Hawaii SAR Alliance	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments and testimony.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Hawai‘i SAR Alliance, a collaborative effort that for the past five years has brought together multiple agencies, teams, and organizations that conduct Search and Rescue across the State of Hawai‘i.

On August 2, 2024, more than one hundred Search and Rescue professionals and national subject-matter experts participated in a virtual symposium focused on best practices and SAR system development. Local experts representing all relevant state agencies were in attendance.

Through that process, participants identified systemic gaps, defined the challenges facing Hawai‘i’s SAR system, and began working toward coordinated, solution-focused approaches tailored to the unique needs of our state.

Comments on SB2358 Re: Search and Rescue Reimbursement Framework

- Each year, legislation related to Search and Rescue (SAR) is introduced without a fully developed systemic foundation to support effective implementation.
- There are existing structural and administrative gaps within Hawai‘i’s fragmented SAR system that spans over a dozen different agencies and jurisdictions that should be addressed prior to implementing reimbursement mechanisms.
- The Executive Director of the National Association for Search and Rescue has advised that SB2358 and SB2937, as currently written, may not be able to operate concurrently.
- Both SB2358 and SB2937 do not include necessary operational details, such as:
  - Billing methodology
  - Fund collection and distribution
  - Financial oversight and administration
  - Identification of responsible agencies or personnel
- SB2358 proposes a reimbursement structure without first establishing the comprehensive framework required to support it.
  - This is comparable to designing utility systems for a house without first having a complete architectural plan.
  - Key system components have not yet been defined or analyzed.
- Several critical implementation questions remain unanswered, including:
  - Who is authorized to close an area to public access?

- Who is authorized to issue closure notices?
- What constitutes legally sufficient signage for a closure?
- Is there a standardized methodology for county-level billing?
- Federal agencies that frequently participate in SAR operations, including:
  - U.S. Coast Guard
  - Civil Air Patrol
  - National Guard

currently do not have mechanisms in place to bill individuals for SAR services.

- While reimbursement systems do exist for pre-hospital medical care (e.g., ambulance services and air medical transport), these systems are not directly transferable to SAR operations.
- SB2358 does not specify:
  - Which agency or position would be responsible for collecting reimbursements
  - Whether SAR agencies currently have administrative staff or resources to manage billing and collections
- States referenced as models for SAR reimbursement systems have key structural elements already in place, including:
  - A State Search and Rescue Coordinator (SSARC)
  - Established administrative offices to manage billing and funds
- States such as Oregon, Vermont, Utah, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, and South Dakota differ significantly from Hawai‘i in tourism volume and associated concerns regarding potential impacts on visitor behavior.
  - Hawai‘i currently lacks a State Search and Rescue Coordinator office, which limits the State’s ability to:
    - Coordinate SAR policy
    - Manage administrative responsibilities
    - Ensure consistent implementation across agencies
  - Establishing a State Search and Rescue Coordinator office would provide the foundational infrastructure needed for:
    - A statewide SAR system
    - A State SAR card program
    - A dedicated State SAR fund
    - A governing board to administer funds appropriately
  - For SAR reimbursement policies to be effective and sustainable, they should be implemented under the authority of a State Search and Rescue Coordinator, as proposed in SB2938, prior to or in conjunction with reimbursement legislation.