

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2498, HD2
RELATING TO CARE HOMES.**

SENATOR CAROL FUKUNAGA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Hearing Date and Time: FRI., March 20, 2026 @ 3:15 pm

Room Number: 016

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** No impact to the Department of Health (Department).
- 2 **Department Position:** The Department submits testimony in support of HB2498 HD2.
- 3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health, Office of Health Care Assurance (OHCA)
- 4 establishes regulatory requirements to protect patients and licenses health care facilities,
- 5 including care homes. Aging care homes in Central Oahu, serving kupuna, people with
- 6 disabilities, and medically fragile individuals, are highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as
- 7 hurricanes, extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and prolonged utility outages. The Department
- 8 supports this pilot in its effort to help care home providers enhance their resilience against
- 9 natural hazards by helping to implement structural and operational resilience improvements.
- 10 Strengthened care homes reduce risk to residents, mitigate strain on emergency responders,
- 11 and accelerate community recovery post-disaster, protecting some of our most vulnerable
- 12 residents while reinforcing community resilience and public health infrastructure.

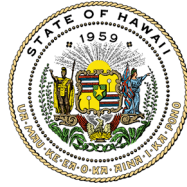
13 We defer to the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) regarding
14 enhancements to physical structures beyond regulatory requirements for emergency
15 preparedness purposes.

1 Should this measure be enacted, OHCA will commit to providing technical assistance to
2 HIEMA in interpreting the relevant sections of Hawaii Revised Statute (HRS) and Hawaii
3 Administrative Rules (HAR) that relate to the physical environment of licensed facilities to help
4 ensure its activities through this pilot do not conflict with regulatory requirements.

5 **Offered amendments:** None

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
KAHU HO'OMALU PŪLIA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
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HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4420

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2498 HD2,
RELATING TO CARE HOMES

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

March 20, 2026

Aloha Chair Fukunaga, Vice-Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) respectfully submits this testimony in support of HB2498 HD2, which establishes the Central O'ahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program. This program aligns with HIEMA's mission to protect Hawai'i's communities by enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience, especially for our most vulnerable populations:

- **Protecting Vulnerable Populations**
The bill targets licensed care homes serving kupuna, individuals with disabilities, and medically fragile residents—groups that face heightened risks during natural disasters and utility disruptions. Strengthening the physical and operational resilience of these facilities directly contributes to safeguarding lives and health.
- **Comprehensive and Practical Resilience Measures**
The pilot program's focus on structural improvements such as roof reinforcements, impact-resistant windows, and backup power systems, alongside operational supports including vulnerability assessments and technical training, addresses critical gaps in disaster readiness for care homes.

- **Strategic Prioritization and Equity**
By prioritizing facilities serving low-income residents, those operating in high-risk hazard zones, and older structures, the program ensures resources are directed where needs are greatest and where the impact will be most meaningful.
- **Enhanced Community Stability and Recovery**
Improving care home resilience reduces emergency response burdens and supports quicker community recovery following disasters, advancing overall public safety and well-being.

HIEMA looks forward to partnering with care homes and community stakeholders to implement this pilot program effectively. We respectfully request the committee's favorable consideration of HB2498 HD2 to advance Hawaii's preparedness and resilience for vulnerable populations.

HIEMA strongly supports HB2498 HD2 and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this important measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

James Barros: james.barros@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300



March 20, 2026

Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Sen. Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Sen. Chris Lee, Vice Chair

RE: HB2498 HD2, Relating to Care Homes

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee –

Navian Hawaii is a nonprofit organization supporting the needs of Hawai'i's aging population, including through hospice, palliative care, and integrated support services. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of HB2498 HD2, Relating to Care Homes. This bill would enhance the resilience of care home settings in Central Oahu against natural disasters, climate-related risks, and extended utility disruptions.

Navian Hawaii currently works with a number of care homes and patients throughout Oahu, including in the 96797 postal zip code, to provide hospice and palliative care. We are acutely aware of the operational and structural difficulties many of these facilities face.

Care homes often serve individuals with complex medical and social needs, making them particularly vulnerable during natural disasters or other emergencies. Many of these facilities are also decades old, which poses a significant risk particularly as the frequency and severity of natural disasters increase.

The proposed Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program emphasizes both physical infrastructure improvements and operational preparedness. This would reduce risks, maintain continuity of care, and ensure that kupuna can remain safely housed and supported even in adverse conditions.

The pilot program's focus on Central Oahu is a prudent initial step in making care home settings more sustainable, offering a model to inform statewide efforts in the long term.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

TESTIMONY OF LESLIE DOOR

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair

Friday, March 20, 2026
3:15 p.m.

HB 2498, HD2

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs, my name is Leslie Door, Director of Product, Risk & Regulatory Compliance for Zephyr Insurance Company and Property Chair for Hawaii Insurers Council. The Hawaii Insurers Council is a non-profit trade association of property and casualty insurance companies licensed to do business in Hawaii. Member companies underwrite approximately forty percent of all property and casualty insurance premiums in the state.

Hawaii Insurers Council (HIC) **supports** this bill, which establishes the Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program.

This measure addresses a critical and increasingly urgent gap in Hawai'i's disaster preparedness framework: the resilience of licensed care homes serving kupuna, individuals with disabilities, and medically fragile residents. Many of these facilities operate in aging structures, have limited financial capacity, and serve residents who cannot safely evacuate or endure prolonged power outages without significant risk to life and health.

This bill takes a practical, targeted, and fiscally responsible approach by establishing a pilot program in a defined geographic area, allowing the State to evaluate effectiveness before considering broader expansion. Importantly, it emphasizes mitigation and preparedness rather than post-disaster response alone, which is both more humane and more cost-effective.

Coordination between the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency and the Office of Health Care Assurance will be key to aligning emergency preparedness with licensing and resident safety

oversight. The inclusion of evacuation planning requirements and a clear reporting obligation to the Legislature reinforces accountability while allowing flexibility in implementation.

Finally, the bill's rulemaking authority allows the administering agency to adapt technical standards as hazards, building practices, and mitigation technologies evolve, without the need for repeated statutory changes.

HIC believes that investing in care home resilience is not only a moral obligation to protect our most vulnerable residents, but also a sound public policy decision that can reduce emergency response costs, minimize displacement, and support faster community recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Mar 20, 2026

MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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Roxanne U. Bolden

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Jennifer Hartssock

The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: HB2498 HD2 – Relating to Care Homes

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a statewide, cross-disability, non-residential Center for Independent Living (CIL) that supports people with all types of disabilities to live, work, and participate fully in their communities in Hawaii. We **support HB2498 HD2 with conditions.**

HB2498 HD2 would require and appropriate funds for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) to establish a Central Oahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program to assist eligible care home facilities to implement structural and operational resilience improvements, with a report to the Legislature, effective 7/1/3000 and sunseting 6/30/2031. Many disabled residents and kupuna currently live in care homes in Central Oahu, and recent disasters have underscored how dangerous power outages, heat, smoke, flooding, and communication failures can be for people who rely on mobility devices, ventilators, refrigerated medications, and other life-sustaining supports.

From an Independent Living perspective, we see two truths at once:

- First, we want to see far more investment in home- and community-based services so that people are not forced into institutional or quasi-institutional settings when they could live in the community with appropriate supports.



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- Second, as long as many disabled people and kupuna **do** live in care homes, it is a public safety and disability-rights imperative that those homes be resilient, prepared, and able to maintain life-sustaining services before, during, and after disasters.

HB2498 HD2 is therefore high-priority for AILH, but the details of implementation matter. We offer the following conditions and recommendations.

1. Make disability-specific resilience standards explicit

The bill's focus on "structural and operational resilience improvements" is promising but broad. To truly protect residents with disabilities and complex medical needs, we urge the Committee to clarify that HI-EMA's pilot must include concrete disability-specific resilience standards, such as:

- Backup power that is sufficient to operate critical medical equipment (ventilators, oxygen concentrators, powered wheelchairs, lifts, refrigeration for medications) for a meaningful duration, not just minimal lighting.
- Safe evacuation and shelter-in-place plans that account for wheelchair users, people who cannot use stairs, people who are blind or low-vision, deaf or hard of hearing, and people with intellectual, developmental, or psychiatric disabilities, with clear staff roles and training.
- Accessible communication procedures, including redundant methods (visual, auditory, plain-language, multiple languages) to share alerts and instructions with residents, families, and staff before and during an event.

Hawaii Healthcare Emergency Management and HI-EMA's Integrated Preparedness Plan already identify healthcare coalitions, long-term care facilities, and "at-risk individuals" as core emergency-management partners, and this pilot should be explicitly aligned with those frameworks.



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2. Center residents, families, and disability advocates in the pilot design

We appreciate that HB2498 HD2 requires a report to the Legislature, but resident and family voices need to be built into the pilot itself, not just the back-end report. From an Independent Living standpoint, resilience planning is strongest when it is co-designed with the people most affected.

We recommend that the Committee encourage HI-EMA, in the bill or in the committee report, to:

- Consult with residents with disabilities, family caregivers, Centers for Independent Living, and cross-disability advocacy organizations in Central Oahu when developing pilot criteria, technical-assistance offerings, and evaluation measures.
- Include at least one representative from a Center for Independent Living or cross-disability organization on any advisory group or stakeholder working group associated with the pilot.
- Ensure that information about the pilot and any resilience upgrades is accessible to residents and families, in plain language and accessible formats.

This is consistent with federal emergency-management guidance that stresses involving people with disabilities in all phases of planning, not just as recipients of services.

3. Ensure the pilot complements, not replaces, community-based supports

Hawaii was once seen as a national leader on long-term care financing, but we have struggled to keep up with the growing need for home- and community-based services and supports that allow people to age and live with disabilities in their own homes. AILH is concerned about any policy that could unintentionally entrench reliance on facility-based care at the expense of community-based options.



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HB2498 HD2 is framed as a **pilot program** focused on resilience, with a sunset date and a required report, which is appropriate. We respectfully request that the Committee's report emphasize that:

- This pilot is not a substitute for investing in home- and community-based services, personal assistance, and accessible housing options in Central Oahu.
- Any lessons learned from the pilot should be considered alongside strategies to keep people safely in their own homes and apartments during disasters, including people who use in-home supports instead of care homes.

Framing the program this way will help ensure the State strengthens safety in care homes **and** advances the broader goal of community integration under Olmstead and the ADA.

4. Integrate the pilot with HI-EMA's broader preparedness work

HI-EMA's Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP) for 2026-2028 outlines priorities such as mass care, sheltering, and support for populations with access and functional needs. The Central Oahu care home pilot should be explicitly integrated into that existing work so that care homes are considered part of the healthcare and community-resilience system rather than a stand-alone effort.

We recommend that the Committee encourage HI-EMA to:

- Align pilot activities with the IPP's stated capabilities and training/exercise plans for healthcare and long-term care partners.
- Coordinate closely with Hawaii Healthcare Emergency Management (HHEM) and relevant coalitions so that care homes are not preparing in isolation but are linked into regional hazard, communication, and resource-sharing structures.



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- Include in the required report information on how the pilot advanced IPP objectives related to access and functional needs and what gaps remain.

Requested Committee Action

For these reasons, Aloha Independent Living Hawaii respectfully urges the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs to PASS HB2498 HD2 **with amendments** that:

- Require disability-specific resilience standards (backup power for critical medical equipment, accessible evacuation and communication plans, and staff training).
- Build in resident, family, and disability-advocacy participation in the pilot's design and evaluation.
- Clarify that the pilot complements, and does not replace, investments in home- and community-based services and community-based emergency planning.
- Integrate the pilot with HI-EMA's Integrated Preparedness Plan and healthcare emergency-management partnerships.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure and for your commitment to protecting disabled residents and kupuna in Central Oahu during disasters.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Bolden
Executive Director



**WAIANAE COAST
COMPREHENSIVE
HEALTH CENTER**

Friday, 03-20-26 3:15PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

To: Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair,
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair

From: Ian Ross
Public Affairs Director
ianross@wcchc.com | (808) 697-3457

LATE

RE: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 2498 HD2 - RELATING TO CARE HOMES

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) **supports** H.B. 2498 H.D. 2, which would establish the Central O'ahu Care Home Community Resilience Pilot Program.

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) is a Federally Qualified Health Center dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the West O'ahu community by providing accessible and affordable medical care. We serve over 36,000 patients annually with clinics spanning from Wai'anae to Waipahu. With 53 years of service, WCCHC is committed to providing comprehensive healthcare that supports the whole person and that improves long-term health outcomes for the communities we serve.

WCCHC has operated the Waipahu Family Health Center for more than thirty years, providing care to the Waipahu community, including many kupuna, individuals with disabilities, and medically fragile residents who rely on licensed care homes for daily support.

This measure supports resident safety and continuity of care during natural disasters, climate-related hazards, and prolonged utility disruptions. Investments in resilience protects vulnerable residents and reduces strain on emergency response systems and healthcare providers during crises.

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