

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Public Safety

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

9:30 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 411 and Videoconference

With Comments

Senate Bill No. 2645, SD3, Relating to Fire Prevention

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the House Committee on Public Safety:

The Office of the Governor supports the intent and provides comments on S.B. No. 2645, SD3, Relating to Fire Prevention.

This measure would improve statutory frameworks, strengthen statewide consistency in fire and life safety standards, and more clearly align the structure and function of the Office of the State Fire Marshal with its core public safety mission.

However, the Office of the Governor does not agree with the removal of the language pertaining to the State Fire Marshal Selection Commission. Retaining the Selection Commission for the purpose of appointing a State Fire Marshal provides transparency and allows valuable input from subject matter experts.

S.B. No. 2645, SD3, ensures county compliance with minimum statewide fire code standards and require that all proposed amendments to county fire codes be submitted to the State Fire Marshal for review and approval. Additionally, the measure establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund, to be administered by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. S.B. No. 2645, SD3, identifies funding sources that may be deposited into the fund and specifies the purposes for which the funds may be expended.

Further, this measure is intended to improve operational efficiency and better align statutory requirements with the duties and responsibilities of the State Fire Marshal and the Office of the State Fire Marshal. In particular, the measure amends the frequency of fire and life safety inspections for state facilities to allow for timely and effective oversight, while reducing administrative burdens associated with conducting annual inspections across a large inventory of state facilities.

Testimony of the Office of the Governor
S.B. No. 2645 SD3
March 18, 2026
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Lastly, the measure updates the statutory positions within the Office of the State Fire Marshal by establishing four assistant fire marshal positions to better reflect the operational needs and scope of responsibility of the office.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

LATE



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Date & Time
Mar 17, 2026, 10:51 am

MIKE LAMBERT
Director

ERNEST J. ROBELLO
Deputy Director
Administration

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
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JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2645, SENATE DRAFT 3
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION
Before the House Committee on
PUBLIC SAFETY
Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 9:30 am
State Capitol Conference Room 411
WRITTEN TESTIMONY of DORTHY BOOTH

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and members of the Committee:

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) supports Senate Bill 2645, Senate Draft 3. SB2645 SD3 proposes several significant and meaningful reforms to fire safety governance in Hawaii. Specifically, the bill establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety, prohibits counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code, establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund, limits the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to once every three years, changes the method of appointment of the State Fire Marshal from selection by the State Fire Marshal Selection Commission to appointment by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and amends Act 302, SLH 2025, by replacing fire inspector and investigator positions with four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) assistant fire marshal positions.

OSFM supports the establishment of the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety. A uniform baseline standard is critical to ensuring that all

residents, workers, and visitors across the State of Hawaii are afforded consistent and meaningful fire safety protections regardless of the county in which they reside or work. Allowing individual counties to adopt or enforce codes less restrictive than the State Fire Code creates a patchwork of safety standards that can lead to preventable loss of life and property. By prohibiting counties from adopting provisions less restrictive than the State Fire Code, SB 2645 SD3 reinforces the integrity of statewide fire safety while still permitting counties to exceed minimum standards where local conditions may warrant additional protection.

The OSFM also supports establishing the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund. A dedicated fund will provide a stable and reliable source of revenue to support fire prevention, life safety programs, inspections, and related administrative functions of the OSFM. This financial mechanism will help ensure OSFM has the resources necessary to fulfill its statutory mission without being solely dependent on general fund appropriations, thereby strengthening the long-term sustainability of fire safety operations across the State.

The bill modifies the inspection frequency for state-owned or state-managed buildings from an annual requirement to a schedule not to exceed once every 3 years, based on assessed risk and occupancy classification. This approach aligns with nationally recognized standards, including the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1730 Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations, and NFPA 1300 Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development. Under a risk-based inspection model, high-risk or critical infrastructure occupancies may be inspected annually, moderate-risk occupancies on a biennial basis, and low-risk occupancies on a triennial basis.

Records indicate that the State owns or manages more than 8,000 occupancies. Maintaining an annual inspection mandate for all such facilities is operationally

infeasible without substantial and unsustainable increases in staffing resources.

Transitioning to a risk-based inspection framework allows OSFM to prioritize critical infrastructure and high-hazard occupancies, align staffing models with objective risk analysis, and improve inspection quality through more focused deployment of limited resources. OSFM intends to pursue a statewide NFPA 1730 analysis to establish data-driven staffing models and service delivery benchmarks. There is also interest in extending this effort to county partners to promote statewide alignment in fire protection service delivery metrics.

Finally, the OSFM supports the amendment to Act 302, SLH 2025, replacing the two full-time equivalent fire inspector positions and three full-time equivalent fire investigator positions with four full-time equivalent assistant fire marshal positions. This restructuring reflects the evolving, integrated nature of fire marshal duties, which increasingly require personnel capable of performing a broad range of functions spanning inspection, investigation, enforcement, and prevention. The creation of the assistant fire marshal classification provides greater operational flexibility and supports a more cohesive, mission-driven workforce within OSFM.

OSFM believes that SB 2645 SD3 represents a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to modernizing fire safety governance in Hawaii and is strongly committed to supporting the successful implementation of these reforms.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
Director

ERNEST J. ROBELLO
Deputy Director
Administration

SYLVIA LUKE
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JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

March 16, 2026

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
Committee on Public Safety
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 420
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Belatti:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 2645 Senate Draft (SD) 3 Relating to Fire Prevention

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Chair of the State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department. The SFC supports the intent of SB 2645, SD 3, which establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety; prohibits the counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code; establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund; limits the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to once every three years; changes the method of appointing the State Fire Marshal (SFM) from a selection by the SFM Selection Commission to an appointment by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate; amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025 by replacing two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions for fire inspectors and three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) positions for fire investigators with four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) positions for assistant fire marshals. The SFC provides the following comments regarding SB 2645, SD 3.

The SFC believes the passage of SB 2645, SD 3 will provide the OSFM with the flexibility to build a team and implement fire inspection processes based on guidance and best practices from resources, such as the National Fire Protection Association 1730: *Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*.

Regarding the appointment of the SFM proposed by SB 2645, SD 3, the SFC recommends retaining the SFC in an advisory capacity for the appointment of the SFM.

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
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March 16, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

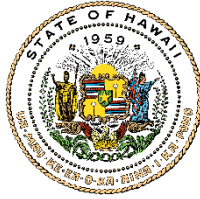
Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Chair

SKH/GL:cn

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
PUBLIC SAFETY

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2645, SENATE DRAFT 3
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

Senate Bill 2645, Senate Draft 3 establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety and prohibits counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code. The measure also creates the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund, limits the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to once every three years, modifies the appointment process for the State Fire Marshal from selection by the State Fire Marshal Selection Commission to appointment by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025, by replacing two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) fire inspector positions and three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) fire investigator positions with four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) assistant fire marshal positions. (Proposed SD2). **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the measure's intent and offers the following comments.**

The Department supports the language in Senate Draft 2 of this measure that amends Section 1, Section 2, and Section 4 of Chapter 132, Hawai'i Revised Statutes. The proposed amendments to those sections will allow the Office of the State Fire Marshal to build a team and carry out fire inspection processes based on guidance and best practices from resources like the National Fire Protection Association's 1730: *Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*.

Regarding Section 3, the State Fire Council selected the Fire Marshal last year. The Fire Marshal's selection process was changed to a commission-based process last legislative session, and the

DAWN N.S. CHANG
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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Fire Marshal was added to the State Fire Council. The proposed amendment would make the Fire Marshal a position appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate approval. The Department prefers the current process. If the Fire Marshal were appointed directly by the Governor, reviewing their effectiveness would be more challenging. A commission would be better suited to monitor performance and, if needed, replace the Marshal. Importantly, a commission-style process also applies to the county Fire Chiefs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA
Deputy Fire Chief



DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 DAIRY ROAD
KAHULUI, MAUI, HAWAII 96732
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March 16, 2026

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
Committee on Public Safety
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 420
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Belatti:

**SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 2645 SENATE DRAFT (SD) 3 RELATING TO
FIRE PREVENTION**

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. The SFC supports the intent of SB 2645, SD 3, which establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety; prohibits the counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code; establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund; limits the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to once every three years; changes the method of appointing the State Fire Marshal (SFM) from a selection by the SFM Selection Commission to an appointment by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate; amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025 by replacing two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions for fire inspectors and three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) positions for fire investigators with four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) positions for assistant fire marshals. The SFC provides the following comments regarding SB 2645, SD 3.

The SFC believes the passage of SB 2645, SD 3 will provide the OSFM with the flexibility to build a team and implement fire inspection processes based on guidance and best practices from resources, such as the National Fire Protection Association 1730: *Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*.

Regarding the appointment of the SFM proposed by SB 2645, SD 3, the SFC recommends retaining the SFC in an advisory capacity for the appointment of the SFM.

If you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at (808) 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad Ventura".

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief



March 18, 2026

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A Chapter of the
American Institute of Architects

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TO: Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
Honorable Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Public Safety

FROM: Legislative Advocacy Committee
American Institute of Architects, Hawai'i State Council

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

The AIA Hawai'i State Council represents architects and design professionals across the State who are committed to advancing public safety, resilient communities, and responsible building practices.

AIA Hawai'i **PROVIDES COMMENTS on SB2645 SD3**, which continues the implementation and refinement of the State's fire prevention and safety framework following recent statewide discussions about wildfire risk and emergency preparedness. This measure makes important administrative and staffing adjustments within the Office of the State Fire Marshal to strengthen statewide fire prevention capacity and coordination.

Our members work closely with building officials, fire departments, and regulatory agencies to ensure that buildings are designed and constructed to protect life safety and property. Strengthening the State's fire prevention infrastructure is essential to protecting communities, safeguarding critical infrastructure, and ensuring that building and fire codes are consistently interpreted and enforced across the islands.

However, AIA Hawai'i respectfully offers **one area of concern** regarding the **proposed change to the selection process for the State Fire Marshal**.

While we support the broader intent of improving oversight and coordination, AIA Hawai'i believes the current **commission-based selection process** provides an important layer of professional and technical review in identifying qualified candidates for this highly specialized position.

AIA Hawai'i recommends that any selection process **include participation from the State Building Code Council**, whose members bring expertise in building safety, code development, and implementation. Involving the Council would help ensure alignment between statewide building and fire safety policies and the leadership of the State Fire Marshal's office.

The State Fire Marshal plays a critical role in overseeing fire prevention programs, interpreting fire codes, and coordinating with building and safety professionals statewide. Because the position requires significant technical expertise and cross-agency collaboration, AIA Hawai'i believes a **selection process grounded in professional review and subject matter expertise best serves the public interest**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure and for your continued efforts to strengthen fire safety and resilience across Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Melanie Islam, AIA
AIA Hawaii President

Testimony of the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization

Regarding S.B. 2645, S.D. 3

Relating to Fire Prevention

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) respectfully submits comments regarding S.B. 2645, S.D. 3.

Our primary reason for submitting testimony is to emphasize the importance of transparency, accountability, and public trust in statewide fire safety leadership.

The measure proposes to repeal the State Fire Marshal Selection Commission and instead provide for appointment of the State Fire Marshal by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate.

HWMO respectfully recommends maintaining a commission structure to review and provide oversight of the State Fire Marshal position.

Across Hawai'i, county fire chiefs operate within systems of accountability that include fire commissions or similar governing bodies that represent diverse sectors and subject matter expertise. These commissions provide transparency in hiring, performance review, and when necessary, removal. They also ensure that leadership decisions are informed by individuals with relevant expertise in fire protection, emergency management, public safety, and community needs.

Maintaining a comparable oversight structure for the State Fire Marshal is consistent with these public safety governance models and helps ensure transparency, accountability, and continuity in statewide fire prevention and safety efforts.

Public safety leadership benefits from systems that provide clear review, transparency, and diverse expertise. For a position with statewide responsibility for fire prevention and safety, this level of accountability is paramount to ensuring the public's trust and the effectiveness of the office.

HWMO respectfully encourages the Legislature to consider maintaining a commission structure to support transparent governance and strong oversight of the State Fire Marshal role.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Pickett and Nani Barretto
Co-Executive Directors
Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization