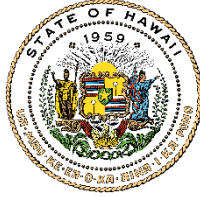


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
FINANCE

Wednesday, April 8, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2645, SENATE DRAFT 3, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

Senate Bill 2645, Senate Draft 3, House Draft 1 establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety and prohibits counties from adopting or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code. The measure also establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund, limits fire and life safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to no more than once every three years, and amends Act 302, SLH 2025, by replacing five full-time equivalent (5.0 FTE) positions for fire inspectors and investigators with four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) positions for assistant fire marshals. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports the measure as drafted.**

The Department supports the language in Senate Draft 3, House Draft 1 that amends Sections 1, 2, and 4 of Chapter 132, Hawai'i Revised Statutes. These amendments will enable the Office of the State Fire Marshal to build capacity and implement fire inspection and prevention programs consistent with established best practices, including those outlined in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1730: Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations.

With respect to Section 3, the State Fire Council selected the Fire Marshal last year following a transition to a commission-based selection process enacted in the previous legislative session, which also added the Fire Marshal to the Council. The Department supports retaining this commission-based process, as reflected in Senate Draft 3, House Draft 1. Appointment of the Fire Marshal by the Governor, as proposed in the original draft, could

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

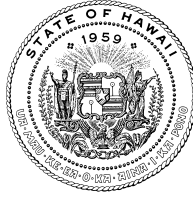
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

make it more difficult to evaluate performance and ensure accountability. A commission structure is better positioned to provide oversight and, if necessary, take corrective action, consistent with the governance model used for county Fire Chiefs.

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



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Finance

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

In Support

Senate Bill No. 2645, SD3 HD1, Relating to Fire Prevention

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of the Governor is in **support** of S.B. No. 2645, SD3 HD1, Relating to Fire Prevention.

This measure would improve statutory frameworks, strengthen statewide consistency in fire and life safety standards, and more clearly align the structure and function of the Office of the State Fire Marshal with its core public safety mission.

S.B. No. 2645, SD3 HD1, ensures county compliance with minimum statewide fire code standards and requires that all proposed amendments to county fire codes be submitted to the State Fire Marshal for review and approval. Additionally, the measure establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund, to be administered by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. S.B. No. 2645, SD3 HD1, identifies funding sources that may be deposited into the fund and specifies the purposes for which the funds may be expended.

Further, this measure is intended to improve operational efficiency and better align statutory requirements with the duties and responsibilities of the State Fire Marshal and the Office of the State Fire Marshal. In particular, the measure amends the frequency of fire and life safety inspections for state facilities to allow for timely and effective oversight, while reducing administrative burdens associated with conducting annual inspections across a large inventory of state facilities.

Lastly, the measure updates the statutory positions within the Office of the State Fire Marshal by establishing four assistant fire marshal positions to better reflect the operational needs and scope of responsibility of the office.

Testimony of the Office of the Governor
S.B. No. 2645 SD3 HD1
April 8, 2026
Page 2

The Office of the Governor respectfully requests that the Committee consider inserting the appropriation amount of \$400,000 on page 6, line 19, to fund the four newly established assistant fire marshal positions, thereby maintaining a net zero effect on the overall appropriations for the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Additionally, the Office requests that the measure be amended to take effect upon approval to support the timely establishment of positions within the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
Director

ERNEST J. ROBELLO
Deputy Director
Administration

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai
715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

April 6, 2026

The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
Committee on Finance
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Todd:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 2645, Senate Draft (SD) 3, House Draft (HD) 1 Relating to Fire Prevention

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Chair of the State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department. The SFC supports SB 2645, SD 3, HD 1, which establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety; prohibits the counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code; establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund; limits the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to no more than once every three years; and amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025 by replacing two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions for fire inspectors and three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) positions for fire investigators with four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) positions for assistant fire marshals. The SFC provides the following comments regarding SB 2645, SD 3, HD 1.

The SFC believes the passage of SB 2645, SD 3, HD 1 will provide the OSFM with the flexibility to build a team and implement fire inspection processes based on guidance and best practices from resources, such as the National Fire Protection Association 1730: *Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*. Furthermore, the amendment of the fire inspection frequency for state facilities by the state fire marshal from annually to a frequency of not more than once every three years will result in a much more achievable target.

The SFC urges your committee to pass SB 2645, SD 3, HD 1.

The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
Page 2
April 6, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Chair

SKH/GL:cn

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
Director

ERNEST J. ROBELLO
Deputy Director
Administration

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JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2645, SENATE DRAFT 3, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION
Before the House Committee on
FINANCE
Wednesday, April 8, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 308
WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) supports Senate Bill 2645, Senate Draft 3, House Draft 1. This bill establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety, prohibits county codes from being less restrictive than the State Fire Code, establishes the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund, limits the frequency of fire safety inspections, and amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, by replacing full-time equivalent positions with assistant fire marshals.

OSFM supports this measure as it advances a critical and long-overdue statewide framework for fire prevention and life safety. By establishing the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard and prohibiting counties from adopting less restrictive codes, this bill ensures that all residents and visitors across the State of Hawaii are afforded a consistent and meaningful baseline level of fire protection, regardless of which county or jurisdiction they reside in. A patchwork of varying county-level standards creates gaps in public safety that can have deadly consequences, as evidenced by recent fire tragedies in Hawaii. Uniform, statewide standards eliminate

these disparities and reflect best practices adopted in jurisdictions across the nation.

The establishment of the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund is a particularly important provision of this bill. Dedicated funding mechanisms are essential to sustain fire prevention programs, support inspection activities, and ensure that the Office of the State Fire Marshal has the resources necessary to carry out its statutory responsibilities effectively. Without a reliable, dedicated funding source, fire safety programs are vulnerable to budget fluctuations and competing priorities, which can erode their effectiveness over time.

OSFM also supports the amendment to Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, replacing full-time equivalent positions with assistant fire marshals. This change provides important operational clarity and ensures that the personnel structure of the State Fire Marshal's Office is properly aligned with its enforcement and inspection responsibilities. Assistant fire marshals with defined roles and authorities are better positioned to conduct rigorous inspections, investigations, and enforcement actions essential to the State Fire Code's effectiveness.

The provision limiting inspection frequency is likewise a reasonable and practical measure that balances the need for thorough fire safety oversight with the operational realities faced by both regulated entities and the State Fire Marshal's Office. Predictable inspection schedules support compliance, allow businesses and property owners to plan accordingly, and ensure that inspections remain meaningful and well-resourced.

On page 6, lines 3 and 19, OSFM respectfully requests that \$400,000 be inserted, as it would create a net zero with the positions that the assistant state fire marshals are replacing. Also, on page 7, line 8, OSFM respectfully requests that the date be changed to upon approval.

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



April 7, 2026

TO: Honorable Todd Chris, Chair
Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Legislative Advocacy Committee
American Institute of Architects, Hawai'i State Council

Hawaii State Council
A Chapter of the
American Institute of Architects

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

The AIA Hawai'i State Council represents architects and design professionals across the State who are committed to advancing public safety, resilient communities, and responsible building practices.

AIA Hawai'i provides our **SUPPORT on SB2645 SD3 HD1**, which continues the implementation and refinement of the State's fire prevention and safety framework following recent statewide discussions about wildfire risk and emergency preparedness. This measure makes important administrative and staffing adjustments within the Office of the State Fire Marshal to strengthen statewide fire prevention capacity and coordination.

Our members work closely with building officials, fire departments, and regulatory agencies to ensure that buildings are designed and constructed to protect life safety and property. Strengthening the State's fire prevention infrastructure is essential to protecting communities, safeguarding critical infrastructure, and ensuring that building and fire codes are consistently interpreted and enforced across the islands.

However, AIA Hawai'i respectfully offers **one area requesting clarification** regarding the **proposed change to the selection process for the State Fire Marshal**.

While we support the broader intent of improving oversight and coordination, AIA Hawai'i believes the current **commission-based selection process** provides an important layer of professional and technical review in identifying qualified candidates for this highly specialized position.

AIA Hawai'i recommends that any selection process **include participation from the State Building Code Council**, whose members bring expertise in building safety, code development, and implementation. Involving the Council would help ensure alignment between statewide building and fire safety policies and the leadership of the State Fire Marshal's office.

The State Fire Marshal plays a critical role in overseeing fire prevention programs, interpreting fire codes, and coordinating with building and safety professionals statewide. Because the position requires significant technical expertise and cross-agency collaboration, AIA Hawai'i believes a **selection process grounded in professional review and subject matter expertise best serves the public interest**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to **provide SUPPORT** on this measure and for your continued efforts to strengthen fire safety and resilience across Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Melanie Islam, AIA

AIA Hawaii President