



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of (SB3203)
RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 10:57 AM | Room Number: 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this measure be
2 considered as a vehicle to provide the needed funding so long as it does not supplant the
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governor's executive budget request, and emphasizes
4 that emergency air medical transport licensure and accreditation fees will be deposited into the
5 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Special Fund to provide a long-term, sustainable funding
6 source through ongoing air medical and ambulance licensing revenues to support these
7 positions and program functions.

8 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure, offering testimony.

9 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Systems Branch
10 (EMSIPSB), on behalf of the Department, respectfully submits this testimony in strong support
11 of this measure.

12 Air medical services are an essential component of Hawaii’s healthcare delivery system,
13 emergency medical systems of care, and overall healthcare infrastructure. Due to Hawaii’s
14 geographic isolation, multi-island structure, rural and remote communities, and limited access
15 to specialty and tertiary care on neighbor islands, timely access to emergency aeromedical and

1 interfacility air medical transport is critical to ensuring equitable, lifesaving care for residents
2 and visitors across the State.

3 Air medical transport is not a supplemental service in Hawaii; it is a foundational element of
4 emergency response, trauma care, stroke care, cardiac care, and disaster preparedness. These
5 services are relied upon daily to bridge geographic barriers and ensure continuity of care across
6 islands.

7 EMSIPSB recognizes that while demand for emergency and interfacility air medical transport
8 has continued to increase, the State currently lacks permanent, dedicated resources within the
9 Department to comprehensively monitor, manage, coordinate, and develop this critical
10 component of the emergency medical services system. The Air Medical Working Group,
11 convened pursuant to 2025 Senate Concurrent Resolution 86 (SCR86), confirmed that Hawaii
12 requires a formalized governance structure and designated staffing within the Department to
13 provide statewide oversight, coordination, performance monitoring, quality improvement, and
14 disaster readiness for air medical services.

15 Senate Bill 3203 (SB3203) represents the initial and necessary implementation step for the
16 Department to operationalize the recommendations outlined in the SCR86 (2025) Air Medical
17 Working Group Report. By establishing statutory authority, dedicated staffing, and sustainable
18 funding mechanisms, this measure enables the Department to begin systematically
19 implementing the Working Group's recommendations to improve coordination, efficiency,
20 equity, and outcomes for air medical resources across all islands.

21 It should be noted that the positions proposed under this measure are intended to be initially
22 established using Rural Healthcare Transformation Funds for the first five years. This approach
23 allows time for emergency air medical transport licensure and accreditation fees to be collected
24 and deposited into the EMS Special Fund. Over this initial implementation period, the revenue
25 generated from air medical and ambulance licensing would serve as the long-term, sustainable

1 funding mechanism to support these positions and programmatic functions within the
2 Department.

3 This phased funding strategy represents a prudent investment in rural health infrastructure and
4 is directly aligned with the goals and intent of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
5 (CMS) Rural Healthcare Transformation initiatives. Leveraging time-limited federal resources to
6 establish durable state infrastructure allows Hawaii to strengthen its emergency air medical
7 systems while ensuring long-term sustainability.

8 This measure provides the framework necessary for DOH to strengthen statewide governance,
9 improve coordination across counties and healthcare systems, support data-driven quality
10 improvement, enhance disaster preparedness, and promote health equity by improving timely
11 access to emergency medical care for rural and neighbor island communities. Collectively, these
12 actions will drive improved performance and patient outcomes for air medical resources across
13 the State.

14 For these reasons, the EMSIPSB strongly supports SB3203.

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



ALOHACARE

To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Maria Rallojey, Public Policy Specialist

Hearing: Wednesday, February 25, 2026, 10:57am, Conference Room 211

RE: **SB3203 SD1 Relating to Air Medical Services**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of the intent of SB3203 SD1**. This measure would (1) establish the Statewide Air Medical Services Program within the Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Systems Branch to coordinate and strengthen air medical services; (2) provide for an air medical director, an air medical program manager, and an air medical coordinator; and (3) provide for annual licensure and accreditation fees to be deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund for costs of the program.

AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan founded by Hawai'i's Community Health Centers and the Queen Emma Clinics. We serve over 66,000 Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dual-eligible residents on all islands. Since 1994, AlohaCare has partnered with providers, government entities, and community-based organizations to meet the evolving needs of our safety net community as Hawai'i's only health plan focused solely on Medicaid-eligible individuals. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for equitable access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare is committed to whole-person care by improving access to care for our members. Hawai'i residents in rural and remote communities have long been accustomed to travelling to urban areas to access specialized care and routine treatment. Residents of Moloka'i and Lāna'i rely on air travel to access emergency and, oftentimes, routine medical care. Timely access to care can hinge on whether air medical transport is coordinated efficiently across counties and facilities. AlohaCare already provides medically necessary transportation for eligible members to access covered services, including when members must travel to receive appropriate levels of care. Timely coordination is important so that our members can actually access the care they need.



For these reasons, AlohaCare supports efforts that reduce avoidable delays and improve the reliability of emergency and interfacility transport because those improvements translate directly into better health outcomes and more equitable access to care. We defer to the Department of Health and the administration on the most appropriate and sustainable funding approach to operationalize this program.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of the intent** of **SB3203 SD1**.

SB-3203

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:32:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/25/2026 10:57:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Speedy Bailey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support



Hawaii Medical Association

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Date: February 25, 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 SB 3203 RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES. DOH; State Emergency Medical Services System; Statewide Air Medical Services Program; Emergency Medical Services Special Fund

Position: Support

This measure would establish the Statewide Air Medical Services Program within the Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Systems Branch to coordinate and strengthen air medical services, provide for an air medical director, an air medical program manager, and an air medical coordinator, provides for annual licensure and accreditation fees to be deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund for costs of the program.

HMA supports this measure which can strengthen statewide coordination of aeromedical services, improve timely access to definitive care, support safer interfacility transfers, and reduce avoidable delays when minutes matter. Reliable air medical transport is a lifeline for patients across our islands—especially for emergencies and for neighbor-island residents who must reach specialty and tertiary care on O‘ahu. In addition, a coordinated statewide approach helps ensure consistent clinical standards, clear oversight, and reliable readiness for disasters and major incidents.

HMA appreciates these efforts that prioritize patient safety, workforce readiness, and transparent performance monitoring for an essential component of Hawai‘i’s emergency care continuum.

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

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Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

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REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

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