



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Monday, April 6, 2026 at 10:32 a.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD
Director, Sea Grant College Program,
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
and
Vassilis L. Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2581 HD2 SD1 – RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports HB 2581 HD2 SD1. HB 2581 HD2 SD1 would establish the Hawai'i Community Resilience Hub Program within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) to support the development of community-based resilience hubs across the State.

Hawai'i Sea Grant supports research, education, and extension services to improve understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems of the state, region, and nation. This includes grant programs and extension services focused on resilient communities and economies.

Hawai'i Sea Grant is well positioned to provide technical assistance through its community extension programs and to support administration of grant programs for a Hawai'i Community Resilience Hub Program through the University of Hawai'i. However, we feel agencies such as HIEMA, county emergency management agencies, and county sustainability and resilience offices are better suited to develop and coordinate a community resilience hub program as proposed in the measure.

Hawai'i Sea Grant suggests the following changes to subsection (c) on page 6:

(c) The agency shall administer the program in coordination with ~~National Sea Grant College Program at the university of Hawaii; the department of land and natural resources;~~ county emergency management agencies and county sustainability and resilience offices with guidance, technical assistance, and grant-administration support from the University of Hawai'i including the Sea Grant College Program, department of land and natural resources; community-

based, nonprofit, and Native Hawaiian stewardship organizations; and other public and private partners as appropriate.

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

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
KE KE'ENA O KA MEIA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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HOPE PO'O HO'OKELE

April 2, 2026

The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means
415 S. Beretania St., Room 211
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

The City and County of Honolulu (City) would like to offer **comments** on HB2581 HD2, Relating to Emergency Management, which would clarify the types of events that constitute disasters and emergencies for the purposes of emergency management.

The City has concerns that as written, Part I of this bill would eliminate the Governor and Mayor's ability to declare a state of emergency relating to certain emergencies, such as housing and homelessness, which greatly impact our residents. While these emergencies are not captured in the proposed definitions in HB2581, they are serious crises facing our State and Counties and swift action is routinely necessary to address real and evolving threats.

Among the many valuable uses, the current housing emergency, as declared by the Governor, has given the City the opportunity to adequately staff our newly created Department of Housing and Land Management with qualified individuals who are committed to addressing the State and City's housing crises. The current declaration has also allowed the City to expedite land leases and transactions to be able to deliver new housing to our residents.

Additionally, the City has concerns that by limiting the scope and definitions relating to emergencies, this bill may hamper the City and State's ability to proactively prepare for emergencies and constrain effective emergency management after the event.

The City is in strong support of Part II of this bill. We have reviewed the language that was added in the Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs and

The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Moriwaki, Vice-Chair
And Members of The Committee on Ways and Means
April 2, 2026
Page 2

believe that the enhanced form of community-based resilience hubs will be an essential tool in creating more resilient communities as we deal with future natural disasters. As made clear by the recent natural disasters our County has faced, community support is essential to effective disaster management. We look forward to partnering with the State to effectuate this part.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. Should there be any questions, please contact Anthony Miranda, Legislative Liaison, at 808-768-6608 or via email at anthony.miranda@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Formby', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Formby
Managing Director



Committee: Ways and Means
Hearing Date/Time: Monday, April 6, 2026 at 10:32am
Place: Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB2581 HD2 SD1 Relating to Emergency Management**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The ACLU of Hawai'i **supports Part I of HB2581 HD2 SD1**. Part I clarifies the types of events that constitute disasters and emergencies for the purposes of emergency management. Part II establishes the Hawai'i Community Resilience Hub Program within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to support the development of community-based resilience hubs across the State and leverage federal, philanthropic, and private-sector funding for disaster preparedness and climate resilience, requires annual reports to the legislature, and appropriates funds.

We take no position on Part II.

Chapter 127A was enacted to address hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and other sudden disasters—not longstanding public policy challenges. But in *Nakoa v. Governor of State*, the Hawai'i Supreme Court rejected a “narrow reading” of the statute and construed “emergency” to encompass “[l]ongstanding issues that escalate or reach crisis-levels” (including, in that case, the ongoing “affordable housing crisis”).¹

That interpretation is deeply problematic because it disturbs the constitutional balance between the Legislature and the Executive. Emergency powers are extraordinary powers. They allow the Governor to suspend statutes and bypass ordinary lawmaking processes. When those powers are stretched to cover policy challenges that have lasted for decades, that risks normalizing executive “lawmaking” over legislative lawmaking.

As one U.S. Supreme Court Justice recently observed in a separation-of-powers case,² “most major decisions affecting the rights and responsibilities of the American people...are funneled through the legislative process for a reason.” And while “legislating can be hard and take time”—and it may be “tempting to bypass” the Legislature when “some pressing problem arises”—it is “the deliberative nature of the

¹ 156 Haw. 416, 427, 575 P.3d 506, 517 (2025).

² *Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump*, 24-1287, slip op. at 46 (Gorsuch, J., concurring) (Feb. 20, 2026), https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/25pdf/24-1287_4gcj.pdf.

legislative process” that allows the public to “tap the combined wisdom of the people’s elected representatives, not just that of one faction or man.”

Part I of this measure restores that balance so that the Legislature legislates and the Executive executes. It clarifies that a “disaster” or “emergency” must involve a sudden event causing catastrophic harm—and not an open-ended public policy issue, no matter how pressing or longstanding.

To be clear, Hawai‘i’s affordable housing shortage is real and urgent. But so are many other serious challenges we face: overcrowded jails, houselessness, the high cost of living, and climate change. Many public policy issues may (and do) reach “crisis” levels. But our constitutional system does not allow the Executive Branch to decide, on its own, that a long-standing public problem should be addressed by suspending statutes and bypassing the democratic process simply by labeling it an “emergency.”

The ACLU of Hawai‘i has been directly engaged on this issue. We were a plaintiff organization in *Nā ‘Ohana o Lele Housing Committee v. Green*, a lawsuit challenging an earlier emergency proclamation “Related to Housing.”³ We also joined an amicus brief in *Nakoa* urging a narrower reading of Chapter 127A. We believe clear guardrails are needed to preserve the separation of powers and our democratic system.

HB2581 HD2 SD1, Part I strikes the right balance between empowering the Governor to act swiftly and flexibly in the face of true disasters and emergencies, while reaffirming that policymaking authority rightfully rests with the Legislature.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Hawai‘i respectfully asks that you pass HB2581 HD2 SD1.

Sincerely,



Jongwook “Wookie” Kim
Legal Director
ACLU of Hawai‘i
wkim@acluhawaii.org

³ The August 2023 suit was filed as case #1CCV-23-0001140. <https://earthjustice.org/press/2023/broad-coalition-challenges-governor-greens-controversial-emergency-proclamation-on-housing>.

With more than 4,000 Hawai'i-based members, the mission of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the United States and Hawai'i State Constitutions through legislative, litigation, and public education work. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving our communities in Hawai'i for over 60 years.

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i
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**The Thirty-Third State Legislature
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
April 6, 2026
Conference Room 211, 10:32 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz Chair
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director
RE: Support for H.B. 2581, SD1 Relating to Emergency Management

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kealii Lopez, State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan, social impact organization dedicated to empowering people age 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. We advocate for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families: health and financial security, and personal fulfillment. On behalf of our nearly 135,000 members in Hawai'i, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

AARP Hawai'i strongly supports H.B. 2581, SD1 which adds the establishment of a Hawaii community resilience hub program within HI-EMA to support development of community-based resiliency hubs around the state to leverage federal, philanthropic, and private funds for climate resilience.

AARP supports investments that help communities prepare for, withstand, respond to, and recover from disasters, particularly policies that protect older adults and enable people to age safely in place. Older adults are more likely to have chronic health conditions, mobility limitations, and reliance on medication or electricity-dependent medical equipment factors that heighten vulnerability during power outages, extreme heat, flooding, wildfires, and other emergencies. Community resilience hubs advance these goals by:

- Serving as trusted, accessible neighborhood assets before, during, and after disasters
- Providing places for cooling and charging, emergency information, food distribution, and health services
- Strengthening social connections, which AARP research shows are critical to survival and recovery during emergencies



By embedding resilience planning at the neighborhood level, the bill reflects best practices in inclusive disaster preparedness and aligns with AARP's emphasis on local solutions informed by community needs.

Many of Hawaii's older residents live in legacy neighborhoods with aging infrastructure, limited transit access, and heightened exposure to flooding, heat, and sea-level rise. Community resilience hubs can help regional neighbors organize around targeted capital improvements. These investments not only reduce disaster risk but also improve day-to-day livability, supporting walkability, public health, and housing stability which are key components of age-friendly communities.

AARP strongly supports the bill's focus on leveraging federal, philanthropic, and private funds, particularly as communities seek to access infrastructure and climate resilience funding made available through recent federal initiatives. Smaller communities and nonprofits often lack the technical capacity to compete for these funds; a statewide program within HI-EMA can help ensure equitable access, coordination, and long-term sustainability.

House Bill 2581, SD1, represents a forward-looking, community-centered approach to disaster resilience that puts people especially kupuna, caregivers, and vulnerable residents at the center of preparedness planning. By empowering communities to develop resilience hubs, Hawaii can strengthen its emergency readiness while supporting aging-in-place, climate resilience, and infrastructure modernization.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 2581, S.D.1.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:50:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wesley Oda	Testifying for Be Ready Manoa	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Be Ready Manoa fully supports HB2581 for several reasons: the recent extended Kona low flooding of the north shore and the 3/23 Manoa flood are wake-up calls where there is a need for community led hubs to provide assistance when there are limited resources at the City and State level. There are many organizations - like Be Ready Manoa - whose mission is to provide assistance following a disaster that are meant to complement the services that the City and State offer or fill in gaps, and this bill can facilitate better coordination and distribution of those services. Each community is unique and the needs will be different, so we must embrace this kind of community-centered partnership and develop a clear framework for how this can/should work.

If you look at what happened with the recent rain events, it was evident that the City could not address all of the growing needs of the impacted communities - so community organizations had to step in to provide additional assistance and coordination. Localized organizations know what their residents need - and this allows the City and State to address the most pressing, larger, island/statewide needs. HIEMA - given its mission and expertise - seems like a logical function to perform this kind of coordination.

Our country - and many others in the world - are ignoring the reality of climate change, so we must be more proactive and think of realistic solutions that will ultimately make our island state more self-reliant and resilient. The recent rain event - as well as other disasters like wildfires - are going to happen more frequently and with greater intensity. We therefore need to figure out now - while recent events are fresh in everyone's mind - a structure where organizations like Be Ready Manoa can be part of a sanctioned, community-based, hub that can serve the unique needs of its residents.



SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATOR SHARON Y. MORIWAKI, VICE-CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF HOUSE BILL 2581, HD2, SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

April 6, 2026, 10:32 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Good morning, Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee:

Earthjustice **supports** House Bill 2581, HD2, SD1, which seeks to place guardrails on the governor's and mayors' use of emergency powers under HRS Chapter 127A by amending the definitions of "disaster" and "emergency" under that statute. These amendments are necessary to reestablish the proper constitutional balance of powers between the legislature and the executive branch with respect to the enactment of laws to address important issues of public policy.

A recent decision of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, *Nakoa v. Governor of State*, 156 Hawai'i 416, 575 P.3d 506 (2025), threatens to upset this vital balance. There, the Court interpreted HRS Chapter 127A to grant the governor extraordinary emergency powers – including the power to suspend laws enacted by the legislature – to address any situation "rationally related to the health, safety, and welfare of the public." *Id.* at 424, 575 P.3d at 514. This interpretation allows for the governor to issue emergency proclamations that address "not only discrete events," but also "long-term issues" of public policy. *Id.* at 435, 575 P.3d at 525. This broad grant of authority to the executive branch undermines the balance of power enshrined in the Hawai'i Constitution, which vests the "legislative power of the State" in the legislature. Haw. Const. art. III, § 1.

To preserve the constitutional balance of powers and to avoid executive overreach, it must remain the exclusive providence of the legislature to address longstanding public policy challenges. Thus, in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling, it is vital for the legislature to amend the statutory definitions of "disaster" and "emergency" within HRS Chapter 127A such that the emergency powers granted to the governor are restricted solely to situations that involve responding to the sudden "occurrence of disasters or emergencies of unprecedented size and destructiveness" as originally intended. HRS § 127A-1(a). HB 2581, HD2, SD1 would accomplish this.

Earthjustice Testimony in **Support** of House Bill 2581, HD2, SD1

April 6, 2026

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Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

David L. Henkin, Esq.

Deputy Managing Attorney

Earthjustice, Mid-Pacific Office



SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

April 6, 2026

10:32 AM

Conference Room 211

In **SUPPORT** of **HB2581 HD2 SD1**: RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** HB2581 HD2 SD1, which will protect the public interest and our very system of constitutional democracy from the potential misuse of state and county executive branch leaders' emergency powers.

As we have seen in recent years, the lack of clear statutory guardrails for the Governor's sweeping emergency powers has resulted in emergency proclamations that have significantly undermined the public interest, the public trust in government, and the separation of powers that is a foundation of our democracy. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that attempted to use a century-long problem, rooted in nuanced economic policies and myriad social and historical factors, to broadly suspend and/or rewrite a suite of laws protecting our environmental and cultural integrity, food security, climate resilience, the public's right-to-know, fiscal transparency and accountability, and even collective bargaining rights - without any actual mechanisms to ensure that housing developed under the proclamation would be affordable, or reserved for current Hawai'i residents.

While this latter emergency proclamation was substantially scaled back in its subsequent iterations, significant concerns remain about the potential for any administration to **declare long-standing and admittedly serious social challenges - such as housing, criminal activity, or poverty - as "emergencies," and thereby exercise their power to repeal or rewrite legislation for an indefinite length of time.** Without the transparency and public accountability of the normal, democratic lawmaking process, this could easily lead to significant and long-lasting changes to public policy that unduly benefit politically connected special interests, at the expense of the public interest - and our very democracy itself.

This measure would help to mitigate the risk of executive overreach by simply ensuring that the use of executive emergency authorities of "disaster" and "emergency" are limited to actual, bona fide disasters and emergencies that require and that can actually be addressed by expedient responses.

Notably, concerns regarding the narrowness of this measure appear unfounded. This measure includes a wide range of unpredictable "climate hazards" as well as "disease or contagion outbreaks" in the definition of "disaster," and emergency responses to "infrastructure failures" due to extreme weather events, mudslides, fires, or any other conceivable cause other than deferred maintenance would likewise be covered within its provisions. There is also no arbitrary time limit to emergency responses that could address



these situations, only a requirement that timely emergency action is in fact able to avert or minimize the impacts of any declared emergency. Should an “emergency” extend beyond a period of several months, the legislature can and should exercise its policymaking and budget-setting prerogatives to address such a prolonged situation, to the extent that longer term and nuanced solutions may be necessary.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical measure.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 9:54:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clement Jung	Testifying for Kailua Alert & Prepared	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: April 3, 2026

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair and Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, Committee on Ways and Means

I am on the board of directors of Kailua Alert & Prepared, a 501c3 non-profit organization, and is a resilience hub in Kailua, Oahu with Vibrant Hawai'i. We support of HB 2581, HD2, SD1.

We need support of resilience hubs throughout the State of Hawai'i which will be a resource in a community to help provide emergency preparedness resources, disaster response support and climate resilience education for communities throughout the State. We know our community and can quickly respond to a natural disaster quickly before first responders can be on scene.

Therefore, we support this bill.

Mahalo,

Clement Jung

Board Member, Kailua Alert & Prepared

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 7:51:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John & Rita Shockley	Testifying for Free Access Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

The Free Access Coalition supports HB2581. We believe that the free access to government requires a strong balance of power.

We need to curb the excesses of the Executive branch of our government.

Mahalo for your time.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 2:10:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janice Ikeda	Testifying for Vibrant Hawai'i	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janice Ikeda, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Vibrant Hawai'i. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Since 2020, Vibrant Hawai'i has supported the training, resourcing, and coordination of Resilience Hubs which has grown into a network of 35 Resilience Hubs across Hawai'i Island and Ko'olau, O'ahu. Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hubs are developed and operate independent of Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency and other government departments. In addition to the network we directly train, resource, and coordinate, we have recently convened representatives from Hawai'i Island, O'ahu, Maui, and Moloka'i Resilience Hubs to form a statewide Resilience Coalition. These community-led systems are actively coordinating mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and reflect an existing foundation that does not require creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

Section 4 – Establishment of a “program”:

Rather than establishing a state-administered “community resilience hub program,” we recommend shifting to a flexible funding model that supports existing community-based efforts. The strength of resilience hubs lies in their independence, adaptability, and ability to respond immediately based on trusted relationships and real-time needs. Creating a formal program within a state agency may unintentionally introduce administrative burden, limit flexibility, and create barriers to participation for grassroots organizations.

A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

The Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network has recently demonstrated their ability to mobilize quickly and effectively in response to severe flooding by establishing Points of Distribution, receiving and coordinating response to thousands of community Requests for Assistance, and

standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.

Section 4(d), (e), and (g) – Structure and criteria:

As written, eligibility requirements, allowable uses, and priority criteria may unintentionally favor well-resourced organizations with administrative capacity or formal affiliations. We recommend maintaining broad eligibility and ensuring that funding is accessible to informal and place-based groups that are already serving as immediate responders in their communities.

Across the Resilience Coalition, Hubs are engaged year-round in activities that build the foundation for effective response, including clearing obstructed streams to reduce flooding risk, hosting First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid trainings, supporting social service navigation, and strengthening communication and mutual aid systems. On Hawai'i Island, hubs also coordinate large-scale efforts such as the Kaukau 4 Keiki Point of Distribution program, which serves over 6,000 students at the onset of hurricane season. These activities strengthen relationships, build skills, and create systems of mutual support that are practiced and refined over time. It is this continuous, community-led work that enables hubs to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,
Janice Ikeda
Chief Executive Officer
Vibrant Hawai'i
Email: janice@vibranthawaii.org

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 3:44:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Kailiwai	Testifying for Hope Dia-Mend Ministries	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Comments on HB2581 HD2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Uilani Kailiwai, and I serve as a Board Member and Project Lead for Hope Dia-Mend Ministries, a community-based Resilience Hub serving the Ka‘ū District on Hawai‘i Island.

I am writing in strong support of the Legislature’s intent to invest in community-based resilience. The recognition of Resilience Hubs as critical infrastructure for preparedness and response is both timely and necessary for rural and underserved communities like ours.

Our Hub is part of the Vibrant Hawai‘i Resilience Hub network and has been actively engaged in year-round mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts. This work has been carried out through trusted community relationships, local leadership, and real-time coordination, not through a centralized or state-administered program.

For this reason, I respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

Section 4 – Establishment of a Program

Rather than establishing a state-administered “community resilience hub program,” we recommend a flexible, grant-based funding model that supports existing, community-led efforts.

In Ka‘ū, our ability to respond quickly depends on trust, proximity, and the ability to act without delay. During recent severe weather and ongoing food insecurity challenges, our Hub has coordinated weekly food distributions serving hundreds of residents, supported emergency supply distribution, and responded directly to community needs as they arise.

This responsiveness is possible because of local autonomy. A formal, state-administered program may unintentionally introduce administrative delays, restrict flexibility, and create barriers for grassroots organizations that are already doing this work effectively.

A more aligned approach would be a funding structure similar to existing state partnerships—where resources are distributed to support community-led work without requiring certification, centralized control, or additional layers of administration.

Section 4(d), (e), and (g) – Structure and Criteria

As written, the eligibility requirements and criteria may unintentionally favor organizations with more administrative capacity, potentially excluding smaller, place-based groups that are often the first to respond in rural communities.

In districts like Ka‘ū, resilience work is already happening daily. This includes food distribution programs, emergency preparedness efforts, community outreach, and coordination of resources for vulnerable populations. These efforts are often led by small teams and volunteers who are deeply connected to the community but may not meet more formalized criteria.

We recommend maintaining broad eligibility and ensuring that funding is accessible to grassroots, community-based organizations that are already serving as critical points of response.

Resilience Hubs are effective not because they are centralized, but because they are local, relational, and continuously engaged. The systems, trust, and coordination needed during emergencies are built over time through consistent, community-led work.

We respectfully ask that the Legislature focus on strengthening this existing ecosystem through flexible and accessible funding, rather than creating a new program structure that may limit the very effectiveness it seeks to support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your commitment to strengthening resilience across Hawai‘i.

Respectfully,

Uilani Kailiwai

Board Member / Project Lead

Hope Dia-Mend Ministries

Ka‘ū, Hawai‘i

Phone: (808) 398-1348

You can drop that straight in. If the form strips formatting, don't worry—it'll still read clean.

If you want next step after this, I'd honestly recommend getting even 2–3 other hub folks to submit something similar—that's where this really starts to carry weight.



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Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

April 6, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

TESTIMONY ON HB 2531, HD2, SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
10:32 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwake, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau offers comments on HB 2531, HD2, SD1, which addresses emergency management and establishes a Hawai'i Community Resilience Hub Program.

HFB supports efforts that strengthen disaster preparedness and response across our state. Agriculture is on the front lines of natural disasters, and our farmers and ranchers are often among the first impacted and the last to fully recover. Recent events, including the Kona Lows, Maui wildfires, and ongoing hurricane threats, highlight the importance of coordinated, community-based approaches to emergency readiness and response.

We appreciate the measure's focus on community resilience hubs. These hubs have the potential to improve coordination, communication, and resource distribution at the local level. We respectfully note that agriculture can play an important role in these efforts. Farms and ranches are embedded within communities across the state and may serve as key partners in strengthening local food access, emergency response, and recovery capacity.

As the State continues to refine its approach to emergency management, HFB respectfully encourages consideration of the unique nature of agricultural operations. Agricultural impacts from disasters are often immediate and can also extend over longer periods due to damage to crops, livestock, infrastructure, equipment, water systems, and supply chains. Ensuring that response and recovery frameworks remain flexible and inclusive of agriculture will help support continuity of local food production during and after emergencies.

HFB looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with state and county agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to strengthen Hawai'i's overall resilience and food security.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Pepe'ekeo
Community
Development
Corporation**

**Executive
Board of
Directors**

**Tracey Wise
President**

**Wanda Louis
Secretary**

**Victoria Haili
Treasurer**

Directors:

Lito Arkangel

**Lennie
Okano-
Kendrick
Tisha
Takazawa**

April 4, 2026

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

My name is Tracey Wise, and I represent Pepe'ekeo Community Development Corporation (PCDC), a community-based Resilience Hub serving Pepe'ekeo in District 1. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

Section 4 – Establishment of a “program”:

Rather than establishing a state-administered “community resilience hub program,” we recommend shifting to a flexible funding model that supports existing community-based efforts. The strength of resilience hubs lies in their independence, adaptability, and ability to respond immediately based on trusted relationships and real-time needs. Creating a formal program within a state agency may unintentionally introduce administrative burden, limit flexibility, and create barriers to participation for grassroots organizations.

A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

The Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network has recently demonstrated its ability to mobilize quickly and effectively in response to severe flooding by establishing Points of Distribution, receiving and coordinating response to thousands of community Requests for Assistance, and standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.



**Pepe'ekeo
Community
Development
Corporation**

**Executive
Board of
Directors**

**Tracey Wise
President**

**Wanda Louis
Secretary**

**Victoria Haili
Treasurer**

**Directors:
Lito Arkangel
Lennie
Okano-
Kendrick
Tisha
Takazawa**

Section 4(d), (e), and (g) – Structure and criteria:

As written, eligibility requirements, allowable uses, and priority criteria may unintentionally favor well-resourced organizations with administrative capacity or formal affiliations. We recommend maintaining broad eligibility and ensuring that funding is accessible to informal and place-based groups that are already serving as immediate responders in their communities.

Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hubs are engaged year-round in activities that build the foundation for effective response, including clearing obstructed streams to reduce flooding risk, hosting First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid trainings, supporting social service navigation, and strengthening communication and mutual aid systems. On Hawai'i Island, hubs also coordinate large-scale efforts such as the Kaukau 4 Keiki Point of Distribution program, which serves over 6,000 students at the onset of hurricane season. These activities strengthen relationships, build skills, and create systems of mutual support that are practiced and refined over time. It is this continuous, community-led work that enables hubs to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,



Tracey Wise
President
Pepe'ekeo Community Development Corporation
pcdc96783@gmail.com

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathleen Matsuda, and I represent the Kohala Resilience Hub, a community-based Resilience Hub serving North Kohala, Hawaii island. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

Section 4 – Establishment of a “program”:

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A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

The Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network has recently demonstrated its ability to mobilize quickly and effectively in response to severe flooding by establishing Points of Distribution, receiving and coordinating response to thousands of community Requests for Assistance, and standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.

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We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,

Kathleen Matsuda

Director of Kohala Resilience Hub & Outreach

(808) 895-2025

PO Box 804, Kapaau, HI 96755

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 5:51:52 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nakoolani Warrington	Testifying for Kupuna for the Moopuna	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT of HB 2581 HD2 SD1

We, Kūpuna for the Mo‘opuna, a hui of Hawaiian Homes Commission Act kūpuna beneficiary farmers from Pana‘ewa, Hawai‘i, **testify in STRONG SUPPORT of HB 2581 HD2 SD1.**

HB 2581 HD2 SD1 would establish much-needed guardrails on the definition of an “emergency,” and ensure that the use of sweeping emergency powers by our Governor and mayors are to actually protect our health and safety, rather than to evade our democratic lawmaking process. This bill will prevent current and future Governors and mayors from arbitrarily calling long-standing and complex societal challenges, such as unaffordable housing or “illegal” activity, as “emergencies” in order to suspend our environmental, cultural protection, good governance, procurement, and labor laws indefinitely.

SUPPORT and PASS HB 2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo.

April 6, 2026, 10:32 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2581 HD2 SD1 — RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and other Committee Members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports the portion of [HB2581 HD2 SD1](#)** that would clarify the definitions of “emergency” and “disaster” in Hawaii’s emergency management statute.

Specifying what constitutes an “emergency” or “disaster” under chapter 127A would go a long way toward addressing the unchecked expansion of executive power via emergency proclamations.

As Grassroot discussed in its January 2021 policy brief “[Lockdowns Versus Liberty: How Hawaii’s Experience in 2020-2021 Demonstrates the Need to Revise the State’s Emergency Powers](#),” the governor of Hawaii has extremely broad powers to define what constitutes an emergency.¹

This has resulted in an ever-growing list of “emergencies” outside of the “immediate” and “catastrophic” threats described in this bill. Thus, important social issues such as homelessness or the lack of affordable housing seem to have been declared “emergencies” to take advantage of the broad powers granted to the executive branch under the emergency management statute. Moreover, the lack of clarity in the statute has resulted in a Hawaii Supreme Court opinion that largely upheld the use of executive power for this expansive definition of emergencies.²

¹ Malia Hill, “[Lockdowns Versus Liberty: How Hawaii’s Experience in 2020-2021 Demonstrates the Need to Revise the State’s Emergency Powers](#),” Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, January 2021.

² [Nakoa v. Governor of the State of Hawaii](#), 575 P.3d 506 (2025).

This use of emergency power might be an effective way to streamline decision-making and cut through cumbersome regulations. However, it also upsets the state’s constitutional balance of powers, allows the governor to act as a “super legislator” by waiving or suspending statewide laws, deprives the Legislature of its constitutional prerogative in the crafting of state policy and frustrates efforts to enact permanent reforms.

Governing via executive order also denies the public a voice on important issues, forcing the people to rely on the courts for redress — which is a slow and expensive process that acts as an additional barrier to public input.

Even those who agree with the goals or actions of some of these questionable emergency orders have expressed concern about the justification behind them.

This problem is compounded by the lack of any meaningful time limit on emergency orders. The executive’s ability to extend emergencies via supplemental proclamations means that an abuse of executive power could be extended indefinitely.

Creating a clear definition of what constitutes an “emergency” or “disaster” under the law would limit the potential for executive overreach via emergency orders.

The list of emergency events in HB2581, combined with the bill’s emphasis on immediate danger and timely action, gives a clear indication of legislative intent and would bring the statute in line with the common understanding of an emergency.

The experiences of the past few years have highlighted the need to reform Hawaii’s emergency management statute. There is room to restore the constitutional balance of powers without handicapping the executive’s ability to respond quickly and effectively to emergency situations.

By providing guidance on what an emergency is, this bill would help reassert the Legislature’s role in the use of emergency powers.

Sincerely,

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 5:33:21 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise Boisvert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I FULLY SUPPORT THIS BILL.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 5:34:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Jorgensen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:07:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB2581, which establishes much-needed guardrails on the definition of an "emergency" and ensures that sweeping executive powers are used only to protect our health and safety—not to bypass environmental, cultural, labor, or good governance laws indefinitely. The previous committee made a significant and welcome improvement to this bill, and I commend them for it.

A New Focus on Community Resilience

The previous committee added provisions establishing the **Hawai'i Community Resilience Hub Program** within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, requiring annual reports to the Legislature, and appropriating funds for this purpose. This is a genuinely positive development.

Community disaster resilience planning helps communities identify the natural hazards to which they are susceptible and identify residents who may be most vulnerable. With this information, communities can develop strategies to reduce risk and improve outcomes during emergencies.

This new program complements the bill's original purpose beautifully. While the guardrails ensure that emergency powers are not abused, the Resilience Hub Program proactively builds the capacity of communities to prepare for and respond to real emergencies. Together, these provisions create a balanced approach: restrict the misuse of emergency declarations while investing in genuine disaster preparedness.

The bill as amended inserts the contents of HB2581, HD2 (2026), which clarifies the types of events that constitute disasters and emergencies for the purposes of emergency management. This clarification is essential to preventing the kind of mission creep we have seen in recent years.

Why the Guardrails Remain Essential

Even with the addition of the Resilience Hub Program, the core guardrails of HB2581 remain critically necessary. Emergency powers exist for genuine emergencies. They are intended to allow swift, temporary action when disaster strikes—a hurricane, a tsunami, a public health

crisis. They are not meant to be a workaround for long-standing policy challenges, no matter how urgent those challenges may feel.

In recent years, we have seen executive orders that attempt to use emergency declarations to address issues like unaffordable housing or "illegal" activity—challenges that are real, but that are not sudden, unforeseen, or temporary.

These declarations have been used to suspend environmental review, cultural protections, procurement rules, and labor standards, often with little public input and no clear end date. HB2581 draws a line: if it is not a sudden, unexpected, and temporary crisis, it is not an emergency.

Suspending environmental and cultural review is not a housing strategy. We can and must build more homes. But doing so by gutting the laws that protect our water, our cultural sites, and our communities is a false choice. HB2581 ensures that we address the housing crisis through deliberate policy—not by declaring an emergency and sidelining the public, and not by sacrificing the very things that make Hawai‘i home.

Good Governance Requires Accountability and Transparency

Emergency declarations should not be used to bypass procurement rules, weaken labor standards, or silence community voices. When they are, the public loses trust in both the process and the outcome. HB2581 ensures that when emergency powers are used, they are used transparently, temporarily, and only for their intended purpose.

The previous committee correctly recognized that existing statutory provisions governing states of emergency are vague and overly permissive, allowing the Governor's and mayors' use of emergency powers without oversight and with few restrictions.

HB2581 now does two important things: it creates a forward-looking Resilience Hub Program to help communities prepare for real emergencies, and it establishes guardrails to prevent the abuse of emergency powers for political convenience. This is a thoughtful, balanced approach.

I urge you to pass HB2581.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:31:58 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Loree Jean Searcy	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB2581

I am not in support of the government having more control over me during one of his so called emergency proclamations! I am not in favor of paying more taxes for this program!

oppose all aspects of HB2581

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 8:12:53 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

Recent disasters in the State and across the country demonstrate the importance of strengthening community-based preparedness and resilience. One way to help is to establish a community based resilience hub program across the State.

We need to be prepared to help our communities before the next disaster hits. Currently communities are lacking the organization and structure to effectively deal with disasters. Having resilience hubs established, funded and supplied before the next disaster hits would greatly help speed the recovery of our communities.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 9:48:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
dana pagalaboyd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in favor of HB2581 HD2 SD1. WE NEED THIS SUPPORT IN OUR COMMUNITIES!!!

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 11:58:47 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Uyeshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the establishment of neighborhood resilience hubs per HB2581 HD2 SD1. Kailua has many streams and the Marsh that are vulnerable to flooding, as well as being vulnerable to tsunami inundation. Many houses have single-wall construction and would not survive a hurricane. There are several roads providing ingress and egress, but many are vulnerable to landslides, fallen trees or flooding. The electrical infrastructure is also vulnerable to fallen trees and branches, as well as toppled poles in the wind. In the event of a disaster, a resilience hub would help alleviate immediate and long term effects and problems.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 5:22:44 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill to establish community hubs will support government and community groups addressing disaster situations. Providing a "hub" will improve coordination, communication to help utilize resources efficiently.

I would like to point out that Resiliency Hubs will be inclusive and help some of the groups that are most vulnerable (eg those needing American Sign Language and persons with limited English proficiency).

Amy Agbayani

Kalihi Valley.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members, My name is U'ilani Naipo, and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1**. As we have seen in Hawai'i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial "checks and balances" against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process. Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai'i's own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai'i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor's emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or "illegal activity" -- to declare an "emergency" and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself. This measure accordingly provides common-sense definitions of "disaster" and "emergency" along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late. Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify. Sincerely, U'ilani Naipo

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 6:56:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Earl Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Earl J. Kim and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Earl J. Kim

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

HB2581 HD2 SD1 — Stop Abuse of Emergency Powers

Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2026, 10:32 a.m. | Room 211

Position: **STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Benton K. Pang (Kealii). I am a retired federal biologist with 26 years of service at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. I hold a Ph.D. in Botany from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB2581 HD2 SD1.

The survival of our democracy depends on meaningful separation of powers. Legislative and judicial checks on executive authority are not formalities — they are foundational protections against overreach. When executive leaders face political pressure to act quickly on complex, long-standing problems, the temptation to misuse emergency powers is real and documented.

Recent events here in Hawai'i made this vulnerability clear. Governor Green's emergency proclamation on housing initially suspended environmental protections, cultural safeguards, public transparency requirements, procurement standards, and labor laws — all to support housing construction that lacked meaningful affordability or residency requirements. While the Hawai'i Supreme Court found that proclamation pushed the limits of executive emergency authority, the door remains open. A future Governor or mayor could declare a housing shortage, rising crime, or other persistent social challenge an "emergency," then use that designation to indefinitely bypass the very laws that protect our environment, our culture, and our democratic processes.

As a conservation professional, I have spent my career working within the legal and regulatory frameworks that protect Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources. Those frameworks exist because the legislature built them through deliberate, transparent, democratic processes. Allowing executive emergency authority to suspend them indefinitely — without defined limits, without meaningful judicial review, without legislative oversight — puts decades of hard-won protections at risk.

HB2581 HD2 SD1 establishes common-sense definitions of "disaster" and "emergency" and adds modest, reasonable guardrails. It does not strip the Governor or mayors of the authority they need to respond to genuine crises. It simply ensures that authority stays within appropriate bounds. These are not radical reforms — they are the minimum protections a functioning democracy requires.

Do not wait for a constitutional or environmental crisis to act. By then, it will be too late to undo the damage. Pass this measure now, while the legislature still has the opportunity to protect the integrity of the process.

I urge the Committee to **PASS HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Benton K. Pang, Ph.D.

Retired Federal Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (26 years)

Kaimukī, Honolulu, Hawai'i

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 9:41:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Reese Liggett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is ___ and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
William Reese Liggett

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 9:52:19 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Casey Takayama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Casey Takayama and I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

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Accordingly, I urge the Committee to PASS HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Casey Takayama

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 11:02:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bo Breda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Bo Breda and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

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Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Bo Breda

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 11:02:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter Wilson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Peter Wilson and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Peter Wilson

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 12:02:25 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allison Schaefers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: Support for H.B. 2581, H.D. 2, S.D. 1 – Relating to Emergency Management

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Allison Schaefers, and I write as a bereaved parent volunteer for the Hawai‘i Water Safety Coalition to express strong support for House Bill 2581 and for the opportunity it creates through the establishment of a Hawai‘i Community Resilience Hub Program.

The *Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan* was developed by the Hawai‘i Water Safety Coalition, a statewide partnership of more than 200 members, including government agencies, first responders, lifeguards, watermen and waterwomen, medical professionals, researchers, nonprofits, and community and cultural leaders. The plan has been recognized nationally with a Safe Kids Champion for Children Award, presented at the Safe Kids Worldwide Annual Childhood Injury Prevention Convention. This honor underscores the plan’s credibility as a rigorous, evidence-based framework for reducing injury and death.

As the lead writer of the *Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan*, released in January 2025, I am genuinely excited about the role community resilience hubs can play in making Hawai‘i’s communities safer before, during, and after emergencies. This bill creates a promising platform for locally driven solutions that align closely with the plan’s goals and its next phase of implementation.

Community Resilience Hubs as a Tool for Safer Communities

The *Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan* recognizes that many of the most effective drowning prevention strategies are community-based and place-specific. Trusted community gathering places—such as schools, libraries, parks, canoe clubs, and nonprofit facilities—are already central to preparedness and mutual aid. Community resilience hubs offer an opportunity to expand that role by serving as local centers for education, coordination, and risk reduction.

From a water safety perspective, resilience hubs can help communities:

- Share place-based knowledge about local risks
- Provide water safety, CPR, and rescue education
- Coordinate preparedness efforts for floods and extreme weather
- Strengthen communication during rapidly changing conditions

We view community resilience hubs as a natural extension of Hawai‘i’s strong tradition of community stewardship and mālama kekahi i kekahi.

A Pathway to a Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan 2.0

The *Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan* intentionally calls for a community-driven “2.0” phase—a second iteration that drills down from statewide strategy to local implementation, particularly in areas with the highest risk of drowning.

In the plan, drowning “hot spots” are defined as locations where drownings occur repeatedly over time based on historical data. Drowning “black spots” are locations with inherently dangerous or rapidly changing conditions—often with hidden hazards—where the risk of drowning is exceptionally high even if incidents occur less frequently. Many communities across Hawai‘i live near these areas and have first-hand knowledge of their risks.

Community resilience hubs could serve as an invaluable tool to help communities translate data and lived experience into action, supporting locally tailored drowning prevention strategies that reflect cultural, environmental, and geographic realities. In this way, resilience hubs offer a practical mechanism to help execute a Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan 2.0 that is grounded in community leadership and place-based solutions.

The Urgency and Cost of Drowning in Hawai‘i

Despite our deep cultural and economic connection to the ocean, Hawai‘i is facing a worsening and unacceptable drowning crisis. In 2023, Hawai‘i’s drowning rate reached 3.34 deaths per 100,000, the second highest in the nation. Drowning remains the leading cause of death for Hawai‘i’s children ages 1 to 15, and the leading cause of injury-related death among visitors. These are not rare or random tragedies. They occur with disturbing regularity, year after year, and they are largely preventable as was the case in the 2004 drowning death of my daughter Charlotte “Sharkey” Schaefer, who drowned after a major rain event saving another child from a poorly maintained and improperly flooded detention pond.

The impact of drowning is measured not only in lives cut short, but in staggering economic cost borne by the entire state. Using Centers for Disease Control and Prevention methodology that combines direct medical expenses with the statistical value of a life, the 475 drowning deaths in Hawai‘i between 2019 and 2023 carried an estimated cost of \$4.75 billion, or approximately \$10 million per life lost. These figures still underestimate the true burden, as they do not fully capture the lifelong costs of nonfatal drownings, which can result in permanent brain injury, chronic health conditions, prolonged hospitalizations, and decades of ongoing care.

Equity, Disasters, and Climate Change

This crisis is also profoundly inequitable. Children with autism are approximately 160 times more likely to die from drowning than their neurotypical peers. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents experience drowning at approximately 1.5 times the rate of the general

population, and NHPI children drown at three times the rate of other children. Addressing drowning is therefore not only about public safety—it is a matter of health equity and justice.

Drowning risk also increases dramatically during disasters and extreme weather events, including flooding, storm surge, and extreme rainfall. Climate change is intensifying these hazards, expanding flood-prone areas, and increasing exposure to dangerous water conditions. Community-based preparedness and education are therefore essential components of disaster risk reduction, not optional add-ons.

Conclusion

As the lead writer of the *Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan*, I am encouraged by the vision reflected in H.B. 2581. Community resilience hubs have the potential to become trusted, local partners in reducing drowning risk, strengthening preparedness, and supporting a future community-based Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan 2.0 that focuses on hot spots, black spots, and the communities most affected by them.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of H.B. 2581 and look forward to the collaborative opportunities it enables to keep our communities safer and more resilient.

Mahalo for your leadership and the opportunity to partner to make communities throughout our state safer.

Sincerely,

Allison Schaefer
Lead Writer, *Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan*
Bereaved parent volunteer, Hawai‘i Water Safety Coalition

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 5:15:31 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy Shaver	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Christy Shaver and I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to PASS HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely
Christy Shaver

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 7:45:03 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jody Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.

Hawai‘i’s democracy depends on a clear separation of powers, with legislative and judicial checks on executive authority. However, emergency powers can be misused when executive leaders bypass the legislative process to create, amend, or suspend policies.

Recent events have exposed this risk. A housing emergency proclamation suspended numerous environmental, cultural, transparency, procurement, and labor laws without requiring affordability or residency protections. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court noted this stretched executive authority, it also highlighted how broadly defined “emergencies” could be used to sidestep essential safeguards indefinitely.

This measure establishes clear definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” and adds reasonable guardrails to prevent misuse of executive powers. These protections are needed now to avoid future constitutional, environmental, and governance crises.

Please PASS **HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

Jody Smith

96825

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 8:16:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Wassell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is John Wassell and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
John Wassell

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 9:09:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaleiheana-a-Pohaku Stormcrow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Kaleiheana Stormcrow and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

Survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers that includes legislative and judicial “checks and balances” to protect against executive overreach. Executive branch leaders may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes are vulnerable to misuse by local executive leadership. This misuse includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Kaleiheana Stormcrow

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 10:48:52 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
irene kloepfer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Irene and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
itene kloepfer

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 11:08:11 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
emily gambino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Emily Gambino and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1**.

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Emily Gambino

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 11:43:38 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Seikai Darcy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Lisa Darcy and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1**.

When many of the laws we are living with were written, there was not as much "interpretation" and manipulation. We depend upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial "checks and balances" against executive overreach. We need emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

I moved to Hawai'i over 20 years ago and saw how savvy mainlanders from years ago and even today took advantage of local residents, their kindness and their ignorance. These turned into systems with no checks and balances. There is a great vulnerability of Hawai'i's own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai'i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor's emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or "illegal activity" -- to declare an "emergency" and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of "disaster" and "emergency" along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS HB2581 HD2 SD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Lisa Darcy, Kula, Maui, HI

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 12:09:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
DIANE CHOY FUJIMURA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

/Cmd+VAloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Diane Choy Fujimura and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Diane Choy Fujimura

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 1:25:43 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am testifying in support of HB2581 because I believe it codifies the separation of powers in our state government and protects checks and balances.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 1:50:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Kahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha WAM committee members,

My name is Greg Kahn from Molokai and I am testifying in support of HB2581 relating to Emergency Management. The proposed Hawaii Community Resilience Hub Program will serve to engage and empower communities in addressing disasters and emergencies. The enactment of this bill will fortify the ability of communities to effectively respond to events such as the recent Kona Low storms. On a secluded and rural Island such as Molokai, where the airport was not operating and the seas too rough to navigate during the storms, this Emergency Management bill can act to lessen the consequences and hardships resulting from these occurrences.

Mahalo,

Greg Kahn

Molokai

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 3:02:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1 whcih will esgablsh much needed guardrails on the definition of an "emergency" and ensure that the use of sweepin emergency powers by execugive branch leaders ARE to actually protect our health and safety.

Cheryl Burghardt

Nuuanu oahu

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 3:07:12 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Brammer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB2581 to establish community resiliency hubs across Hawai‘i. As an active member of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) serving the Kailua community on O‘ahu, I have seen firsthand both the strengths of our residents and the critical gaps that remain in our preparedness for major disasters.

Kailua is a vibrant, close-knit community, but it is also uniquely vulnerable. With its coastal geography, limited evacuation routes, and exposure to hazards such as tsunamis, hurricanes, and severe flooding, a major event could quickly overwhelm existing emergency response systems. In those first hours and days, neighbors become the true first line of support—and too often, they lack the resources, coordination, and safe gathering places needed to respond effectively.

Resiliency hubs would provide trusted, accessible locations where residents can gather before, during, and after emergencies. These hubs can serve as centers for emergency supplies, backup power, reliable communication, and medical assistance. Just as importantly, they can function year-round as places for preparedness training, CERT coordination, and community-building—strengthening relationships and readiness long before disaster strikes.

From my experience in CERT, one of the biggest challenges during an emergency is not just the lack of supplies, but the lack of coordination and clear information. After a major event, communication systems may be down, roads may be blocked, and first responders may not be able to reach every neighborhood right away. Resiliency hubs would provide a pre-designated, well-known place where people can go for accurate information and assistance, and where trained volunteers can organize response efforts more efficiently.

I am particularly concerned that many in our community are not adequately prepared for a large-scale disaster. Vulnerable populations—including kūpuna, individuals with disabilities, and those without reliable transportation—are especially at risk in a place like Kailua, where evacuation options can be limited. Resiliency hubs can be designed with these populations in mind, ensuring equitable access to life-saving resources and support.

Investing in resiliency hubs through HB2581 is a proactive and practical step toward disaster readiness. It will reduce the burden on emergency services, save lives, and help communities like Kailua recover more quickly. Most importantly, it empowers residents to take care of one another when it matters most.

It is not a question of if a major disaster will impact Hawai‘i, but when. HB2581 helps ensure that when that day comes, our communities are ready.

I respectfully urge you to support HB2581.

Mahalo nui for your consideration.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 3:30:21 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frederick Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2581 HD2 SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)
April 6, 2026 | 10:32 AM | CR 211 & Videoconference

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

My name is Frederick Smith, and I live in the Kealakekua ahupua‘a in Kona. I **strongly support HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

This measure clarifies the definition of “disaster” and “emergency” under Hawai‘i law and establishes reasonable guardrails on the use of emergency powers. In doing so, it helps ensure that these authorities are used for acute, time-limited crises—not for addressing long-standing and complex policy challenges.

Recent use of emergency proclamations in Hawai‘i, including for housing, has demonstrated how broadly these powers can be interpreted. In some cases, emergency authorities have been used to suspend environmental review, cultural protections, procurement requirements, and other core safeguards without the deliberation typically required through the legislative process.

While emergency powers are essential during true disasters, their use should remain narrowly tailored and time-bound. This bill provides needed clarity to prevent their use as a substitute for policy development through established democratic processes.

By clarifying the scope of emergency powers, this measure helps reduce fiscal risk and legal uncertainty associated with prolonged or improperly scoped emergency proclamations.

I respectfully urge the Committee to **pass this measure.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Frederick Smith

Captain Cook, Hawai‘i

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 4:04:25 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janice K T Shiira	Testifying for Shimanchu Mamuyaa	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 4:51:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANDREW ISODA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Andrew Isoda and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Andrew Isoda
Lahaina, Mau‘i

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marcia Masters, and I represent Malama Na Po'e O Ka'u/Naalehu Resilience Hub , a community-based Resilience Hub serving the Naalehu, Ka'u community. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

Section 4 – Establishment of a “program”:

Rather than establishing a state-administered “community resilience hub program,” we recommend shifting to a flexible funding model that supports existing community-based efforts. The strength of resilience hubs lies in their independence, adaptability, and ability to respond immediately based on trusted relationships and real-time needs. Creating a formal program within a state agency may unintentionally introduce administrative burden, limit flexibility, and create barriers to participation for grassroots organizations.

A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

The Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network has recently demonstrated its ability to mobilize quickly and effectively in response to severe flooding by establishing Points of Distribution, receiving and coordinating response to thousands of community Requests for Assistance, and standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.

Section 4(d), (e), and (g) – Structure and criteria:

As written, eligibility requirements, allowable uses, and priority criteria may unintentionally favor well-resourced organizations with administrative capacity or formal affiliations. We recommend maintaining broad eligibility and ensuring that funding is accessible to informal and place-based groups that are already serving as immediate responders in their communities.

Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hubs are engaged year-round in activities that build the foundation for effective response, including clearing obstructed streams to reduce flooding risk, hosting First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid trainings, supporting social service navigation, and strengthening communication and mutual aid systems. On Hawai'i Island, hubs also coordinate large-scale efforts such as the Kaukau 4 Keiki Point of Distribution program, which serves over 6,000 students at the onset of hurricane season. These activities strengthen relationships, build skills, and create systems of mutual support that are practiced and refined over time. It is this continuous, community-led work that enables hubs to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,

Marcia Masters Team Leader/Coordinator
Malama Na Po'e O Ka'u/ Naalehu Resilience hube
808-936-5639

marciamasters58@gmail.com

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 7:18:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keri Zacher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members

My name is Keri Zacher and I **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.**

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely, Keri Zacher

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 7:55:44 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katherine Fryer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB2581 HD2 SD1.

The survival of our democracy depends on a meaningful separation of powers that maintains legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may disrespect and actively challenge the foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of our state’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this pushed the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use complex societal challenges (such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity”) to declare an “emergency” and indefinitely bypass checks and balances.

This bill provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with guardrails to better prevent misuse of executive emergency authorities. Please, do not wait for a crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure. By then, it may be too late.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 9:59:49 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This important measure provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please PASS.

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 3:01:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa Armbruster	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

OPPOSE HB2581 HD2 SD1

Part 1: Amend "disaster" definition to only list major events: hurricanes, wildfires, floods, tsunamis, bioterrorism & terrorism.

Part 2: Do not need laws or government agency to direct/control community hubs. Instead, Hawaii Emergency Mgt Agency (HI EMA) can "partner" with hubs as proposed in pilot hub program in: HB2457 HD1. Better to start with a smaller, less costly program, to see if even viable. If pilot program is successful, this might increase ways to secure funding & gain more community support!

FYI: Vibrant Hawaii & CERENE are entities that have been trying to establish community hubs, but have faced many challenges with ongoing funding, maintaining community support & addressing diverse needs of different communities across the islands.

Defer HD2581 HD2 SD1 or refer back to appropriate committee to Amend Part 1 definitions; Part 2: Delete SD1 proposal, Insert pilot hub program of HB2457 HD1

Mahalo

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 5:57:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tisha Mahealani Maikui	Testifying for Hamakua Resilience Hub	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tisha Mahealani Maikui, and I represent Hāmākua Resilience Hub in Hāmākua on Hawai'i. We are a community-based Resilience Hub serving 'Ō'ōkala to Waipi'o Valley. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

Section 4 – Establishment of a “program”:

Rather than establishing a state-administered “community resilience hub program,” we recommend shifting to a flexible funding model that supports existing community-based efforts. The strength of resilience hubs lies in their independence, adaptability, and ability to respond immediately based on trusted relationships and real-time needs. Creating a formal program within a state agency may unintentionally introduce administrative burden, limit flexibility, and create barriers to participation for grassroots organizations.

A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

The Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network has recently demonstrated its ability to mobilize quickly and effectively in response to severe flooding by establishing Points of Distribution, receiving and coordinating response to thousands of community Requests for Assistance, and standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing

community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.

Section 4(d), (e), and (g) – Structure and criteria:

As written, eligibility requirements, allowable uses, and priority criteria may unintentionally favor well-resourced organizations with administrative capacity or formal affiliations. We recommend maintaining broad eligibility and ensuring that funding is accessible to informal and place-based groups that are already serving as immediate responders in their communities.

Vibrant Hawai‘i Resilience Hubs are engaged year-round in activities that build the foundation for effective response, including clearing obstructed streams to reduce flooding risk, hosting First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid trainings, supporting social service navigation, and strengthening communication and mutual aid systems. On Hawai‘i Island, hubs also coordinate large-scale efforts such as the Kaukau 4 Keiki Point of Distribution program, which serves over 6,000 students at the onset of hurricane season. These activities strengthen relationships, build skills, and create systems of mutual support that are practiced and refined over time. It is this continuous, community-led work that enables hubs to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,
t.Mahealani Maikui
Coordinator
Hamakua Resilience Hub
HamakuaHub@gmail.com

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 7:43:12 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Aynessazian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing in support of HB2581, HD2, SD1. At its core, this bill is about restoring balance—making sure that the power to shape long-term public policy stays where it belongs: with the Legislature, and ultimately, with the people.

A recent Hawai'i Supreme Court decision (*Nakoa v. Governor of State*, 156 Hawai'i 416, 575 P.3d 506 (2025)) expanded the scope of emergency powers in a way that raises real concern. It allows emergency proclamations to be used not just for immediate crises, but for ongoing, long-term issues—anything broadly tied to public health, safety, or welfare. That's a very wide lane and not the intention of executive *emergency* powers. .

Emergency powers are important. We need them in moments of true crisis—when something sudden, urgent, and disruptive happens and quick action is necessary. But they were never meant to become a pathway for making lasting policy decisions outside of the legislative process.

When that line blurs, we risk concentrating too much authority in one branch of government, and losing the checks and balances that protect transparency, accountability, and public trust. Given the past actions of the US executive branch and what we can extrapolate to expect in the future, it's clear we need to pull back executive powers back now.

HB2581 helps bring balance and clarity back. It narrows the definition of what qualifies as an emergency, ensuring these powers are used for what they were originally intended—responding to truly immediate and extraordinary events.

Big, complex challenges facing Hawai'i—whether economic, environmental, or social—deserve thoughtful, inclusive policymaking. That means public input, legislative deliberation, and shared responsibility. This bill reinforces that principle.

Pass HB2581, HD2, SD1.

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jess Baker, and I represent Nā'ālehu Resilience HUB, a community-based Resilience Hub serving Ka'u. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

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A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

The Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network has recently demonstrated its ability to mobilize quickly and effectively in response to severe flooding by establishing Points of Distribution, receiving and coordinating response to thousands of community Requests for Assistance, and standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.

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Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hubs are engaged year-round in activities that build the foundation for effective response, including clearing obstructed streams to reduce flooding risk, hosting First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid trainings, supporting social service navigation, and strengthening communication and mutual aid systems. On Hawai'i Island, hubs also coordinate large-scale efforts such as the Kaukau 4 Keiki Point of Distribution program, which serves over 6,000 students at the onset of hurricane season. These activities strengthen relationships, build skills, and create systems of mutual support that are practiced and refined over time. It is this continuous, community-led work that enables hubs to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,
Jess Baker
HUB Coordinator
Nā'ālehu Resilience HUB
206.240.8316, jesbaker24@gmail.com

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Suzanne West and I represent Waimea Resilience Hub, a community-based Resilience Hub serving the Waimea community. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

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A more effective approach would be to establish a grant-based funding mechanism that reflects existing models, such as DLNR's partnership with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, where the State provides funding to support community-led mitigation efforts without creating a government-run program, certification process, or centralized coordination structure.

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Assistance, and standing up information and resource centers. These efforts were organized and implemented by community partners in real time, without reliance on a state-administered program or centralized coordination through Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. This demonstrates that existing community networks already have the capacity, coordination, and readiness to respond effectively, and that the creation of a new government-run program is not necessary to achieve these outcomes.

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Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hubs are engaged year-round in activities that build the foundation for effective response, including clearing obstructed streams to reduce flooding risk, hosting First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid trainings, supporting social service navigation, and strengthening communication and mutual aid systems. On Hawai'i Island, hubs also coordinate large-scale efforts such as the Kaukau 4 Keiki Point of Distribution program, which serves over 6,000 students at the onset of hurricane season. These activities strengthen relationships, build skills, and create systems of mutual support that are practiced and refined over time. It is this continuous, community-led work that enables hubs to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,
Suzanne West

Waimea Resilience Hub

mikeandsuzhawaii@gmail.com

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 9:52:18 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Diane Ware and I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

Recent circumstances have highlighted the vulnerability of Hawai‘i’s own emergency powers statutes to potential misuse by local executive leadership. This includes an emergency proclamation on housing that initially suspended numerous environmental, cultural, good governance, public transparency, procurement, and labor laws, to purportedly support housing construction without any affordability or meaningful residency requirements. While the Hawai‘i Supreme Court recognized that this did push the limits of the Governor’s emergency authorities, the potential still exists for a future executive to attempt to use long-standing and complex societal challenges – such as unaffordable housing or “illegal activity” -- to declare an “emergency” and thereby indefinitely bypass the checks and balances that protect vital public interests, including in our environment, cultural integrity, and democracy itself.

This measure accordingly provides common sense definitions of “disaster” and “emergency” along with modest guardrails to better protect against the misuse of executive emergency authorities, whether now or in the years and decades to come. Please, do not wait for a constitutional, civil, or environmental crisis before adopting the critical guidance proposed in this measure - by then, it may be too late.

Accordingly, I urge the Committee to PASS HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

DLW Volcano 96785

HB-2581-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 10:06:09 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Shay Chan Hodges and I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2581 HD2 SD1.

As we have seen in Hawai‘i and across the continent, the survival of our democracy may hinge upon a meaningful separation of powers, one that includes keeping legislative and judicial “checks and balances” against executive overreach. Unfortunately, executive branch leaders may not always have the same level of respect for this foundational limitation on their authority, and may be tempted to use their emergency statutory authorities to create, amend, or suspend policies that should be developed through the democratic legislative process.

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Accordingly, I urge the Committee to PASS HB2581 HD2 SD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Shay Chan Hodges

Subject: Comments on HB2581 HB2 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Allison Barrett, and I represent Kanaka Ha'aheo/Pahoa Resilience Hub, a community-based Resilience Hub serving Pahoa in the Puna District. We support the Legislature's intent to invest in community-based resilience and appreciate the recognition of the important role that community hubs play in preparedness and response.

Our Resilience Hub is a member organization of the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hub network and participates in mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts year-round and has not relied on the creation, certification, or centralized coordination by the State.

For this reason, we respectfully recommend a structural revision to Section 4.

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We respectfully recommend that the Legislature focus on resourcing this existing ecosystem through flexible, accessible funding rather than establishing a new programmatic structure. This approach will better preserve community autonomy, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen the systems that are already in place across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully,
Allison Barrett
Co-Captain
Kanaka Ha'aheo/Pahoa Resilience Hub
kanakahaheo96778@gmail.com