

**STATE HEALTH PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

**JOSH GREEN, MD**  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

**KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH**  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

**JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD**  
ADMINISTRATOR

February 11, 2026

**TO:** HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair  
Honorable Members

**FROM:** John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to  
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

**RE: HB 2173 -- RELATING TO AMBULANCES**

**HEARING:** Friday, February 13, 2026 @ 09:00 am; Conference Room 329

**POSITION:** SUPPORT with COMMENTS

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Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 2173 with comments.

This bill proposes to purchase one advanced life support (ALS) ambulance and equipment for central Maui along with the personnel needed. As our island population grows, the need to meet the healthcare needs of the population is also necessary.

Central Maui, now facing substantial population growth, lacks an ALS ambulance. This leads to slower response times in medical emergencies, increasing risks of preventable death or long-term disability. An additional ambulance would fill this gap.

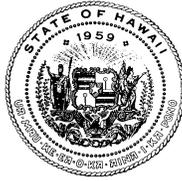
The measure's statewide air ambulance component also boosts equity and reliability across all islands. Flexible air coverage complements ground support, saving lives during time-sensitive emergencies.

SHPDA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for hearing HB 2173

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of (HB2173)  
RELATING TO AMBULANCES**

REPRESENTATIVE GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Friday, February 13, 2026 at 9:00 AM | Room Number: 329

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) respectfully requests
- 2 \$1,750,000.00 and recurring funding to support the ambulance unit, staffing, station
- 3 operations, and related needs, and requests that this measure be considered as a vehicle to
- 4 provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and requests outlined
- 5 in the Governor's executive budget request.
  
- 6 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure offering testimony and proposed
- 7 amendments.
  
- 8 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Systems Branch
- 9 (EMSIPSB), on behalf of the Department, respectfully submits this testimony in strong support
- 10 of this measure, while respectfully requesting a targeted amendment to ensure alignment with
- 11 related legislation and statewide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) planning efforts.
  
- 12 In partnership with county EMS leadership, EMSIPSB has conducted a comprehensive review
- 13 and primary needs assessment of ground ambulance resources statewide, with a forward-
- 14 looking analysis of system needs over the next five years. This assessment was informed by
- 15 current and historical 911 EMS response data, operational demand, population growth,
- 16 geographic access, and system performance benchmarks.

1 **Data:** Statewide 911 EMS data clearly demonstrate that Maui County is experiencing sustained  
2 and increasing demand for emergency medical services, particularly within Central Maui. Based  
3 on calendar year 2025 Maui County EMS data, there were more than 15,790 total 911 EMS  
4 responses countywide. Of these, over 5,342 emergency responses originated from Central Maui  
5 alone, accounting for more than 34 percent of all EMS responses in the county. The Kahului and  
6 Wailuku service areas, along with the broader Central Maui region, represent the highest  
7 concentration of EMS demand and consistently experience significant resource strain.

8 The Department recognizes that in calendar year 2025, approximately 90 percent of 911  
9 emergent EMS calls across Maui County were responded to in less than 19 minutes. The  
10 Department also monitors quality benchmarks that measure first patient contact time, with a  
11 target that 90 percent of emergent responses achieve first patient contact in less than 11  
12 minutes. Additionally, national EMS benchmarks recommend transport times from scene to  
13 hospital of less than 25 minutes. In Maui County, the current median transport time is  
14 approximately 34 minutes, reflecting the county's geographic challenges and the presence of  
15 remote and rural areas that are not within close proximity to acute care hospitals.

16 While the EMS system continues to perform at a high level given these constraints, EMSIPSB  
17 recognizes that sustained call volume, increasing demand in Central Maui, and longer transport  
18 times place ongoing pressure on unit availability and response reliability. EMSIPSB believes that  
19 the addition of an advanced life support 911 ambulance and associated staffing resources will  
20 improve system resilience, reduce unit hour utilization, and enhance overall quality of care for  
21 Maui County's 911 EMS system.

22 EMSIPSB strongly supports the portion of House Bill 2173 (HB2173) that appropriates funding  
23 for an additional 911 advanced life support ambulance to be based in Central Maui. This  
24 request aligns with the Department's strategic, data-driven plan for the placement of additional  
25 911 EMS resources over the next five years.

1 **Amendment Request:** While supporting this measure, EMSIPSB respectfully requests that  
2 HB2173 be amended to focus solely on the 911 EMS ground ambulance request for Central  
3 Maui and that the air medical services provisions within the bill be removed or amended.

4 EMSIPSB makes this request to avoid duplication and to maintain alignment with parallel  
5 legislation addressing air medical services. Specifically, Senate Bill 3203 (SB3203) and its  
6 companion measure House Bill 2508 (HB2508), relating to air medical services, have been  
7 introduced based on the recommendations of Senate Concurrent Resolution 86 (2025), which  
8 established the Air Medical Working Group. These measures support the intent of the air  
9 medical provisions currently included in HB2173.

10 The Air Medical Working Group produced a comprehensive report exceeding 100 pages that  
11 outlines statewide recommendations for governance, oversight, integration, and sustainability  
12 of air medical services. SB3203 and HB2508 propose to provide resources to EMSIPSB to  
13 formally establish an Air Medical Section within EMSIPSB. This section would be responsible for  
14 implementing and integrating the Working Group's recommendations into a coordinated,  
15 statewide air medical system.

16 EMSIPSB believes that addressing air medical services through SB3203 and HB2508 provides a  
17 more appropriate and comprehensive framework for this complex system-level work, while  
18 allowing HB2173 to remain focused on the immediate and critical need for additional 911  
19 ground ambulance resources in Central Maui.

20 For these reasons, EMSIPSB strongly supports HB2173, with the requested amendment to focus  
21 exclusively on the 911 EMS ambulance resource for Central Maui. The Department believes  
22 that the addition of this resource will improve response reliability, operational efficiency, and  
23 overall quality of emergency medical care for the residents and visitors of Maui County.

24

25

1 **Offered Amendments:**

2 (1) Purchase one advanced life support ambulance and related equipment to be based in  
3 the central Maui area of the county of Maui and fund pay-related personnel costs for state-  
4 certified emergency medical services personnel. ~~and~~

5 ~~(2) Increase the predictability and stability of available air ambulance services for all islands in~~  
6 ~~the State.]~~

7

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

Council Chair  
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair  
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Councilmembers  
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Tom Cook  
Gabe Johnson  
Tamara Paltin  
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez  
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**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
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February 12, 2026

TO: The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair  
House Committee on Health

FROM: Alice L. Lee  
Council Chair 

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF FEBRUARY 13, 2026; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF  
HB 2173, RELATING TO AMBULANCES**

I support this measure to fund the Department of Health to fund an advanced life support ambulance to be based in Central Maui.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. Central Maui's growing population has a significant need for additional emergency services.
2. Funding this effort would help reduce death and disability among residents and visitors by ensuring more timely response to 911 calls.
3. This measure is consistent with Maui Island Plan policy 4.6.1.f: "Encourage expansion and improved access to emergency care in all communities."

Thank you for your consideration.

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## Hawaii Medical Association

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
Representative Sue Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair

Date: February 13, 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 HB 2173** RELATING TO AMBULANCES. Emergency Medical Services; Advanced Life Support Ambulance; Central Maui; Statewide Air Ambulance Network System; Department of Health; Appropriation.

#### **Position: Support**

This measure would appropriate funds to the Department of Health to purchase one advanced life support ambulance and related equipment to be based in central Maui, fund pay-related personnel costs for state-certified emergency medical services personnel, and increase the predictability and stability of available air ambulance services for all islands in the State.

Timely emergency care is essential to improving survival and health outcomes, particularly in growing communities facing rising call volumes. HMA supports this measure to strengthen emergency medical response capacity in Maui and across Hawaii by expanding advanced life support resources and reinforcing the stability of interisland medical transport. Investing in additional ground ambulance capacity and trained emergency personnel will improve response reliability and help ensure that patients receive rapid, appropriate care when minutes matter most. A coordinated statewide approach will also promote consistent clinical standards, clear oversight, and dependable readiness for disasters and other large-scale emergencies in our state.

HMA appreciates these efforts that prioritize patient access and safety for an essential component of Hawaii's emergency care continuum.

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

#### **2026 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team**

Elizabeth A Ignacio, MD, Chair • Robert Carlisle, MD, Vice Chair • Christina Marzo, MD, Vice Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

#### **2026 Hawaii Medical Association Officers**

Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President • Jerald Garcia, MD, President Elect • Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, Immediate Past President  
Laeton Pang, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

## REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

Brittany Lyte. "Game Changer? Free Medical Flights Start For Some Neighbor Island Residents." *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 20 Jan. 2026.

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Wu N. State selects REACH for Maui County's aeromedical transport services. [Honolulu Star Advertiser July 11 2024.](#)

Hawaii Department of Health. [DOH issues notice of award for emergency aeromedical ambulance transport service for Maui county.](#)

Hawaii Air Ambulance and Medical Escort Costs. <https://airambulance.com/locations-served/hawaii-air-ambulance/> Accessed Feb 1 2026.

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Hawaii residents complain of high prices for medevac flights. <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/29981390/hawaii-residents-complain-of-high-prices-for-medevac-flights/> Accessed Feb 1 2026

### **2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers**

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Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

### **2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team**

Beth England, MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

**HB-2173**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:13:57 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
William Bailey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.

**HB-2173**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 4:46:46 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
william t watkins jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Should read ground ambulance. This rig ideally would cover East Kahului as well as Paia and the lower portion of Haiku. Thanks

**HB-2173**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:26:14 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kaikane Beam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kaikane Beam. I am 37 years old and have been a resident of Kahului and Wailuku, Maui for my entire life. I am also a Maui County Firefighter, stationed at Wailuku Fire Station (Engine 1).

I am writing this testimony in support of HB2173. As firefighters, we are dispatched to all medical related emergency calls along with the ambulance (ALS) as first responders. We work closely with and witness firsthand the demand and call volume that has increased over the years in the central area.

Many times, due to the significant call volume, we arrive alongside medics from outside our district to handle these calls. The ambulance crews work tirelessly to make sure response times are as fast as possible, but are limited due to the short staffing of ambulance and personnel.

As both a resident and first responder, having another ambulance in our district would be beneficial to our community and ensure that if my family is in any kind of emergency, I can be confident that they will be provided the best and most timely care possible.

Ambulance personnel work long shifts and dedicate themselves to providing high quality care. We need to make sure they have enough resources to do their job properly. Our population in our central area keeps growing, and our emergency services need to match this growth. Adding more ambulances and personnel is long overdue and this is our time to change that.

Please support and implement this bill, and give our workers and community what we deserve.

Mahalo.

Kaikane Beam - Engine 1

**LATE**

**HB-2173**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:22:56 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Kingdon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legislators:

I am submitting this testimony representing only myself and my community as a citizen, though it is relevant that I am a working paramedic and also have a background in public health and EMS system design.

I am writing in support of HB2173 (and companion bill SB2934) with the following corrections/amendments that I understand are in progress:

- Currently, Central Maui (Wailuku, Kahului, Waikapu, Waiehu, Waihee, Puunene, Sprecklesville) only has \*one\* state-contracted 9-1-1 ambulance, based in Wailuku. Until corrected/amended, the current language of the bill indicates there are two. A second ambulance currently based in Kahului is a private ambulance that focuses on inter-facility transfers and cannot be relied upon for 9-1-1 EMS coverage. Thus, Maui's most populous and high call-volume district has only (1) 9-1-1 ambulance, whereas other highly populated districts such as West, South, and Upcountry Maui each have two. Even Molokai now has two. Other than Central Maui, the only other districts with only one state-contracted 9-1-1 ambulance in Maui County are the rural areas of Lanai and Hana.
- Current language in this bill referencing "air ambulance services" should be removed, as this statute should focus on improvements to our ground EMS coverage. For many years, our Maui County EMS system did in fact include Maui Medevac helicopter services, however since rotor craft service was cleaved from our system by the State of Hawaii Department of Health in the last iteration of its RFP/contract process, air services should not be conflated with ground in this bill. We are fortunate to have a good working relationship with REACH 48, which has taken on sole responsibility for EMS helicopter services within Maui County.

Maui County is in desperate need of this additional asset in our Central district, and I do not use the term 'desperate' lightly. Again, this is the most populous and high-volume district within our system, where population growth and changes in population density are causing further strain. When out-of-district response and ambulance units are called into the 'vortex' of Central Maui, this has a repercussive effect, including depletion of paramedic resources in those other districts. Other first responders such as the Maui County Fire Department are valuable, but are strictly Basic Life Support (BLS) providers. Maui County EMS is the only Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider, with paramedics on each unit, bringing extensive training and scope of practice

including advanced airways, vascular access, dozens of emergency medications, life-saving cardiovascular interventions and cardiothoracic procedures, and other essential ALS assessment and treatment modalities to the patient's side.

An additional ambulance is needed not only for routine response, but also as a crucial asset in the event of multiple casualty incidents (MCI). From frequent moderate-scale MCIs, such as multi-vehicle collisions, to infrequent but large-scale MCIs, such as firestorms and tsunamis, Maui County residents and state legislators should be shocked that once the Wailuku ambulance is on a case, the next-closest state-contracted ambulances would be coming from Kihei and Haiku (over 8 miles and 12 miles from Kahului proper, respectively) - and that is only if those ambulances are in station and not already on calls of their own. We do have one paramedic special response unit based in Ma'alaea, which provides rapid response to districts including Central Maui, but as our only unit capable of and nationally recognized for special operations including marine ALS (launching with Coast Guard Station Maui), tactical paramedicine (embedding with Maui Police SRT), and medical incident command (such as at the August 2023 firestorms), this unit needs to be preserved as a non-transporting specialized asset - but does need plentiful ambulances to whom a response unit paramedic may delegate patients as they triage casualties.

The community will suffer longer response times and increased morbidity and mortality without improvement of our coverage via the crucial addition of this Central Maui ambulance.

Thank you for your serious consideration.

Sincerely,

David Kingdon, MPH, Paramedic  
Wailuku, Hawaii