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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL HB1913, HD 1
RELATING TO VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

BY

JOHN P. ALAMODIN
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

February 18, 2026

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and members of the committee:

I am John P. Alamodin, Director, Office of Veterans Services, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense

The Office of Veterans Services (OVS) provides written testimony to SUPPORT HB 1913, HD 1.

This measure seeks to establish within the Office of Veterans' Services a mental health coordinator position at Tripler Army Medical Center.

Veterans in Hawaii face unique mental health challenges, including trauma, stress, and adjustment disorders. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 7% of all veterans develop post-traumatic stress disorder at some point – and that rate goes up to 29% for those who participated in the operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Veterans in Hawaii often face significant behavioral health challenges including high rates of post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. The stigma around behavioral health treatment along with a shortage of providers and other behavioral health care professionals further compound the difficulties. Many Veterans and their families do not access the necessary care due to the stigma, which can be influenced by military branch, family, cultural, or religious factors.

Hawaii Veterans can also face challenges when it comes to accessing care and services that support the behavioral health, health and wellness, and overall well-being. When navigating community and government resources, the system of care can sometimes feel fragmented to overwhelming, leaving many Veterans unsure and often feeling uneasy about seeking help.

The VA Pacific Islands Health Care System (VAPIHCS) is the primary provider of medical care, mental health services, and other benefits for Veterans in Hawaii. At times, accessing these services and navigating a large health system can be perceived as complex and fragmented arising from the user's view of the VA system and psychological factors affecting Veterans seeking care. While the VA offers valuable resources for veterans, accessing these services comes with significant barriers. These barriers arise both from structural issues within the VA system and from psychological factors that affect veterans seeking care.

The proposed Mental Health Coordinator position could serve as a key navigator for Veterans needing access to behavioral health services across the State to not only access behavioral health care within the VAPIHCS and VA community care providers, but also other community providers, government resources, and community agencies, particularly in underserved areas with limited treatment and support resources. In addition to the scope of work outlined in the bill proposal, the outcomes of the behavioral health care coordination may also reaffirm and better understand the other factors impacting access to care, especially in underserved geographical areas. These factors would include, but not be limited to the shortage of licensed providers and other behavioral health support professionals.

The Office of Veterans Services truly appreciates that the introducers of this measure are legislators within the House of Representatives who understand that Veterans and many other members of our communities face barriers that limit access to critical behavioral health care. Breaking through the barriers and stigma surrounding mental health will take a collective investment to ensure access to resources and essential care for everyone in need.

The Department of Defense supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of HB1913, HD 1.

John P. Alamodin
john.p.alamodin@hawaii.gov

HB-1913-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 1:30:46 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carlos A. Santana	Veterans Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is important legislation to provide mental healthcare management for veterans. I fully support this legislation and urge all legislators to vote in favor.



**OAHU REGION
HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS CORPORATION**

**Committee on Health
Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice-Chair**

February 18, 2026, 10:00 A.M.
(Via Video Conference)
Conference Room 329
Hawaii State Capitol

Sean Sanada
Oahu Region Chief Executive Officer
Hawaii Health Systems Corporation
Re: Testimony in Support

HB 1913, HD1 Relating to Veteran Mental Health Services

Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the Committee on Health:

Aloha and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1913, HD1, which establishes and funds a Mental Health Coordinator position within the Office of Veterans' Services ("OVS") that will be responsible for coordinating mental and behavioral health services for veterans statewide.

As the state agency responsible for the Daniel Kahikina Akaka State Veterans Home ("DKASVH"), the Oahu Region embraces the importance of mental health support services and believes that HB 1913, HD1, will create an invaluable resource for our vulnerable veterans and their families. Through a dedicated Mental Health Coordinator who is responsible for screening potential patients and facilitating referrals in accordance with applicable regulations set by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and other relevant agencies, veterans and their families would have greater knowledge of available health care services and placements into appropriate facilities could be more efficiently streamlined along the continuum of care.

Again, thank you for considering our testimony in support of this important measure.

LATE

HB-1913-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:20:17 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	CARES	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support.

HB-1913-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 6:41:14 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1913. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr

HB-1913-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 12:53:14 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Plowman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support!

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1913 HD1
A BILL RELATING TO VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

PRESENTATION TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

BY

Thomas M. Driskill, Jr
COL, USA, MSC (Ret)
698 Kaulana Place
Honolulu, Hawaii
96821

February 18, 2026, 10:00 AM

Conference Room 329

Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and members of the committee,

I am Tommy Driskill and I am testifying in support of HB1913 HD1 with amendments made by the House Committee on Public Safety.

Based upon my past years of experience as President/CEO, Hawaii Health Systems Corp (HHSC) Aug 1997 to Dec 2009, during which time I oversaw the planning, construction, opening and initial operation of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home, Hilo and my work representing Director, Office of Veterans Services, DOD, SOH, interest in both the construction of the Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home (DKA SVH), Kapolei 2021 through 2024 as well as planning and design preparation for our new 3d Hawaii State Veterans Home (HI SVH) Maui 2025, I feel uniquely qualified to offer comments on this legislation.

First, please allow me to say, I embrace and applaud the concept of allocating additional state resources to enhance mental health services direly needed by our Hawaii Veterans and I appreciate the great efforts put forth to bring this important bill before your committee.

Second, establishing an administrative mental health specialist position as a member of the Hawaii Office of Veterans Services (HOVS) staff located at Tripler Army Medical Center would be a wonderful enhancement for the HOVS Veteran outreach capability. With this new position working as a direct report to the Director, HOVS, the agency would have a state-wide focus seeking ways to improve mental health services for all Veterans throughout the State of Hawaii. That is a function that the agency currently does not have the capability to perform. Being located in the HOVS Office at Triple, the position could work hand-in-hand with other members of the HOVS staff, many of whom also have state-wide focused missions thus creating a synergy that would complement a holistic approach to offering Veteran services across the State. Of course, due to proximity, the person in the position would also be available to support DKA SVH upon request. Bottom Line: With a state-wide mission and with the person in this position operating under the direct supervision of the Director, HOVS, tremendous benefit could be derived in several ways, (1) identifying Veteran mental health service gaps across the state, (2) coordinating efforts to close these gaps by sharing/realigning resources wherever

possible, (3) supporting Veterans in their quest navigating the system to obtain support and (4) proposing, when justification warrants, further future allocation of additional state resources to address the inevitable growing need for more Veteran mental health support.

My final comment on HB1913 HD1 is that passage of this bill should not replace or adversely impact any priorities indicated in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of my support for HB1913 HD1.

Thomas M Driskill Jr
COL, USA, MSC (Ret)
tmdriskill@gmail.com
808-499-9917

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1913 HD1
A BILL RELATING TO VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**PRESENTATION TO
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
FEBRUARY 18, 2026 10:00AM**

Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and members of the Committee,

I am Dr. Kathleen M. McNamara and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1913 HD1 which seeks to establish within the Office of Veterans Services a mental health coordinator position to be located at Tripler Army Medical Center.

I retired as a clinical psychologist working with the veterans of Hawaii for over 27 years through my administrative and clinical staff positions with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in Hawaii. Among my duties was to serve for over ten years as the psychologist traveling to each of the neighbor islands to provide psychological services. Much of my time with the VA after that was as a full-time psychologist assigned to the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Kahului. Through that position I provided clinical services to veterans and their families across the Island of Maui and on the Island of Molokai.

As a provider of mental and behavioral health services I am very aware of the nature and extent of the challenges which our veterans and their families face. I also am keenly aware that many individual veterans or the loved ones of the veteran experiencing a behavioral health challenge can find it very confusing to know what would help, who could help, what steps are needed to access help from a qualified provider, especially in a timely way, and what consequences may follow due to the stigma often associated with mental health issues.

These challenges are compounded by the shortage of qualified providers across the State. The shortage is not remedied by telehealth if the person does not have access to what is needed for virtual appointments – the technology, devices, or the infrastructure. The shortage remains. Available appointment times do not magically expand. Beyond all of these considerations is another very basic obstacle – the perceived fragmentation of the system of care for behavioral health services. Those who are not part of the system, or familiar with the system in some way, can become overwhelmed sorting through what they believe may or may not be possible, and may then decide to avoid seeking help.

The position of mental health coordinator authorized through this legislation can become part of a solution. The Coordinator will have the responsibility to serve as the point of contact for veterans and

their families with behavioral health challenges. The individual assigned will be responsible for coordinating across resources available through the Department of Veterans Affairs, State of Hawaii behavioral health programs, and other qualified providers. This coordination relies on clinical services in place, and may result in further highlighting the nature and extent of what is needed and what solutions may be considered. However despite the shortage of services and providers the Coordinator will serve a critical role in support of our Hawaii veterans and their loved ones.

As a provider who has assisted our veterans for many years I want to express my appreciation to those who have introduced this bill. This reflects your awareness of the challenges facing our veterans, their loved ones, and others in their communities and your commitment to act in support of minimizing, possibly even eliminating, the obstacles they encounter on their journey to better health and wellness. Thank you.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen M. McNamara, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, kmcnamara7@aol.com/808-351-5567

HB-1913-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:00:45 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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LATE

HB-1913-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 12:25:30 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1913 HD1.

Gregory Misakian