



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of (HB2314 HD2 SD1)
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL SYSTEMS OF CARE**

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 10:15 PM | Room Number: 016

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) supports this measure
3 offering testimony.

4 **Department Testimony:** The State of Hawaii Department of Health’s Emergency Medical
5 Services & Injury Prevention Systems Branch (EMSIPSB) **strongly supports** this measure and
6 provides testimony on behalf of the Department to modernize Hawaii Revised Statutes §321-
7 221 through §321-230 and strengthen the State’s emergency medical systems of care.

8 Hawaii’s existing Emergency Medical Services (EMS) statutes were developed decades ago and
9 reflect emergency medical services practices and system structures that largely date back to the
10 late 1980s, when EMS was primarily viewed as a means of transporting patients to the hospital.
11 Since that time, the role of EMS has evolved significantly. Today, EMS is an integrated and
12 essential component of the healthcare and public health system, providing out-of-hospital,
13 community-based care that includes assessment, treatment, stabilization, telehealth-supported
14 services, and coordination of care, in addition to acute medical response and patient transport.
15 This measure is a critical step forward in updating Hawaii’s statutory framework to better

1 reflect present-day emergency medical services practice and the evolving public health role of
2 modern emergency medical systems of care.

3 By modernizing and clarifying key statutory definitions, the bill recognizes the full scope of
4 modern EMS systems and promotes improved coordination across all islands, including both
5 urban and rural communities. These updates will also ensure that the State Department of
6 Health and EMS agencies have statutory authority and flexibility to integrate state-of-the-art
7 technologies and community-based strategies to expand access to care. This includes the use of
8 mobile integrated health, community paramedicine, and telehealth services to better meet
9 local community needs, reduce barriers to care, and strengthen continuity across the
10 emergency and healthcare delivery system.

11 Passage of this measure is essential to Hawaii's ability to access and fully leverage federal
12 funding opportunities, including the Rural Health Care Transformation Program. Outdated
13 statutory language currently creates barriers to eligibility and limits the State's ability to expand
14 rural EMS services and integrated systems of care. By aligning statutory definitions with current
15 practice and national standards, this measure positions Hawaii to meet federal requirements,
16 maximize available matching funds, and make strategic investments in rural EMS capacity,
17 workforce development, data sharing, and coordinated systems of care.

18 These statutory updates will strengthen emergency response capabilities statewide, resulting in
19 improved health outcomes across Hawaii, particularly in rural and underserved communities,
20 while ensuring the responsible and effective use of state and federal resources.

21 For these reasons, the Department of Health strongly supports this measure and urges its
22 passage.

23 **Offered Amendments:** None

24 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

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April 2, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, 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 2314-HD2-SD1 -- RELATING TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL
SYSTEMS OF CARE**

HEARING: Tuesday, April 7, 2026 @ 10:15 am; Conference Room 016

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 2314-HD2-SD1, with comments.

This bill is intended to modernize Hawai'i's emergency medical services statutes by updating them to a comprehensive, time-sensitive emergency medical systems of care model that reflects how emergencies are managed today. By aligning with national best practices, this bill supports coordinated, evidence-based care for critical emergencies, standardized statewide protocols, and improved preparedness for disasters and mass-casualty incidents so residents on every island can receive timely, effective emergency care.

This bill will strengthen Hawai'i's ability to save lives in time-sensitive emergencies by modernizing EMS law into an integrated "emergency medical systems of care" framework that connects pre-hospital response, hospitals, trauma and critical care, and disaster response statewide. By aligning with national best practices, the bill supports coordinated, evidence-based care for emergencies like trauma, heart attacks, strokes, sepsis, and burns, which can improve survival and reduce long-term disability. It also expands statewide coordination tools such as standardized protocols, stronger data collection and evaluation (including a trauma registry), improved communications and 9-1-1 dispatch oversight, and better monitoring of air-medical services, which helps ensure residents in rural and neighbor island communities receive timely, consistent emergency care and improving preparedness for disasters and mass casualty incidents.

HB 2314-HD2-SD1: testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued

We defer to the Department of Health the costs and implementation details; and we thank EMS program and the members of the Emergency Medical Service Advisory Committee (EMSAC) for their support and advice on these needed statewide system improvements.

In closing, this bill will bring Hawai'i's emergency response framework into alignment with modern best practices and today's real-world needs. By strengthening statewide coordination, communications, and quality improvement across the full emergency medical systems of care, especially for time-sensitive conditions like trauma, stroke, heart attack, sepsis, and burns, this bill will help ensure that residents on every island can access timely, consistent, lifesaving care when minutes matter most.

Thank you for hearing HB 2314-HD2-SD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2314 HD2 SD1

RELATING TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL SYSTEMS OF CARE

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘okolokolo

(Senate Committee on Judiciary)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

‘Apelila 7, 2026

10:15 AM

Lumi 016

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB2314 HD2 SD1** which modernizes Hawai‘i’s emergency medical services laws to establish a comprehensive, integrated, time-sensitive emergency medical systems of care model aligned with national best practices. OHA appreciates recent amendments that require the Department of Health to include mobile integrated health care into the community paramedicine program, expand the entities with which the department is to explore and develop partnerships to include community colleges, colleges, universities, and professional organizations, clarify the employment of telehealth to enhance access and improve the patient experience, and extend the sunset date for interim rules adopted by the department from July 1, 2023 to July 1, 2029.

This bill reflects the reality that modern emergency care depends on integrated statewide systems that coordinate pre-hospital response, transport, facility-based care, communications, and data systems for time-sensitive conditions such as trauma, stroke, cardiac events, sepsis, and burns. Updating statute to reflect a true systems-of-care model will improve coordination, standardization, and accountability across emergency response partners and better position Hawai‘i to respond to everyday emergencies as well as disasters and mass casualty events.

Reliable and well-coordinated emergency systems are especially important for geographically isolated and rural communities, where distance, workforce shortages, and transport constraints can significantly affect outcomes. Strengthening statewide coordination, communications interoperability, air-medical integration, and data-driven quality improvement supports more equitable emergency care access across all islands. The clarification that counties retain primary authority over service levels, unless otherwise determined through the state process, also helps preserve appropriate local responsiveness within a stronger statewide framework.

For Native Hawaiian communities, timely emergency care is a significant health equity issue. Native Hawaiians experience disproportionate burdens in several time-sensitive health conditions, including heart disease and stroke, making rapid, coordinated emergency response especially important to beneficiary outcomes.¹ System modernization that improves response time, triage accuracy, continuity of care, and statewide planning helps reduce preventable death and long-term disability. OHA also supports the bill's emphasis on emergency medical services for children, advisory council capacity, and stronger statewide planning and evaluation.

For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs respectfully urges this Committee to **PASS HB2314 HD2 SD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.

¹ Papa Ola Lōkahi, *E Ola Mau: An Update on the Health and Well-Being of Native Hawaiians* (December 2023), <https://www.papaolalokahi.org/wp-content/uploads/E-OLA-MAU-2023-Update-of-all-Workgroups.pdf>