

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



EDWIN H. SNIFFEN
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Deputy Directors
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele
DREANALEE K. KALILI
TAMMY L. LEE
CURT T. OTAGURO
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

Thursday, March 19, 2026
8:30 AM
State Capitol, 430

SB2521, SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY SERVICES

House Committee on Transportation

The Department of Transportation (DOT) supports S.B. 2521, S.D. 1, relating to emergency medical services personnel and authorized emergency vehicles.

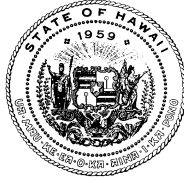
This bill proposes to exempt emergency medical services personnel from commercial driver's license requirements and amends the definition of 'authorized emergency vehicle' to include emergency medical services vehicles, not just ambulances. The DOT recognizes the critical role that emergency medical services play in our communities and the unique operational requirements of their vehicles.

By exempting emergency medical services personnel from commercial driver's license requirements, this bill would reduce administrative burdens on these essential workers while maintaining public safety. Emergency medical services personnel undergo rigorous training specific to their roles, which includes the safe operation of their vehicles in emergency situations.

The expansion of the 'authorized emergency vehicle' definition to include all emergency medical services vehicles, beyond just ambulances, acknowledges the diverse range of vehicles used in modern emergency medical response. This change will ensure that all such vehicles receive appropriate recognition and treatment under the law, potentially improving response times and operational efficiency.

The DOT believes that these changes will enhance the ability of emergency medical services to carry out their vital mission without compromising road safety. We view this bill as a positive step towards streamlining regulations for emergency responders while maintaining the high standards of safety that the public expects and deserves.

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



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 (SB2521 SD1)
RELATING TO EMERGENCY SERVICES**

REPRESENTATIVE DARIUS K. KILA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 8:30 AM | Room Number: 430

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

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

4 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Systems Branch
5 (EMSIPSB), on behalf of the Department, respectfully submits this testimony in **support** of this
6 measure.

7 Hawaii’s emergency response framework requires targeted statutory updates that promote
8 clarity, readiness, and public safety. Updating Hawai’i Revised Statutes (HRS) §286-235.5 to use
9 the term “emergency medical services personnel” aligns the Commercial Driver’s License (CDL)
10 exemption language with the definitional framework in HRS §321-222. This change eliminates
11 ambiguity and ensures the exemption applies to the intended Emergency Medical Services
12 (EMS) workforce.

13 The Senate Draft 1 (SD1) version appropriately clarifies that emergency medical services
14 personnel who drive disaster response, recovery, and emergency vehicles are exempt from CDL
15 requirements, reducing administrative barriers that can delay deployment and hinder
16 recruitment and retention of qualified personnel.

1 The measure also modernizes the definition of “authorized emergency vehicle” in HRS §291C-1
2 to reflect current emergency operations by explicitly including emergency medical services
3 vehicles, disaster response and recovery vehicles, and Department of Health vehicles. This
4 clarification acknowledges that emergency response extends beyond traditional ambulances
5 and supports the State, appropriate county councils, and emergency management agencies in
6 designating authorized vehicles for disaster and emergency activities.

7 Importantly, the SD1 amendments introduce critical safeguards by requiring federal, state, and
8 county firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, and law enforcement officers who
9 operate authorized emergency vehicles to maintain proof of successful completion of an
10 agency-approved or other state-approved training program. These provisions address concerns
11 regarding non-CDL operation of larger or specialized vehicles, ensuring consistent, verifiable
12 competencies and reinforcing public health and safety standards.

13 For these reasons, EMSIPSB respectfully supports Senate Bill 2521 SD1 (SB2521 SD1), to clarify
14 scope, strengthen safeguards, and enhance Hawaii’s capacity to respond effectively to
15 emergencies and disasters.

16 **Offered Amendments: None**

17 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued
18 commitment to strengthening Hawaii’s EMS system.

HONOLULU EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE ULIA PŌPILIKIA O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

3375 KOAPAKA STREET, SUITE H450 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96819
PHONE: (808) 723-7800 • FAX: (808) 833-3934 • WEB: <https://emergencyservices.honolulu.gov/>

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



JAMES H.E. IRELAND, M.D.
DIRECTOR
PO'O

IAN T. T. SANTEE, MPA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

March 17, 2026

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair
House Committee on Transportation
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 322
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: Letter of Support SB2521, Relating to Emergency Services

Dear Chair Kila:

The Honolulu Emergency Services Department (HESD) strongly supports SB2521, Relating to Emergency Services.

This measure assists in expanding the scope of personnel who are authorized to operate HESD's disaster response, recovery, and emergency vehicles without the requirement of a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). By removing the CDL requirement, HESD expands the pool of eligible drivers, facilitating quicker and more efficient emergency response during critical incidents.

Although the bill removes the CDL requirement, HESD remains committed to ensuring personnel receive comprehensive and appropriate training in the proper management and safe operation of emergency vehicles. This training will meet rigorous department and state standards to maintain the highest levels of safety and performance.

SB2521 also brings the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) division into alignment with existing practices of the Honolulu Fire Department and Honolulu Police Department, both of which allow qualified personnel to operate emergency vehicles without a CDL. CDL training will continue to be conducted by agency-approved or state-approved programs focused on emergency vehicle operations. However, the bill eliminates the separate state commercial licensing process, which provides little additional value for personnel who operate vehicles exclusively for emergency response rather than for commercial freight purposes.

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair

March 17, 2026

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Importantly, SB2521 recognizes the distinct difference between emergency driving, which involves lights-and-sirens operations, intersection clearance, and emergency response maneuvers, and freight and other commercial transportation operations.

For these reasons, the City and County of Honolulu and the Honolulu Emergency Services Department strongly support SB2521 and respectfully urge its passage.

Should you have any questions, please contact Deputy Director Ian T.T. Santee at (808) 723-7811 by email at isantee@honolulu.gov.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.

Sincerely,

James H.E. Ireland, M.D.
Director

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA LIMAHANA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

650 SOUTH KING STREET, 10TH FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 768-8500 • FAX: (808) 768-5563 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov/dhr

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



NOLA N. MIYASAKI
DIRECTOR
PO'O

KAREN MILLER
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
KOKUA PO'O

March 17, 2026

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair
The Honorable Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Transportation
The House of Representatives
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 430
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

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

SUBJECT: Senate Bill No. 2521, SD1
Relating to Emergency Services

The Department of Human Resources, City and County of Honolulu **strongly supports** Senate Bill No. 2521, SD1, which would exempt emergency medical services personnel from commercial driver's license requirements, similar to other licensed first responders operating in the State.

Importantly, this bill does not negatively impact public health and safety because it does not exempt emergency services personnel from meeting federal and state requirements related to drug and alcohol testing, specifically Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), §321-226, which provides in part, that "ambulance service providers licensed by the State establish and maintain an alcohol and substance abuse policy for employees that the department deems is equivalent to, or exceeds the provisions of, the safety and health standards established by the federal Department of Transportation for holders of commercial driver's licenses." Instead, this bill allows emergency medical services personnel to operate under the same requirements as other licensed first responders while maintaining public health safety standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nola N. Miyasaki". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Nola N. Miyasaki
Director



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Rep. Darius K. Kila, Chair
Rep. Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 8:30 AM
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on SB2521, SD1 – RELATING TO EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 12,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW **supports** SB2521, SD1, which exempts emergency medical services (“EMS”) personnel from commercial driver’s license (“CDL”) requirements. This bill also requires federal, state, and county firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, and law enforcement officers to maintain proof that they have successfully completed an agency approved or other state approved training on authorized emergency vehicles.

EMS personnel are required, pursuant to Section 453-32, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to complete training that meets U.S. Department of Transportation standards. The additional requirement for EMS personnel to acquire a commercial driver’s license exceeds these standards and is inconsistent with current CDL exemptions for firefighters and law enforcement officers. UPW agrees that exempting qualified EMS personnel from CDL requirements may help to alleviate barriers to recruitment and retention, and streamline essential functions, while maintaining public safety standards.

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

HEADQUARTERS

1426 North School Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-1914
Phone 808.847.2631

HAWAII

362 East Lanikaula Street
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-4336
Phone 808.961.3424

KAUAI

2970 Kele Street, Suite 213
Lihue, Hawaii 96766-1803
Phone 808.245.2412

MAUI

841 Kolu Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793-1436
Phone 808.244.0815

1.866.454.4166

Toll Free - Molokai/Lanai only