

STAND. COM. REP. NO. **2503**

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 20 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2645
S.D. 2

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs, to which was referred S.B. No. 2645, S.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to amend Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 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.

Prior to the hearing on this measure, your Committee posted and made available for public review a proposed S.D. 2, which:

- (1) Establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety;
- (2) Prohibits the counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code;
- (3) Establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund;



- (4) Limits the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to once every three years;
- (5) 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
- (6) Amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 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.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the proposed S.D. 2 from the Office of the State Fire Marshal, State Fire Council, and one individual.

Your Committee received comments on the proposed S.D. 2 from the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Your Committee finds that Act 209, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024 (Act 209), established the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Prior to the adoption of Act 209, Hawaii was the only state without a state fire marshal, instead relying on the State Fire Council. However, in the aftermath of the 2023 Maui wildfires that devastated Lahaina, the State determined that reforms were necessary. Notably, the Department of the Attorney General initiated an investigation of the incident through the Fire Safety Research Institute, part of UL Research Institutes, to identify necessary changes. Establishing the Office of the State Fire Marshal was the first of these changes.

To further address the risk of wildfires and the need for greater fire safety more generally, the report issued by the Fire Safety Research Institute made additional recommendations, including bolstering statutory authority of the Office of the State Fire Marshal to address the wide spectrum of fire safety issues, delineating responsibilities and reporting structures between the State Fire Marshal and the State Fire Council, and creating an organizational structure to immediately address the



State's fire-safety priorities effectively. Accordingly, the Legislature passed Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025 (Act 302), to implement these recommendations.

This measure expands on and refines the changes made by Acts 209 and 302 by clarifying the minimum standards for fire safety across the State, establishing a dedicated special fund, and making other critical changes to fire inspection requirements and the organizational structure of the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Your Committee has amended this measure by adopting the proposed S.D. 2 and further amending the measure by repealing the appropriation in section 18 of Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, and inserting an unspecified appropriation amount.

Your Committee notes that this measure, as amended, contains an unspecified appropriation amount. Should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it considers inserting an appropriation amount of \$2,212,000 for positions within the Department of Law enforcement and expenses of the Office of the State Fire Marshal for fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.

Your Committee further notes the concerns expressed by the Department of Land and Natural Resources that a selection process in which the Governor is solely responsible for selecting the State Fire Marshal could compromise effective evaluation of the State Fire Marshal's performance. Accordingly, your Committee respectfully requests that subsequent Committees to which this measure is referred consider this issue.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2645, S.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2645, S.D. 2, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Public Safety and
Military Affairs,



CAROL FUKUNAGA, Chair



The Senate
 Thirty-Third Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
 Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
 PSM

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:		
SB2645 SD1 <i>am</i>	PSM, WDM	2/18/26		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313		
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
FUKUNAGA, Carol (C)	✓			
LEE, Chris (VC)	✓			
HASHIMOTO, Troy N.	✓			
INOUYE, Lorraine R.	✓			
DECORTE, Samantha	✓			
TOTAL	5			
Recommendation:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature:				
				
Distribution:				
Original	Yellow	Pink		
File with Committee Report	Committee	Drafting Agency		

*Only one measure per Record of Votes