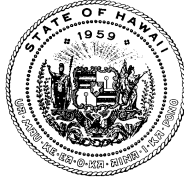


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'



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

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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of (HCR46/HR42)
RECOGNIZING OPEN WATER LIFEGUARD AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THE STATE OF HAWAII**

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON D. SAYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Room Number: 309

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) is submitting testimony in
3 support of House Concurrent Resolution 46 and House Resolution 42, which recognize Hawaii’s
4 open water lifeguards as first responders, and provides comments.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Systems Branch
6 (EMSIPSB), on behalf of the Department, respectfully submits this testimony in **support** of this
7 concurrent resolution, and provides **comments**.

8 It is important to understand that “First Responders” are defined at a local and state level.
9 “Emergency Medical Responders” (EMRs) are defined at a national level, and hold a national
10 certification through the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

11 Hawaii’s open water lifeguards are essential to the safety and wellbeing of residents and
12 visitors statewide. Every day, they provide rapid, skilled, and lifesaving interventions in
13 dynamic, high-risk environments prior to the arrival of emergency medical services personnel.
14 These responsibilities align with the modern statutory direction for defining first responder
15 personnel.

1 The EMS modernization legislation currently advancing through the Legislature (SB3134 and
2 HB2314) updates HRS §321-222 to define first responder personnel to “a person who provides
3 initial assistance until emergency medical services personnel arrive.” This modernized definition
4 reflects contemporary emergency response practice and aligns directly with the lifesaving role
5 Hawaii’s open water lifeguards perform every day.

6 It is important to note that “first responder personnel” is distinct from “emergency medical
7 responder” and “emergency medical services personnel,” which are also defined in SB3134 and
8 HB2314.

9 • **Emergency medical responders (EMRs)** are individuals who hold national certification
10 through the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

11 • **Emergency medical services personnel** include emergency medical technicians,
12 advanced emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and other health care workers
13 who are licensed or certified by the State of Hawaii.

14 These distinctions ensure clarity about training, certification pathways, and roles within the
15 statewide Emergency Medical Systems, while also supporting appropriate recognition of
16 Hawaii’s open water lifeguards as first responder personnel.

17 **Offered Amendments: None**

18 Mahalo for your consideration and for your commitment to public safety.

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/27/2026 3:42:50 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
zach edlao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for [SR54 and SCR56 / HR42 and HCR46], the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i.

Open water lifeguards perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive. Their responsibilities extend well beyond ocean rescues and include responding to cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle collisions occurring on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways.

Open water lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder.

Recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s ocean, shoreline, and public environments.

I respectfully ask that you support these resolutions and ensure they receive a timely hearing.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Sincerely,

Zach Edlao

Ocean Safety Bureau Chief

County of Maui

Department of Fire & Public Safety

21 Kinipopo St. Wailuku, HI. 96793

Ph: 808-866-7163

HONOLULU OCEAN SAFETY DEPARTMENT

KA 'OIHANA KIA'I OLA KAI O HONOLULU

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

3823 LEAHI AVE • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96815

PHONE: (808) 723-7861 • FAX: (808) 922-0411 • WEBSITE: oceansafety.honolulu.gov

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



KURT S. LAGER
CHIEF
LUNA NUI

JIMMY BARROS
DEPUTY CHIEF
HOPE LUNA NUI

To: Members of the Hawai'i State Legislature

Subject: Letter of Support – Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Honorable Members of the Legislature:

I write in strong support of HCR46/HR42, recognizing open water lifeguards—including Ocean Safety Officers and Water Safety Officers; as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community well-being throughout the State of Hawai'i.

Open water lifeguards stand as the frontline of defense between life and tragedy in some of the most dynamic and hazardous environments in the world. These amazing individuals put themselves at risk daily during rescues in dangerous shore breaks, rip currents, reef, large year round surf, and extreme hazards requiring exceptional skill, vigilance, and courage.

Open water lifeguards are often the first personnel at emergency scenes. They initiate lifesaving interventions, secure hazardous environments, coordinate incoming responders, and provide advanced care until other first-responders arrive. Their responsibilities extend well beyond dangerous ocean rescues; responding to cardiac arrests, spinal injuries, traumatic accidents, marine life attacks, overdoses, assaults and other emergencies occurring in beach parks, parking areas, and roadways.

Our personnel undergo rigorous and ongoing training in high-performance CPR, AED use, advanced water rescue techniques, personal watercraft operations, emergency scene management, and interagency coordination. In fulfilling their duties and considering specialized training, rapid emergency response, and lifesaving intervention — open water lifeguards already are; and always have, functioned as first responders by definition.

The Honolulu Ocean Safety Department strongly supports the proper recognition of our personnel and all open water lifeguards through the adoption of HCR46/HR42.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HCR46/HR42.

Jimmy Barros, Deputy Chief
Honolulu Ocean Safety Department

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 7:50:56 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Fasciano	Hawaii Fire Department Ocean Safety Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Lifeguards literally are *the first responders* in most ocean related accidents or injuries at both our guarded beaches, and offshore waters using our rescue watercraft. We are the first on scene & are incorporated in the incident command system. Our lifeguards instruct and certify the firefighters in their aquatic competency certification. We utilize response vehicles with lights and sirens, enter life threatening conditions to perform rescues at higher trained levels than any civilian agency in the country. Also lifeguards are the only public safety group in the country that has to annually recertify by passing the same physical agility test that we take to get hired.

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/27/2026 2:25:03 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Fairchild	Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of HR42 and HCR46 recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai'i. Recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. They are there for us; let's be there for them.



66-434 Kamehameha Hwy
Haleiwa, HI 96712
(808) 637-4558

info@gonorthshore.org / www.gonorthshore.org

Mike Biechler
President
North Shore Law Offices

Carol Philips
Vice-President
North Shore Surf Girls

Marcia Murphy
Treasurer
Pacific One Mortgage

Darrell Whitaker
Secretary
Camp Mokulē'ia

Lamont Brown
Director
Maya's Tapas and Wine

T.J. Cuaresma
Director
Tita Ei Nei Productions

Dave Fuga
Director
KT Protection Systems

Erica Lehmkuhl
Director
Seaside Realty

Michelle Maldonado
Director

Thomas Naylor
Director
Ke Nui Kitchen

Michael Sweetman
Director
Law Offices of
Einwechter & Hyatt

Robert Walker
Director
Integral Consulting

Bill Ward
Director
Corcoran Properties

Virginia Wallace
Administrator

Marsha Taylor
Community Outreach
Coordinator

**Hawaii State Legislature
House Committee on Labor**

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HR42

Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

Aloha Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee on Labor,

On behalf of the North Shore Chamber of Commerce, I am writing in strong support of HR42, which recognizes open water lifeguards as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout the State of Hawai'i.

The North Shore of O'ahu is world-renowned for its extreme ocean conditions, drawing visitors from around the globe to experience iconic surf breaks and coastal environments. These same conditions, while central to our visitor industry and local culture, also present significant and often life-threatening risks. Open water lifeguards are the frontline professionals who make it possible for residents and visitors alike to safely enjoy Hawai'i's ocean resources. Their specialized training, constant vigilance, and rapid response capabilities are critical to sustaining both public safety and the economic vitality of our communities.

As outlined in HR42, open water lifeguards routinely operate in dynamic and hazardous environments and are frequently among the first to arrive at emergency scenes, providing life-saving care and coordinating with other emergency personnel. Their role extends far beyond ocean rescues, encompassing medical emergencies, shoreline incidents, and public safety coordination in high-risk environments.

This designation is not only appropriate—it is necessary.

During the recent Kona Storm that devastated portions of the North Shore, including Waialua, our community witnessed firsthand the extraordinary courage and commitment of our lifeguards. In the absence of immediate formal response infrastructure in the earliest hours, North Shore lifeguards were among the very first responders who entered dangerous floodwaters to rescue trapped residents, helping to save lives under extreme and rapidly changing conditions. Their actions exemplify the very definition of a first responder.

*The North Shore Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization,
Federal Tax ID# 99-0265444*



66-434 Kamehameha Hwy
Haleiwa, HI 96712
(808) 637-4558

info@gonorthshore.org / www.gonorthshore.org

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Corcoran Properties

Virginia Wallace
Administrator

Marsha Taylor
Community Outreach
Coordinator

For the visitor industry, this recognition is especially important. Hawai'i's reputation as a safe and welcoming destination depends heavily on the presence of highly trained ocean safety professionals. Officially recognizing lifeguards as first responders reinforces the State's commitment to safety, supports workforce development and retention, and ensures these professionals receive the resources, protections, and respect commensurate with the responsibilities they carry.

We strongly urge the Legislature to adopt HR42 and formally recognize open water lifeguards as first responders. Doing so honors their service, strengthens our emergency response system, and supports the safety of both our residents and the millions of visitors who experience Hawai'i's shores each year.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

Carol Philips,

Vice President

North Shore Chamber of Commerce



March 29, 2026

The Honorable Representative Sayama
House Committee on Labor
Hawai'i State Legislature

RE: Support for HCR46/HR42 – Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

Aloha Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee,

I write in my capacity as Coordinator of the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition (HWSC) in strong support of HCR46/HR42 recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders in the State of Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition is a statewide partnership of ocean safety agencies, public safety professionals, healthcare providers, government agencies, visitor industry professionals, private sector stakeholders, and community organizations working collaboratively to reduce drowning and aquatic injury across our islands. From this systems-level perspective, the role of open water lifeguards as first responders is clear and well established.

Across Hawai'i, lifeguards are fully integrated into the broader emergency response landscape. They are often the first to identify risk, the first to intervene, and the first to provide medical care. Their work does not occur in isolation—it is part of a coordinated continuum that includes emergency medical services, fire, law enforcement, and public health systems.

In a state where drowning remains the leading cause of death for keiki ages 1–15 and visitors, and where environmental conditions present ongoing risk, this coordination is essential. Open water lifeguards perform more than 2 million preventative actions annually, reducing risk before incidents occur, and respond rapidly when emergencies escalate.

From a coalition perspective, formal recognition of lifeguards as first responders strengthens the entire system. It supports clearer alignment across agencies, improves integration into emergency response planning, and reinforces the shared goal of preventing injury and saving lives.

This resolution reflects the reality of how public safety is already being delivered in Hawai'i.

For these reasons, the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition respectfully urges your support.

Mahalo for your leadership and your commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Mahalo

Kirsten Hermstad
Coordinator, Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition
Executive Director, Hawaiian Lifeguard Association

March 25, 2026

The Honorable Representative Sayama
Chair, House Committee on Labor

RE: Strong Support for Resolution Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders HCR46 / HC42



Aloha Chair Sayama,

As President of the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association, I represent a statewide community of professionals who serve on the front lines of ocean and public safety every day. I write in strong support of HCR46 / HC42 recognizing open water lifeguards—Ocean Safety Officers and Water Safety Officers—as first responders in the State of Hawai'i.

For our members, this designation is not aspirational—it reflects the work they are already doing.

Hawai'i presents one of the most challenging aquatic safety environments in the nation. Drowning is the leading cause of death for keiki ages 1–15 and the leading cause of death among visitors, with the State ranking second nationally in drowning rates. These risks are intensified by high visitor volumes and widespread unfamiliarity with local ocean conditions. In response, lifeguards perform more than 2 million preventative actions each year, intervening before emergencies escalate. When incidents do occur, they respond immediately as highly trained professionals, often arriving first and determining outcomes in critical moments.

Our members routinely operate in unpredictable, high-risk conditions and respond not only to ocean emergencies, but also to cardiac events, traumatic injuries, and multi-agency incidents across public spaces. They fulfill the full scope of emergency response—protecting life, preserving safety, and coordinating with partner agencies under pressure.

Yet despite this, they are not consistently recognized within the same framework as other first responders.

This resolution is an important step toward correcting that gap. It aligns recognition with reality and affirms the essential role these professionals play in protecting our communities and visitors alike.

On behalf of the men and women who serve in this capacity every day, I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo for your leadership and your commitment to public safety in Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

David Vierra

Kalani Vierra
President
Hawaiian Lifeguard Association

Board of Directors

Kalani Vierra
President

Ricky Alvarez
Vice President

Bridget Velasco
Secretary

Chantal Zarbaugh
Treasurer

Directors
Cary Kayama
Jon Kaneshina
Bradley Young
Kleve Zarbaugh
Kurt Lager
Clark Abbey
Kekaulike Kealoha
Luke Evslin

Kirsten Hermstad
Executive Director

Honorary Legends

Ralph Goto
Brian Keaulana
Archie Kalepa
Mark Cunningham

Hawaiian Lifeguard Association
P.O. Box 844
Kapa'a, Hawaii 96746
Tax Id 99-0308213



March 30, 2026

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HR42, HCR46
RELATING TO THE RECOGNITION OF OPEN WATER LIFEGUARDS AS FIRST RESPONDERS**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Branch Lotspeich, and I am the Executive Director of The Rescue Tube Foundation. I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support** of **HR42, HCR46**.

Open water lifeguards are a critical component of Hawai‘i’s public safety system and are often the **first to arrive** at emergency scenes. In addition to ocean rescues, they routinely respond to cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and incidents occurring on beaches, parks, and adjacent public areas—working alongside police, fire, and EMS personnel.

They are highly trained in CPR, AED use, advanced rescue techniques, and emergency scene management, and they regularly perform duties consistent with those of recognized first responders—often under hazardous ocean conditions.

This measure does not change their responsibilities; it simply recognizes the reality of the role they already perform. Formal recognition will help ensure appropriate support, coordination, and respect across our public safety system.

Through our work at The Rescue Tube Foundation, we have seen firsthand that rapid response in aquatic emergencies saves lives.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass these measures.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Branch Lotspeich

Executive Director
The Rescue Tube Foundation

Rescue Tubes Save Lives!

Rescue Tube Foundation, Inc.
4350 Kahili Makai St., Kilauea, HI 96754
501 (c)(3) Federal Tax Identification #27-4350046

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:51:32 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chad K listman	HGEA UNIT 15	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As the current president of the Hawaiian lifeguards HGEA unit 15,

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for [SR54 and SCR56 / HR42 and HCR46], the resolutions recognizing **open water lifeguards as first responders** in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i.

Open water lifeguards perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as **ocean safety officers or water safety officers**, depending on the county—are frequently **among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes**, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive. Their responsibilities extend well beyond ocean rescues and include responding to **cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle collisions** occurring on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways.

Open water lifeguards undergo **rigorous and continuous training**, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder.

Recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the **professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect** afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s ocean, shoreline, and public environments.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Sincerely,
CHAD K LISTMAN
HANAIEI, KAUAI, HAWAII



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The House of Representatives
Committee on Labor

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 31, 2026

H.C.R. 46/H.R. 42 – RECOGNIZING OPEN WATER LIFEGUARD
AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THE STATE OF HAWAII

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO strongly supports H.C.R. 46/H.R. 42, which encourages the House of Representatives with the Senate concurring, to recognize open water lifeguards as first responders in the State of Hawaii.

Open water lifeguards, known as Ocean Safety Officers within the counties of Kauai and Maui and Water Safety Officers within the City and County of Honolulu and Hawaii County are considered the best in the world. They are trained above the standards of the United States Lifesaving Association and are the only “first responders” that must maintain certifications and pass demanding physical performance tests annually to ensure they can manage high-adrenaline and physically exhausting rescues. Many lifeguards are certified rescue watercraft (jet ski) operators, which allows them to reach victims much quicker in challenging surf. Many are also trained and certified as emergency medical technicians (EMT) which allows them to deliver advanced life support (ALS) to victims before medical professionals arrive.

Similar to other first responders (i.e. law enforcement, fire fighters, paramedics, etc.), lifeguards receive specialized training and are first to arrive and provide care or resolution at the scene of emergency. A perfect example is the recent Kona-low storm, although responding to floods are not generally within their scope of duties, lifeguards responded to assist those who were trapped in devastating conditions. The state should recognize lifeguards as first responders as they run towards dangerous situations to save lives, at the expense of risking their own lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of H.C.R. 46/H.R. 42.

Respectfully submitted,



Randy Perreira
Executive Director

COMMITTEE ON LABOR

Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair

Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair



March 30, 2026

RE: STRONG SUPPORT OF HR42 & HCR 46 *Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders*

Aloha Chairs Wakai and Fukunaga, Vice Chairs Chang and Lee and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony. The term "first responder" is commonly defined as an individual with **specialized training** who is among the **first to arrive at and provide assistance at the scene of an emergency**.

The Hawai'i Search and Rescue (SAR) Alliance is a collaborative effort of multiple agencies, teams, and organizations that consist of first responders, specifically those who conduct SAR operations across the State of Hawai'i. We advocate for the rights, resources, training support, and professional respect accorded to first responders. Our Alliance consists of subject matter experts—including local experts representing all relevant state agencies as well as national partners—who meet to determine best practices and support system development.

As many open water lifeguards are cross-trained in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and water rescue craft operations, we support that they be afforded the respect and recognition as first responders in the State of Hawaii.

There is a **3-3-3 survival rule**. Humans can live three weeks without food, three days without water and **THREE minutes without breath**. In the water, **seconds make the difference between life and death**. Gratefully, due to our lifeguards countless lives are saved from death or serious injury among residents and visitors throughout the State on a daily basis.

Open water lifeguards:

- **Meet the four defined duties of an emergency response employees:**
 - Respond/attend to emergencies
 - Treating victims
 - Assisting victims
 - Transporting victims
- **Meet the four core tenets commonly used to define a first responder:**
 - Protect human life

- Safeguard property
- Preserve evidence
- Protect the environment
- **Are cross-trained in:**
 - Emergency medical response
 - Marine fire safety
 - Law enforcement support
 - Water rescue craft operations

Open water lifeguards also have training and are experienced in emergency scene management duties which have extended far beyond ocean rescues due to the **increase of extreme weather.**

The unpredictable and hazardous environments in which they operate, and the wide range of emergency situations and locations to which they respond are vast and rapidly expanding. This has been proven time and time again but **most noticeable** during and in the immediate aftermath of the **August 8th wildfires on Maui** and the most recent in the **Kona Low storms on the North Shore of Oahu**. They did not only play an essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing but **they** were the ones who **literally saved the day and hundreds of lives!**

They are trained to **jump into action** and that is what they did **for their community**. On those grounds, and their actions on a daily basis, I respectfully urge your support for **SR54 and SCR56**, the resolutions recognizing **open water lifeguards as first responders**—which they truly are.

Many other countries formally recognize open water lifeguards as emergency responders and grant them access to programs, protections, and resources afforded to first responders. Considering the necessity of them in our state, we request that this body recognizes them as first responders in the State of Hawaii. This will also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities and enhance safety across the State's ocean, shoreline, and public environments.

I will be available for questions.

Mahalo
Rosemarie Johnson
BSE, MBA, MBB, TICC, Strategist
Director, Hawai'i SAR Alliance
Director@Hawai'iSARalliance.org

Aloha,

Je me prénomme Nora et je suis française.

Je viens par ce présent témoignage, exprimer mon expérience sur les plages d'O'ahu !

L'archipel d'Hawaii !!! ...

des noms qui font rêver, ces îles que l'on a vu uniquement au cinéma....

Alors, on envisage le voyage d'une vie, de concrétiser un rêve, d'oser parcourir tous ces kilomètres,

de traverser plusieurs aéroports immenses avec tellement de gens, de bruits, de mouvements ...

En Mai 2025, j'arrive (seule) à Honolulu !!! il est très tard, je suis épuisée et tellement survoltée d'être à Honolulu !

Le voyage s'est très bien passé,

Pour moi, c'est la première fois que je prends l'avion, c'est mon premier voyage !

Premier contact avec l'archipel d'Hawaii, c'est l'accueil des hawaiiens, le sourire, la décontraction, la gentillesse !!

Je ressens d'avance que mon séjour sera inoubliable !!!

Pour remercier la vie de ce bel événement, je décide d'offrir de mon temps de vacances en étant bénévole, quelques jours lors d'une compétition de surf pour athlètes en situation de handicap.

J'ai programmé des visites, des balades, des dégustations, une visite incroyable chez un tatoueur, des achats de cadeaux pour la famille et les amis... ... mais la première question est où aller se baigner ???

Ce qui est fonctionnel c'est que les tours des lifeguards sont très visibles aux abords des plages.

De là se pose la question de la sécurité de la baignade, des affaires que l'on laisse sur la plage, quand on ne connaît pas l'environnement public !

Alors, le seul repaire de confiance c'est les maîtres nageurs, les secouristes, les lifeguards.

Personnalités professionnelles mondialement connues et trop souvent pas assez reconnues ...

Je m'approche donc de la plage, c'est difficile de décrire la beauté infinie du lieu !!!

J'arrive pas à croire que je suis là.

Les maîtres nageurs sont là, en surveillance, tôt le matin, je décide donc de leur demander quelques informations, concernant la sécurité de la plage, des affaires pendant la baignade, l'endroit semble très familial et calme.

Je suis très bien renseignée et me voilà rassurée et prête à nager dans l'océan pacifique Hawaïien !

Durant toutes mes escapades à la plage, j'ai pu profiter sereinement de la baignade, j'ai pu nager sans stress pour mes affaires laissées sur la plage,

J'ai également remarqué le travail des lifeguards au quotidien.

Les lifeguards viennent nous aider dans l'eau si besoin, nous renseigne également, j'ai noté aussi leurs respects pour la faune aquatique,

à plusieurs reprises nous avons eu l'heureuse visite des phoques moines, les lifeguards ont mis en place un périmètre de sécurité, ont informé les baigneurs des règles de sécurité pour ces animaux et nous mêmes.

La connexion est immédiate, le milieu aquatique est un tout, on est tous connecté avec l'océan pour divers raisons et le lien irremplaçable, c'est le lifeguard!

C'est plus qu'un surveillant de baignade c'est le trait d'union indispensable, c'est tout de suite visible,

ces hommes et ces femmes connaissent l'environnement, les dangers propres au site, la météo, ils se déplacent sur l'eau avec du matériel professionnel, maîtrisent les techniques de secourisme et de sauvetage.

ils sont le premier repaire et le dernier rempart sur une plage et ses alentours, c'est un métier dans lequel vous engager votre responsabilité

à chaque instant durant votre journée de travail !

pour protéger et sauver des vies !!

À la fin de mon séjour, je suis allée remercier ces lifeguards pour leur travail et je me suis dit quel privilège de les avoir rencontré, ils ont participé à la sécurité durant mon séjour.

Pour toutes ces raisons mon séjour a été un merveilleux voyage et je souhaite vivement que les lifeguards reçoivent la reconnaissance professionnelle digne de leur engagement total et dévoué à la sécurité en mer.

Je remercie chaleureusement cette corporation de lifeguards.

Bien à vous,

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 8:33:14 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Graham Clifford	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Hello Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Graham Clifford. I am a board-certified emergency physician & EMS physician. I currently serve as the Medical Director for Honolulu Ocean Safety. I am here today speaking in my personal capacity, informed by my experience across the full continuum of emergency care.

Before becoming a physician, I was an ocean lifeguard. That experience is what set me on my career path—from the shoreline, to the ambulance system, to the emergency department, and now into medical oversight of a public safety agency. I have worked at every level of this system.

And I want to be very clear about one point:

Ocean lifeguards are not simply attendants to the beach—they are first responders in every operational, clinical, and public safety sense of the word.

As a lifeguard, I was frequently the first medically trained person on scene. I initiated resuscitations. I stabilized cervical spine injuries in surf and shorebreak environments. I treated heat stroke, cardiac events, trauma, overdoses, and critically ill patients—often in austere, time-sensitive conditions where minutes determine outcome.

That is the definition of a first responder:
the first trained individual to assess, intervene, and begin life-saving care in an emergency.

Now, as an emergency physician, I see the downstream impact of those early interventions. The patients who arrive with a pulse after drowning—those outcomes are not accidental. They are the direct result of immediate recognition, rapid extrication, and early high-quality resuscitation performed on scene.

In drowning physiology, seconds to minutes define neurologic outcome.
In cardiac arrest, early CPR and AED use determine survival.
In trauma, early stabilization prevents secondary injury.

These are not theoretical concepts—they are clinical realities I see every day.

And importantly, the data strongly supports this.

In Hawai‘i, this issue is even more acute. Drowning is consistently one of the leading causes of death among children, and it disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian communities. In a state where the ocean is not recreational for many—but part of daily life—these incidents are not rare or isolated. They are predictable, preventable public health events. This further underscores the importance of having highly trained personnel physically present at the shoreline, capable of immediate recognition and intervention. In Hawai‘i, lifeguards are not simply a safety feature—they are a critical layer of protection for some of our most vulnerable populations.

According to the United States Lifesaving Association, the chance of a person drowning at a beach protected by trained lifeguards is approximately 1 in 18 million. That is an extraordinarily low mortality rate and reflects a highly effective emergency response system. Data also show that drowning risk is approximately five times higher at unguarded beaches, and that the majority of fatal drownings occur when lifeguards are not present.

At the same time, lifeguards across the United States perform tens of thousands to over 100,000 rescues annually. This combination—high rescue volume with extremely low fatality rates—is exactly what we aim for in any high-functioning first responder system.

From a global perspective, the International Life Saving Federation and World Health Organization data show that drowning causes approximately 300,000 deaths per year worldwide and remains a leading cause of death among children and young adults. The international evidence consistently demonstrates that trained lifeguards, active surveillance, and early intervention are among the most effective strategies to reduce drowning mortality at a population level.

This is not just rescue—it is public health intervention, prehospital medicine, and emergency response happening simultaneously.

In my current role as a medical director, I oversee a system where ocean safety personnel respond daily to a wide spectrum of emergencies. They operate under medical protocols, integrate with EMS and fire, and deliver life-saving care prior to transport. In many jurisdictions across the country, similar agencies are already formally recognized and integrated as first responder entities within the emergency response system.

So when we ask whether ocean lifeguards should be recognized as first responders, the question is not whether they meet the definition.

The question is why we have not yet fully aligned policy with reality.

Recognition as first responders is not simply a matter of terminology.

It has professional implications—ensuring appropriate training, standards, and medical oversight. It has fiscal implications—supporting the equipment, staffing, and infrastructure required to deliver effective care.

And most importantly, it has community implications—strengthening the first link in the chain of survival and improving outcomes for the people we serve.

From the shoreline to the emergency department, I have seen the full arc of patient care. I have been the lifeguard initiating resuscitation, the physician receiving that patient, and now the medical director responsible for the system delivering that care.

And I can say without hesitation:

Ocean lifeguards are a critical, life-saving component of our emergency response system.

Recognizing them as first responders is not an expansion of their role—it is an accurate acknowledgment of the role they already perform every single day.

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 9:31:27 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Subject: Strong Support for HR42 and HCR46 – Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

My name is Allison Schaefers, and I am writing in strong support for HR42 and HCR46, the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i.

I write as a bereaved parent, a volunteer with the Hawai‘i Water Safety Coalition, and the writer of the Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan. While my child did not drown in the ocean, losing a child to a fatal drowning fundamentally changed my life. Through my subsequent volunteer work with the Hawai‘i Water Safety Coalition, now a program of the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association, and with the national drowning prevention advocacy group, Families United, I have come to know many families across Hawai‘i and the nation who have lost beloved ohana members to ocean drownings. Walking alongside these families has given me a deep and personal understanding of the life-and-death stakes of ocean safety, as well as the profound emotional toll these tragedies place not only on families, but also on the first responders who respond to them.

Through this work and lived experience, I have seen firsthand the indispensable role open water lifeguards play in protecting lives across our state’s shoreline and ocean environments. Open water lifeguards perform a critical public safety function, protecting residents and visitors alike in Hawai‘i’s uniquely dynamic and hazardous coastal conditions. In the course of their duties, they routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to rescue swimmers in distress, respond to serious medical emergencies, and prevent loss of life.

Across Hawai‘i, lifeguards—known as ocean safety officers or water safety officers depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel on scene during emergencies. They work in close coordination with police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services to secure scenes and protect life until additional responders arrive. Their responsibilities extend far beyond ocean rescues and regularly include responses to cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle collisions occurring on or near beaches, parks, and adjacent roadways.

Open water lifeguards undergo rigorous and ongoing training in high-performance CPR, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, and emergency scene management. Many are also cross-trained in emergency medical response, marine fire safety,

law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. In practice, they routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—clearly meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder.

Formally recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the life-saving work they already perform every day. It would also acknowledge the emotional burden they carry when responding to fatalities—especially those involving children and families—and help ensure appropriate professional recognition, training support, and parity in pay and other benefits with other emergency response personnel. This recognition would further strengthen interagency collaboration across Hawai‘i’s public safety system.

Mahalo for your continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Hawai‘i’s communities.

Respectfully,

Allison Schaefer
Bereaved Family Volunteer, Hawai‘i Water Safety Coalition
Writer, Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 9:35:50 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
joshua schaefer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Support for HR42 and HCR46 – Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

My name is Joshua Schaefer, and I am writing to support **HR42 and HCR46**, which recognize open water lifeguards as first responders.

I lost my sister to a fatal drowning. This loss has shaped my understanding of how important water safety and emergency response truly are. My mother, Allison Schaefer, is the lead writer of the Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan, and through her work—and through meeting many families who have lost loved ones to ocean drownings—I have learned how vital open water lifeguards are to keeping people safe.

Across Hawai‘i, open water lifeguards are often the first people to respond during emergencies. They rescue swimmers, give CPR, use AEDs, and help people suffering from serious injuries or medical emergencies. They regularly work alongside police, firefighters, and paramedics to save lives.

Lifeguards train extensively and put themselves at risk to protect both residents and visitors. The work they do clearly matches what we expect from first responders.

Recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders reflects the reality of the life-saving work they already do every day. It is an important step in honoring their role and supporting public safety in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your commitment to protecting our communities.

Respectfully,

Joshua Schaefer

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 9:52:56 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pamela Louise Ramsay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testifying in strong support of HR42 and HRC46:

I lost my granddaughter Charlotte “Sharkey” Schaefer to a fatal drowning. Charlotte’s death was the result of a rescue attempt—what is often called a secondary or rescue drowning—and tragically, people who attempt rescues are often at even greater risk than the person they are trying to save. Our ohana’s loss has given us a deep understanding of how important water safety and emergency response truly are.

Through my daughter Allison Schaefer’s work on the Hawai‘i Water Safety Plan, and through meeting many families who have lost loved ones to ocean drownings, we have seen how often tragedy happens near the water—and how much depends on the people who respond first.

Lifeguards regularly put themselves in harm’s way to protect others. In Hawai‘i, ocean lifeguards are often the first on scene during emergencies. They make rescues, provide CPR, use AEDs, and give emergency medical care in rough surf, strong currents, and dangerous conditions, often before other responders can reach the water.

For these reasons, ocean lifeguards should be recognized as first responders. They are trained emergency professionals who make critical, life-saving decisions in some of the most challenging environments we have. Their work clearly reflects the responsibility, risk, and skill we associate with first responders.

What happened to my granddaughter shows how quickly a rescue situation can become dangerous. Lifeguards are trained to assess these risks and intervene safely, but strong systems, clear planning, and proper recognition are essential to support the work they do.

Water safety planning, prevention, and coordination save lives. They help prevent emergencies and protect both the public and the responders who step in when something goes wrong.

I support efforts that improve water safety, recognize the vital role lifeguards play, and work to prevent avoidable tragedies. My hope is that fewer families will experience a loss like ours.

Mahalo for your time and for considering the importance of water safety in our communities.

Sincerely,

Pamela Ramsay

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 9:45:44 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Leibbrandt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for [SR54 and SCR56 / HR42 and HCR46], the resolutions recognizing **open water lifeguards as first responders** in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i.

Open water lifeguards perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as **ocean safety officers or water safety officers**, depending on the county—are frequently **among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes**, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive. Their responsibilities extend well beyond ocean rescues and include responding to **cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle collisions** occurring on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways.

Open water lifeguards undergo **rigorous and continuous training**, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder.

Recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the **professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect** afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s ocean, shoreline, and public environments.

I respectfully ask that you **support these resolutions and ensure they receive a timely hearing**.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Sincerely,
Leslie

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 11:32:42 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
glenn pang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator/Representative

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for adopting the Hawai'i Water Safety Plan, as proposed in the resolutions ([SR54 & SCR56]; [HR42 & HCR46]; [SCR55 and SR53]; [HCR155 and HR147]) before your committee.

As you may know, our state has the second-highest drowning rate in the nation, and drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 15 in Hawai'i. It is also the number one cause of injury-related death for Hawai'i's visitors, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated prevention efforts.

As a formal water safety educator with the Windward Community College Professional Development program and a Water Safety/Lifeguard Instructor Trainer with the American Red Cross, I ask for your support for these two very important sets of resolutions to continue as building blocks to strengthen our statewide water safety plan.

Mahalo

Glenn R Pang
naia82904@gmail.com
(808)-829-0010 (c)

#be smart, become water safe, and enjoy our beautiful beaches and pools
[#hoea96744.com](http://hoea96744.com) [#HiOceanSafety.com](http://HiOceanSafety.com) [#HawaiiWaterSafetyCoalition.com](http://HawaiiWaterSafetyCoalition.com)
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website:
<https://hoea96744.weebly.com>

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 1:27:04 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ezgi Green	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Ezgi Green, and I am a mother and a resident of Hawaii. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of 46 HCR and its companion measure HR 42, which would formally recognize open water lifeguards as first responders in the State of Hawaii.

The ocean is part of our daily life here in Hawaii — our culture, our identity, and yes, our greatest natural hazard. Every time my child enter the water, what gives me peace of mind is the lifeguard in that tower. These are not random people — they are highly trained super humans and professionals performing over 4,000 ocean rescues a year statewide, saving approximately 2,400 lives annually on O'ahu alone. Drowning is the leading cause of death for visitors to Hawaii and the fifth leading cause of fatal injury for residents. Hawaii has the second-highest per-capita rate of resident drownings in the country.

Our lifeguards respond to, treat, assist, and transport victims. They administer CPR and emergency care before anyone else arrives. They coordinate with EMS, fire, and police on 911 calls. By every definition, they are first responders — and it is long past time they are formally recognized as such. That recognition has real consequences for how they are supported, compensated, and protected.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass both 46 HCR and HR 42, and take this important step forward for the safety of our communities and the recognition of those who protect them.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,
Ezgi Green
Waialua, O'ahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 1:54:09 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Treloar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for **[SR54 and SCR56 / HR42 and HCR46]**, the resolutions recognizing **open water lifeguards as first responders** in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i.

Open water lifeguards perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as **ocean safety officers or water safety officers**, depending on the county—are frequently **among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes**, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive. Their responsibilities extend well beyond ocean rescues and include responding to **cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle collisions** occurring on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways.

Open water lifeguards undergo **rigorous and continuous training**, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder.

Recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the **professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect** afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s ocean, shoreline, and public environments.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Sincerely,
Brandon Treloar

Kailua-Kona

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 1:55:27 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for [SR54 and SCR56 / HR42 and HCR46], which recognize open water lifeguards as first responders. It reflects the reality of the work they already perform every day across Hawai'i.

Open water lifeguards are often the first to arrive in life-threatening situations. They respond to ocean rescues, cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and emergencies along our shorelines. They work alongside police and fire, stabilize victims, manage scenes, and take on real personal risk. By every practical definition, they are already first responders.

This issue is personal for me. In 2022, I lost my 15-year-old daughter in a surfing accident at a popular West Hawaii beach on the Big Island. In those moments, seconds matter. Immediate access to trained responders can mean the difference between life and death. When no lifeguard is present, that responsibility falls on bystanders who are not equipped to respond. That gap is where preventable tragedies happen.

Lifeguards are trained in CPR, AED use, advanced rescue, and emergency response coordination. They are positioned where emergencies actually occur. Recognizing them as first responders ensures they receive the support, resources, and recognition needed to continue saving lives.

This is about aligning policy with reality and preventing future loss. I respectfully ask that you support these resolutions and ensure they receive a timely hearing.

Mahalo for your leadership and commitment to community safety.

Ocean lifeguards are not simply public safety personnel—they are highly trained **first responders** who serve as the first line of defense between life and death along Hawai‘i’s shorelines and highways. Every day, they perform dangerous water rescues, administer CPR, treat spinal injuries, respond to shark incidents, and coordinate with EMS, fire, and police—all often before any other emergency service can arrive. Their work environment is uniquely dangerous and unpredictable, requiring split-second decision-making in powerful surf, strong currents, and remote locations where immediate action is critical.

Despite these responsibilities, ocean lifeguards are often not formally recognized with the same status as other first responders. This lack of recognition affects funding, training resources, benefits, and public awareness—ultimately impacting safety for both residents and visitors.

Passing resolutions HCR 155, HCR 46, HR 42, SCR 56, and SC 54 is a necessary step to formally acknowledge what is already true in practice: ocean lifeguards are essential first responders. These measures will strengthen support, improve recruitment and retention, and ensure that Hawai‘i continues to provide the highest standard of ocean safety in the world.

Supporting these resolutions is about protecting lives, honoring those who risk their own safety daily, and reinforcing Hawai‘i’s commitment to public safety in its most iconic and high-risk environment—the ocean.

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 5:10:37 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nick Dubovsky	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in strong support of HR42 and HCR 46

Aloha, my name is Nick Dubovsky.

Ocean lifeguards should be formally recognized as first responders because they perform the same essential functions under some of the most dangerous conditions any responder faces. They are trained emergency professionals who routinely arrive first at the scene of water emergencies, conduct rescues in hazardous environments, provide emergency medical care, and make critical, time-sensitive decisions while exposed to significant personal risk.

Lifeguards operate in strong surf, fast-moving currents, and flood conditions that are often inaccessible to other emergency services. Their role requires specialized training, judgment, and a willingness to enter life-threatening situations to protect the public. Recognition as first responders accurately reflects the responsibilities they carry and the risks they assume.

Strong water safety systems and prevention efforts help reduce emergencies, but when incidents do occur, trained lifeguards are essential to effective response and to minimizing harm for both victims and rescuers.

This issue is personal for my family. My stepdaughter, Charlotte “Sharkey” Schaefer, was five years old when she died in what is known as a *rescue drowning*. She entered a flooded detention pond attempting to help another child and was overcome by the conditions herself. She did not understand how powerful or dangerous the water was, or how quickly a rescue attempt can turn fatal. Her death was preventable.

Rescue drownings like Sharkey’s demonstrate how quickly water emergencies escalate and why trained responders—and systems that support them—are so critical. Recognizing ocean lifeguards as first responders is an important step toward acknowledging their role, supporting their safety, and preventing avoidable loss of life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo.

Nick Dubovsky

3.29.26

Support for Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders [SR54 & SCR56] or [HR42 & HCR46]

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai'i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

Here on the North Shore, they perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai'i's dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments, but also by providing life-saving CPR and stabilizing measures in other first responder situations that arise on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways, like vehicular collisions, traumatic injuries, and cardiac arrests. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai'i's communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,

Ivy Ghercovici

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 6:36:54 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Fraites	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

Here on the North Shore, they perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments, but also by providing life-saving CPR and stabilizing measures in other first responder situations that arise on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways, like vehicular collisions, traumatic injuries, and cardiac arrests. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Douglas Fraites
Mililani, Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 7:12:10 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessamy Town Hornor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members fo the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue. I am writing in strong support of HCR46 RECOGNIZING OPEN WATER LIFEGUARDS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THE STATE OF HAWAII.

I submit this testimony as an individual, noting my experience as Co-Founder of the Hawaii Water Safety Coalition and member of the executive team, and as an Executive Editor of the Hawaii Water Safety Plan. Last year I also worked in a temporary capacity to intiate drowning prevention initiatives within DOH's EMS & Injury Prevention Systems Branch, and in that role I led meetings with the county ocean safety leadership on many issues.

Lifeguards not only assess risk and make preventative actions and rescues every day, they also perform life-saving interventions when every second counts well before EMS or others are on the scene. Especially in a drowning incident, seconds and minutes can be the difference between life, death, or a debilitating lifetime brain injury from lack of oxygen.

I am also testifying as a bereaved family member. In 2016 I lost my husband Mark and my daughter Mina to a storm surge at the Makapu'u Tidepools which was generated from a hurricane far offshore that the public was unaware of. After the incident I met with the lifeguards involved to learn how to make our beaches and shorelines safer. In that meeting I also learned about the circles of impact of a fatal drowning incident, that it affects lifeguards and the other first responders at every step of the way, from the beach to the ambulance to the hospital. In the case of my family members, the lifeguards shared that they were deeply affected by their loss and hoped for a different outcome. In many cases a lifeguard's intervention allows someone to live another another day. And in others a lifeguard is the one to bear witness to someone's final moments, and that is a lot to carry, especially cumulatively over the years. In that light I want to make a special note that Hawaii's lifeguards should have the same protections, supports, and resources as other first responders in Hawaii, including those that address both physical and mental health impacts.

This Resolution is a ciritical step in supporting those who support us.

Thank you for your time,
Jessamy Town Hornor

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 8:04:49 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dave Kreutzer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support the resolution to formally recognize open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders, in acknowledgment of the critical role they play in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing across Hawai‘i.

On the North Shore and throughout the state, lifeguards are often the first to arrive at emergencies, not only in the ocean, but on nearby highways, bike paths, beach parks, and public roadways. They routinely respond to severe injuries, drowning incidents, vehicle collisions, cardiac arrests, and other life-threatening situations, providing immediate medical care, CPR, and stabilization until additional responders arrive.

Lifeguards operate in some of Hawai‘i’s most dynamic and hazardous environments and regularly place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives. Their responsibilities and response capabilities align squarely with those of police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel. In many cases, they work side-by-side with these agencies to secure scenes and protect life.

Open water lifeguards undergo rigorous, ongoing training, including high-performance CPR, AED use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and specialized marine response skills. They are also uniquely required to test and requalify annually, maintaining peak physical and mental readiness to perform their duties.

Formally recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day. It would ensure appropriate professional recognition, support continued training and interagency coordination, and strengthen emergency response capabilities statewide.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to protecting the people of Hawai‘i.

Sincerely,

Dave Kreutzer

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 8:25:50 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorrin Pihana Duarte	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lorrin Duarte and I am 13 years old. I attended Junior Lifeguards for the past two years and last year participated the entire summer learning from some of the best lifeguards in the State. Their leadership and example inspired me to one day want to be a lifeguard myself.

The entire program was dedicated to training us how to be a first responder when someone needs help. Our lifeguards are always the FIRST to respond in these situations and deserve to be recognized for the courage they have to be putting their own lives on the line and their expertise in saving lives daily- in and out of the water.

Mahalo,

Lorrin Duarte

Jr Lifeguard

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 8:44:43 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

Here on the North Shore, they perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments, but also by providing life-saving CPR and stabilizing measures in other first responder situations that arise on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways, like vehicular collisions, traumatic injuries, and cardiac arrests. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Recently the North Shore lifeguards rescued hundreds of people from the floods from the Kona Low Storm. They were there before any other first responders.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition,

resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai'i's communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Beth Young
Waiialua, Hi

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 11:13:41 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kai Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

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Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Kai Hall

wso 2

oceansafety lifeguard for C&C Honolulu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 11:19:09 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paulo Dias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

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Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Paulo Dias
Waialua, Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 7:36:56 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gabriel tennberg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

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Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Gabriel Tennberg

Haleiwa, Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 8:15:24 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Chiang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. **Our North Shore lifeguards are not only the first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.**

Here on the North Shore, they perform a critical public safety function, protecting countless residents and visitors from serious injury and death in Hawai‘i’s dynamic and hazardous ocean and shoreline environments, but also by providing life-saving CPR and stabilizing measures in other first responder situations that arise on or near beaches, parks, and public roadways, like vehicular collisions, traumatic injuries, and cardiac arrests. In the course of their duties, lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant personal risk to save lives.

Across the state, lifeguards—designated as ocean safety officers or water safety officers, depending on the county—are frequently among the first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes, where they work alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional responders arrive.

Open water/ocean safety lifeguards undergo rigorous and continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, emergency scene management, and, in many cases, cross-training in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement support, and rescue craft operations. They routinely attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims—fulfilling the defined duties of emergency response employees and meeting the commonly accepted definition of a first responder. They are also the only emergency personnel that have to test and requalify for their jobs annually, proving they're in top shape mentally and physically.

Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,

Amy Chiang

Haleiwa, Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:16:10 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Drew Lamore	Ocean Safety	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

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Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Drew Lamore
Honolulu/Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:22:14 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Max Mckinley	ocean safety	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

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Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Max Mckinley
Haleiwa/Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:39:24 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dan Worden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to voice my support of HR42/HCR46. Ocean Safety Officers (or Water Safety Officers depending on the county) are the first individuals on the scene of emergency situations in, on, and around aquatic environments. I believe it is both appropriate and necessary to recognize them as first responders.

Mahalo.

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 11:09:37 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ,

I am in support of the resolutions recognizing open water lifeguards (ocean safety guards) as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout Hawai‘i. Our North Shore lifeguards are first to respond to ocean emergencies, but also accidents on the highway, bike path, beach park, or any other nearby emergency.

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Recognizing open water/ocean safety lifeguards as first responders would accurately reflect the work they already perform every day and help ensure they receive the professional recognition, resources, training support, and respect afforded to other emergency responders. It would also encourage continued collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen emergency response capabilities across Hawai‘i’s communities.

Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our home.

Sincerely,
Justin Riddleberger
Waialua, Oahu

HR-42

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 11:34:17 AM

Testimony for LAB on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Giles	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support **HR42/HCR46**

Paul Giles