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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2645, SENATE DRAFT 1

RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

Before the Senate Committee on

PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 3:00 PM

State Capitol Conference Room 016

Testifier: Dorothy Booth

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee:

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) respectfully provides testimony supporting SB2645, the proposed version of SD2. This measure promotes a unified, risk-based, and administratively sound framework for statewide fire and life safety in line with the intent and implementation of Act 302.

I. State Fire Code; County Amendments; Minimum Standards (New)

SB2645, SD2 clarifies that the State Fire Code establishes the minimum baseline for fire and life safety across Hawai'i and that county amendments may not be less restrictive than the adopted State Fire Code. It further requires OSFM review and approval of proposed county amendments to ensure consistency with statewide minimum standards.

This approach:

- Affirms uniform minimum life safety protections for all communities.
- Mirrors the structure utilized for State Building Codes.

- Parallels procedures used by other state fire marshal offices nationally, where local flexibility is preserved, but not at the expense of minimum safety thresholds.

The measure does not eliminate local authority. Rather, it ensures that local amendments enhance, rather than diminish, the baseline level of protection intended by the Legislature. Establishing OSFM review promotes consistency, legal defensibility, and clarity for industry stakeholders operating across county lines.

II. Establishment of the “State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund” (New)

This bill reintroduces the concept of a dedicated special fund, previously contemplated during deliberations on HB1064, to support community risk reduction (CRR) and fire and life safety initiatives.

Act 302 (HRS §132-D(6)) authorizes OSFM to accept grants, donations, and other forms of assistance. However, a clear statutory mechanism for receiving, holding, and disbursing such funds is not currently established. The proposed “State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund” provides that mechanism.

To avoid confusion with the existing special fund within the Department of Land and Natural Resources for wildfire-related CRR efforts, the proposed name distinguishes this fund as statewide, and life-safety focused.

The fund would support:

- Staffing augmentation through competitive grants.
- Scholarships for fire personnel to attend training, certification programs, and professional conferences.
- Home hardening rebate initiatives.
- Public education and CRR programming.
- Targeted prevention and mitigation initiatives aligned with statewide risk assessments.

The creation of this fund enhances transparency, accountability, and fiscal clarity while positioning the State to compete more effectively for federal and private grant opportunities.

III. Amendments to HRS §132-6

A. Public Thoroughfare Inspection Requirement

Section 2 removes the statutory requirement that county fire chiefs inspect all public thoroughfares.

This mandate has presented operational and resource challenges and has been identified by county leadership as a statutory provision warranting reconsideration. Its removal allows fire departments to prioritize inspection resources based on life safety risk and operational necessity.

B. Risk-Based Inspection Frequency for State Buildings

The bill modifies the inspection frequency for state-owned or managed buildings from an annual requirement to a schedule not to exceed once every three years, determined by assessed risk and occupancy classification.

This change aligns with nationally recognized standards, including:

- 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
 - NFPA 1300: Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development

Under a risk-based model:

- **High Risk / Critical Infrastructure** – Annually
- **Moderate Risk** – Biennially
- **Low Risk** – Triennially

Research indicates that the State owns or manages more than 8,000 occupancies. An annual inspection mandate for all facilities is operationally infeasible without substantial and unsustainable staffing increases.

Transitioning to a risk-based inspection framework allows OSFM to:

- Prioritize critical infrastructure and high-hazard occupancies.
- Aligning staffing models with objective risk analysis.
- Improve inspection quality through focused deployment of resources.

OSFM intends to pursue a statewide NFPA 1730 analysis to establish data-driven staffing models and service benchmarks. There is also interest in extending this opportunity to county partners to promote statewide alignment in fire protection service delivery metrics.

IV. Amendment to Act 302 – State Fire Marshal Selection

Section 3 amends HRS §132-39 by replacing the State Fire Marshal Selection Commission with gubernatorial appointment, subject to advice and consent of the Senate.

This structure parallels other executive branch appointments and was recommended during legislative consultation to ensure consistency within the Department of Law Enforcement and across state government.

The change maintains accountability through Senate confirmation while streamlining the appointment process.

V. Organizational Structure Adjustments (Section 4)

Section 4 eliminates two Fire Inspector and three Fire Investigator positions and establishes four Assistant Fire Marshal (AFM) positions.

The AFM classification:

- Requires cross-certification in inspections, investigations, and plan review.
- Expands functional capacity within each position.
- Enhance flexibility to address shifting workloads, emergent risks, and strategic priorities.

The current structure has presented challenges in recruitment and operational flexibility due to narrow position descriptions. The AFM model enables a more resilient, adaptive organizational design, supporting the long-term buildout of the Office in alignment with Act 302's expanded responsibilities.

While the salary structure reflects expanded qualifications and scope, the consolidation of roles enhances efficiency and reduces functional silos within the Office.

Conclusion

SB2645, SD2 strengthens Hawai'i's fire and life safety framework by:

- Establishing clear statewide minimum code standards.
- Providing fiscal infrastructure to support prevention and CRR initiatives.
- Modernizing inspection mandates through risk-based deployment.
- Aligning appointment authority with executive branch norms.
- Enhancing organizational flexibility within OSFM.

Collectively, these amendments support a data-driven, fiscally responsible, and prevention-focused approach to safeguarding our communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2645, the proposed version of SD2. The Office of the State Fire Marshal is ready to work collaboratively with the Legislature, county fire departments, and stakeholders to ensure effective and equitable implementation statewide.

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

Before the Senate Committee on
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2645 Proposed Senate Draft 2
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

Senate Bill 2645 Proposed Senate Draft 2 establishes the State Fire Code as the minimum statewide standard for fire safety and prohibits the counties from adopting, amending, or enforcing any ordinance, rule, or code provision that is less restrictive than the State Fire Code. The measure would also establish the State Fire and Life Safety Special Fund; limit the frequency of fire and safety inspections at state facilities by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to once every three years; change the method of appointment of the State Fire Marshal from selection by the State Fire Marshal Selection Commission to appointment by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate; and amend 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. (Proposed SD2). **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the measure's intent and offers the following comments.**

The Department supports the language in Senate Draft 2 of this measure that amends Section 1, Section 2, and Section 4 of Chapter 132, Hawai'i Revised Statutes. The proposed amendments to those Sections will give the Office of the State Fire Marshal 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's 1730: *Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*.

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

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Regarding Section 3, the State Fire Council selected the Fire Marshal last year. The Fire Marshal's selection process was changed to a commission-style process last legislative session, and the Fire Marshal was added to the State Fire Council. The amendment proposed would make the Fire Marshal a Governor-appointed position, subject to Senate approval. The Department prefers the current process. If the Fire Marshal was appointed directly by the Governor, reviewing the Marshal's efficacy would be more difficult. A commission would be better positioned to monitor performance and, if necessary, replace the Marshal. Significantly, a commission-style process also applies to the county Fire Chiefs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
Director

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JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

February 17, 2026



The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
State Senate
State Capitol, Room 216
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Fukunaga:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 2645 Senate Draft (SD) 2 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 2, which amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025, by replacing two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions for fire inspectors, three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) positions for fire investigators, and four full-time equivalent (4.0 FTE) positions for assistant fire marshals.

The SFC believes the passage of SB 2645, SD 2 will provide the Office of the State Fire Marshal 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's 1730: *Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*.

The SFC urges your committee's support of the passage of SB 2645, SD 2.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Chair

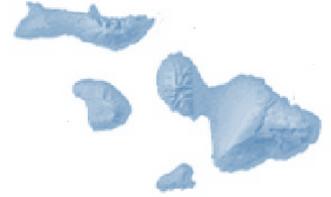
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RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA
Deputy Fire Chief



DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY

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February 11, 2026

LATE

The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
State Senate
State Capitol, Room 216
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Fukunaga,

**SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 2645 SENATE DRAFT (SD) 2 RELATING TO
FIRE PREVENTION**

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. The SFC supports SB 2645, SD 2, which amends Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 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 believes passage of SB 2645, SD 2 will provide the Office of the State Fire Marshal with 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's 1730: *Standard of Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations*.

The SFC urges your committee's support of the passage of SB 2645, SD 2.

If you have any questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at (808) 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Ventura".

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief