



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

February 19, 2026

To: The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Chair,
The Honorable Mike Lee, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor

Date: Thursday, February 19, 2026

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: H.B. 2387 RELATING TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION MEDICAL BENEFITS

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The **DLIR supports** this measure to ensure first responders receive timely and appropriate medical treatment associated with firefighting duties.

HB2387 proposes to amend HRS §386-21.9 by:

- Expanding workers' compensation medical benefits for firefighters as defined in §386-21-9 to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, cervix, colon, esophagus, ovary, pharynx, skin, female reproductive organs, including the uterus, endometrium, and fallopian tubes, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma.
- Specifying that an employer may prove that the cancer or disease was not associated with the firefighting duties to deny medical benefits under workers' compensation law.

II. CURRENT LAW

§386-21.9 defines medical care, services, and supplies for firefighters suffering from cancer. If a claim for leukemia, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, or cancer of the lung, brain, stomach, esophagus, intestines, rectum, kidney, bladder, prostate, or testes filed by an employee with five or more years of service as a firefighter is accepted or determined to be compensable, §386-21 shall remain applicable; provided that the employer shall be liable for medical care, services and supplies for a minimum of one hundred ten per cent, and not to exceed one hundred fifty per cent of fees prescribed in the Medicare Resource Based Relative Value Scale

applicable to Hawaii as prepared by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

§386-21 defines medical care, services, and supplies and provides that immediately after a work injury sustained by an employee and so long as reasonably needed the employer shall furnish to the employee all medical care, services, and supplies as the nature of the injury requires.

§386-73.5 states the DLIR Director has original jurisdiction over all controversies and disputes arising out of workers' compensation.

§386-85 states the presumption of employment and compensation for a work-covered work injury in the absence of substantial evidence to the contrary.

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

The Department fully supports this measure to ensure that first responders receive timely and appropriate medical treatment to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, cervix, colon, esophagus, ovary, pharynx, skin, female reproductive organs, including the uterus, endometrium, and fallopian tubes, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma when it is determined that said cancer or disease was associated with firefighting duties.

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jeremey Irvine and I testify in strong support of HB2387.

Firefighters face unavoidable exposure to toxic smoke, carcinogens, and hazardous materials every time we respond to structure, vehicle, wildland, and industrial fires. These exposures accumulate over an entire career and significantly increase cancer risk.

According to the [International Association of Fire Fighters](#), firefighters experience a 9 percent higher cancer diagnosis rate and a 14 percent higher cancer mortality rate than the general population. Cancer is now the leading cause of firefighter line-of-duty deaths.

Many of these cancers take years or decades to develop, long after the initial exposure. Requiring firefighters to individually prove causation delays treatment and creates unnecessary barriers to care at the moment it is most critical.

This bill recognizes modern medical science and expands workers' compensation medical coverage to include cancers that are clearly linked to firefighting exposures. It ensures firefighters can access timely medical care without having to fight a second battle while facing a life-threatening illness.

Firefighters accept risk to protect our communities. This measure ensures our communities stand behind firefighters when that risk becomes cancer.

I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo.

HB-2387

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 5:14:06 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/19/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tay Soares Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tay Keaweluahi Soares Jr. , and I am a firefighter in Hawai‘i County. I am writing in strong support of HB2387.

Firefighters face repeated exposure to carcinogens throughout the course of our duties. Modern structure fires involve synthetic materials, plastics, treated woods, industrial chemicals, and toxic combustion byproducts that were not present in the past. Even with proper PPE, decontamination protocols, and safety standards, exposure is cumulative and unavoidable over the span of a career.

Cancer is now one of the leading causes of line-of-duty deaths among firefighters nationwide. Expanding workers’ compensation medical coverage to include additional cancers recognizes the evolving science and the real risks associated with this profession.

HB2387 reflects:

- An acknowledgment of documented occupational hazards
- Alignment with national research linking firefighting to increased cancer incidence
- A commitment to protecting those who protect our communities

Firefighters willingly accept risk to life and limb in service to the people of Hawai'i. However, when long-term occupational exposure results in serious illness, the burden should not fall solely on the firefighter and their family.

This bill provides fairness, medical security, and peace of mind to those who dedicate their lives to public safety. It ensures that if we become ill due to the hazards inherent in our profession, we are not forced into prolonged legal battles to prove what research already supports.

Supporting HB2387 is not only about policy — it is about honoring service, protecting families, and standing behind the men and women who respond without hesitation when our communities call.

Mahalo for your consideration and your continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Hawai'i's first responders.

Respectfully,

Tay Keaweluahi Soares Jr.

Fire Rescue Specialist, Hawai'i Fire Department

73-4535 Iki Place, Kailua Kona, HI 96740

[808-238-6956](tel:808-238-6956)

HB-2387

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 7:40:27 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/19/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Courtney Kacir	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I am writing regarding my **SUPPORT** for HB 2387. Relating to workers compensation medical benefits.

Firefighters face a significantly higher risk of developing and dying from cancer compared to the general population, largely due to the toxic, carcinogenic environment of their profession. As of 2024, cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths for firefighters, responsible for 66% to 75% of career firefighter deaths, making this a critical health crisis.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Courtney Kacir, RN BSN

Honolulu, Hawaii

https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/pdf/firefighter_cancer_reduction.pdf

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/chemicals/firefighting.html#:~:text=Fire%20fighters%20are%20rescue%20professionals,scenes%20and%20at%20fire%20stations.>

HB-2387

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:42:53 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/19/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Kukahiko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-2387

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 9:10:05 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/19/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KAMUELA GUTH	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB2387 — Relating to Workers’ Compensation Medical Benefits

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB2387. Firefighters face repeated exposure to toxic smoke, carcinogens, and hazardous environments in the line of duty. Scientific evidence shows firefighters have significantly higher cancer risks compared to the general population due to these occupational exposures. Expanding workers’ compensation coverage to include additional cancers is a necessary step to protect those who risk their lives to protect our communities.

HB2387 ensures that firefighters who develop job-related cancers receive the medical care they need without financial hardship. The bill appropriately recognizes that many cancers linked to firefighting may develop years after exposure and that proving causation can be difficult for affected workers and their families.

By passing HB2387, Hawaii will demonstrate its commitment to taking care of those who serve and sacrifice for public safety. Our firefighters should never have to fight both cancer and the system meant to support them.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure.

Respectfully,

Kamuela Guth