



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Denise Eby Konan, Dean  
College of Social Services

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD  
Interim Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### SB 2969 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY

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

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH) is in strong support of the intent of SB 2969 SD1 HD1. SB 2969 SD1 HD1 would appropriate funds for UH to sustain and expand services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and Maui Health Registry. The initiatives were established in response to the devastating August 2023 Maui wildfires, which caused more than 100 deaths and significant toxic exposures and health trauma to survivors. These survivors include children, the elderly, first responders and medically vulnerable populations.

Funding will support expanded MauiWES services and long-term follow-up for thousands of individuals, building on the existing comprehensive biomonitoring effort that has already provided medical and mental health screenings and referrals to over 2,000 residents.

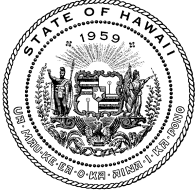
The MauiWES team is co-led by UH Mānoa College of Social Sciences (CSS) and the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine, in partnership with several units at UH. The program is administered by the UH Mānoa CSS Social Sciences Research Institute and UH Economic Research Organization (UHERO).

UH and its community partners are uniquely positioned to lead this work, integrating education, research and service in direct partnership with the community. The program actively trains and employs students and early-career professionals across medicine, nursing, public health, social sciences, environmental science, and data analytics. By integrating education with real-world service, MauiWES helps Hawai'i grow its own workforce while instilling a model of ethical, community-engaged scholarship.

As the MauiWes program involves significant participation by its non-profit partners, delivery depends on community-based non-profit entities for trusted outreach, translation and participation navigation. Thus, timely funding to them is essential. When state funds are appropriated solely to the University, and then must be routed to non-profit partners through State procurement and contracting practices, the resulting requirements can create delays and administrative burden that disrupt time-sensitive community events, screenings and follow-up services. The University, therefore, strongly prefers that key non-profit partners receive their own direct appropriation (e.g., grant-in-aid), or that SB 2969 SD1 HD1 explicitly authorize sub-awards or grants to designated non-profit partners without triggering full procurement timelines.

Due to the work of MauiWES, hundreds of participants have followed up with healthcare providers, accessed mental health services, and made meaningful lifestyle changes as a direct result of their participation. SB 2969 SD1 HD1 ensures that this commitment continues, that services remain available to those who need them most, and that Hawai'i remains a national leader in community-centered, disaster-informed health response.

Thank you for your consideration.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

**JOSH GREEN, MD**  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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

**JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD**  
ADMINISTRATOR

1177 Alakea Street, #402, Honolulu, HI 96813

Phone: 587-0788 Fax: 587-0783 [www.shpda.org](http://www.shpda.org)

April 1, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to  
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: **SB 2969-SD1-HD1 -- RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE  
EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY**

HEARING: Thursday, April 2, 2026 @ 2:00 pm; Conference Room 308

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

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Testimony:

The State Health Planning and Development Agency is in strong support of SB 2969-SD1-HD1, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

After 9/11, the World Trade Center Health Registry found 67% of adult enrollees reported new or worsened respiratory symptoms and 16% screened positive for probable PTSD. Urban wildfire disasters show similar patterns: after the Fort McMurray fire, 33.9% of workers reported a fire-related health conditions, including respiratory and mental health problems. More recently, California data from the 2020 wildfire season linked increases in wildfire smoke (PM2.5) to increased mental health emergency department visits in the days after exposure. If the State of Hawaii waits any longer, we miss the chance for early detection and prevention and people will show up later in crisis, sicker and harder to treat.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide community-based care and early detection that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to support

*SB 2969-SD1-HD1: testimony of SHPDA (2026) continued*

SB 2969-SD1-HD1 and guarantee that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Thank you for hearing SB2969-SD1-HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2969 SD1 HD1**

RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana ‘Imi Kālā

(House Committee on Finance)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

‘Apelila 2, 2026

2:00 PM

Lumi 308

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

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) SUPPORTS **SB2969 SD1 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the University of Hawai‘i to expand and sustain the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

OHA supports this measure because the health impacts of the 2023 Maui wildfires did not end when the fires were extinguished. Survivors continue to face ongoing risks tied to toxic exposure, respiratory illness, mental health trauma, and other longer-term complications. Continued monitoring, screening, and follow-up care are essential, especially for children, first responders, kūpuna, and medically vulnerable residents.

This measure is also important from a Native Hawaiian well-being perspective. Many OHA beneficiaries on Maui continue to live with the physical, emotional, cultural, and economic consequences of the fires. For Native Hawaiian families, health recovery cannot be separated from place, family stability, and community trust. A sustained study and registry can help ensure affected residents are not lost in the long tail of disaster response, and that care remains available over time rather than only in the immediate aftermath.

OHA also supports this bill because it builds on an effort already reaching residents through screening, biomonitoring, referrals, and follow-up services. Long-term data collection and care coordination are sound public health investments. They improve the State’s understanding of wildfire-related health impacts, help connect people to treatment earlier, and reduce the risk of more serious and costly health consequences later.

The bill also appropriately recognizes the importance of community trust. Reaching Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Hispanic, Asian, and immigrant residents requires sustained partnership and culturally responsive engagement. In a post-disaster setting, trust is not incidental. It is part of whether people seek care, remain in care, and receive support early enough to make a difference.

For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs respectfully urges this Committee to **PASS SB2969 SD1 HD1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.



April 1, 2026

To: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Re: SUPPORT of SB2969 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY  
AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY

Hrg: April 2, 2026 at 2:00 PM

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy.

The Hawaii Public Health Association supports SB2969 SD1 HD1 and its goal to provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB 2969 SD1 HD1 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Kessler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Holly Kessler  
Executive Director



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE**  
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
415 S. BERETANIA ST. #415  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 2969 SD1 HD1**  
**Relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry**

Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.; Room Number: 308

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) supports the intent of S.B. 2969 SD1 HD1 Relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

The mission of the OWR is to strengthen state systems and services by advancing hope-centered principles and supporting Hawai'i's transition toward becoming a trauma-informed state. In this work, our office explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

Following the 2023 Maui wildfires, the OWR was assisted with coordinating the mental health and wellbeing response. Over the past two and a half years, our office has gathered lessons learned and developed recommendations that now inform a Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework for Disasters and Traumatic Events. In this response and recovery effort, the OWR worked with the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry (MauiWES) team.

The impacts of the Maui wildfire did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience significant and ongoing mental health challenges as they cope with the trauma and loss they endured. MauiWES plays a critical role in our long-term recovery by supporting trusted, community-based providers who are often the first to recognize emerging mental

health needs. This early-detection, culturally grounded approach strengthens the resilience of our community and ensures that healing remains at the center of our recovery efforts.

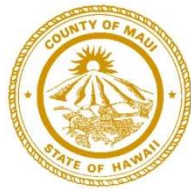
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this issue.

Tia L.R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA  
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director

**ERIN W. WADE**  
Deputy Managing Director



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.mauicounty.gov](http://www.mauicounty.gov)

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

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
John Smith, Administrator for the Office of Recovery

DATE: March 31, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT FOR SB2969 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure which appropriates funds for the University of Hawai'i to expand and sustain services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry provide critical services to impacted residents, including health screenings, long-term monitoring, and data collection that will inform healthcare and recovery efforts for years to come. These services are especially important for children, kūpuna, first responders, and medically vulnerable residents who may face higher risks from wildfire exposure. Programs like these help ensure that families have access to vital health services and information that might otherwise be out of reach.
2. While the immediate impacts were visible through the loss of homes, businesses, and lives, the long-term health impacts of wildfire exposure are still emerging. Continued monitoring and research are essential to understanding and addressing these effects for residents who were exposed to smoke, ash, and other environmental hazards. Ensuring that affected residents receive ongoing health monitoring and support is not only a public health priority, but also the right thing to do as we continue to care for and support our community's recovery.

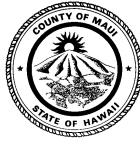
3. Investing in long-term health monitoring not only supports affected residents but also strengthens Hawai'i's ability to respond to future environmental and public health challenges. The knowledge gained from this work will help inform public health strategies, emergency response planning, and community resilience efforts statewide.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Council Chair  
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair  
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Councilmembers  
K. Kauano'e Batangan  
Tom Cook  
Gabe Johnson  
Tamara Paltin  
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez  
Shane M. Sinenci  
Nohelani U'u-Hodgins



Director of Council Services  
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services  
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 S. HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.MauiCounty.us](http://www.MauiCounty.us)

April 1, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance

FROM: Tamara Paltin  
Councilmember

DATE: April 1, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB 2969 SD1, HD1, RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY**

My name is Tamara Paltin, and I serve as the Maui County Councilmember for the West Maui (Lahaina) residency area. I am writing in strong support of SB 2969, which provides funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

I know many families who have come to rely on the mental health services, medical testing, and ongoing support provided through these programs as they work to move forward after the trauma of the August 8, 2023 wildfires. Entire families have built trust and relationships with the medical professionals serving our community, particularly through the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center. These programs may not yet reach everyone, but they are making a real and meaningful difference for many residents who are still struggling to rebuild their lives.

People in our community continue to face daily challenges — meeting FEMA requirements to maintain housing assistance, searching for long-term permanent housing, navigating the rebuild process, coping with the high cost of living, changing jobs or career paths, and grieving the loss of loved ones and neighbors. Each new loss in our community is felt deeply. The emotional and mental burden our residents carry every day is significant, and these programs help ease that burden.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term health effects, especially for children and medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that our residents are not forgotten and that health issues are identified and treated before they become more serious emergencies.

April 1, 2026  
Page 2

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB 2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara A. M. Paltin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Tamara Paltin  
Councilmember



## House Committee on Finance

### Testimony on SB 2969 SD1 HD1

#### Relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry

**April 2nd, 2026**

**2:00pm**

**Room 308**

The Climate Change and Health Working Group (CCHWG) is a cross-sector collaborative focused on strengthening climate and health resilience in Hawai'i. CCHWG **supports SB 2969 SD1 HD1**, which appropriates funds for fiscal year 2026–2027 to the University of Hawai'i to expand and sustain the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

#### **Testimony of the Hawai'i Climate Change and Health Working Group**

##### **In Support of SB 2969 SD1 HD1**

##### **Relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry**

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

The August 2023 Maui wildfires were the deadliest natural disaster in Hawai'i's history and one of the worst wildfires in the United States in over a century. Beyond the immediate and devastating loss of life and property, the fires created ongoing health consequences that continue to affect survivors today.

Survivors continue to face toxic exposures, respiratory illness, and mental health trauma. Wildfire smoke and ash can contain fine particulate matter (PM2.5), heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and other hazardous substances released from burned homes, vehicles, and infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> Exposure to these contaminants is associated with respiratory irritation,

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<sup>1</sup> [Wildfires](#), CDC. 2024.

reduced lung function, asthma exacerbations, cardiovascular stress, and long-term mental health impacts, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress.<sup>2</sup>

Children, first responders, kūpuna, and medically vulnerable individuals remain at especially high risk. Children are particularly vulnerable because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air relative to their body weight.<sup>3</sup> Kūpuna and individuals with underlying heart or lung disease face increased risk of serious complications, including heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks, and COPD flare-ups.<sup>4</sup> First responders may face repeated or prolonged exposure, increasing cumulative risk. Pregnant people and individuals with chronic conditions may also experience heightened susceptibility to both short- and long-term health effects.<sup>5</sup>

The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry, together, represent the most comprehensive social and health biomonitoring effort in the state's history.<sup>6</sup> These efforts are critical for identifying patterns of exposure, connecting residents to medical and mental health services, and building the evidence base needed to guide ongoing recovery and preparedness.

To date, more than two thousand residents have received services, including medical and mental health screenings, biomonitoring, and referrals to care. Continued outreach and follow-up are essential to ensure that health conditions are identified early and that residents receive appropriate care over time.

Additional funding is needed to expand and sustain these services, with a focus on children and other high-risk populations, and to ensure long-term follow-up through the Maui Health Registry for up to five thousand individuals. Wildfire-related health effects may emerge or persist for months or years after exposure. Sustained investment is necessary to monitor long-term outcomes, support community trust, and ensure equitable access to services, including for immigrant and underserved communities.

Strengthening these efforts not only supports Maui's recovery but also builds statewide capacity to respond to future climate-driven disasters.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure. The climate crisis is a health crisis.

Sincerely,

James McCallen, MPH

The Climate Change & Health Working Group

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<sup>2</sup> [Wildfires](#), CDC. 2024.

<sup>3</sup> [Who is at Increased Risk of Health Effects from Wildfire Smoke Exposure?](#), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2025

<sup>4</sup> [Who is at Increased Risk of Health Effects from Wildfire Smoke Exposure?](#), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2025

<sup>5</sup> [Who is at Increased Risk of Health Effects from Wildfire Smoke Exposure?](#), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2025

<sup>6</sup> [Maui Wildfire Exposure Study: Community Health, Wellbeing, and Resilience](#), UHERO, 2024.



## Hawai'i Community Health

[info@hawaiicommunityhealth.org](mailto:info@hawaiicommunityhealth.org) | [www.hawaiicommunityhealth.org](http://www.hawaiicommunityhealth.org)

March 31, 2026

To: House Finance Committee (FIN)

**Re: Strong Support for SB 2969 – UH Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of myself and **Hawai'i Community Health**, I write in **strong support of SB 2969**, which would provide critical funding to expand the **Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES)** and Maui Health Registry and to strengthen community partners delivering vital interventions, follow-up engagement, education, and coordinated care for fire-impacted residents.

My name is Dayna Moore. I am a *Kānaka Maoli nurse rooted in Maui* and a community organization leader with both clinical and systems-level experience. I have been directly involved in Maui's wildfire crisis response and recovery since August 8, 2023, the deadliest urban wildfire disaster in a century. Building on prior public health and pandemic work, I continue to volunteer regularly at clinics with MauiWES and the Registry while coordinating statewide and community-based efforts through Hawai'i Community Health.

The health impacts of the Maui wildfires did not end in 2023. Many adverse physical and mental health conditions are emerging over time, particularly among keiki, kūpuna, first responders, volunteers, debris cleanup and rebuild crews, educators, and others exposed directly or indirectly in and around burn zones. Displacement, loss of access, and survival priorities delayed care for many residents.

***Limited rural health system capacity continues to compound these challenges.***

The **Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry** are now trusted, community-based entry points for screening, referral, and early intervention. These programs:

- Identify health concerns before they escalate into costly emergency or specialty care
- Support continuity of care and reduce gaps in access
- Strengthen coordination between researchers, providers, and community partners
- Generate data that informs policy, prevention strategies, and responsible resource allocation

**SB 2969 represents a strategic investment in prevention and long-term cost containment.**

Early screening and intervention reduce avoidable emergency visits, hospitalizations, disability, and long-term productivity loss. Sustaining this infrastructure now helps prevent significantly higher downstream healthcare and social costs in the future.

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### **How Hawai'i Community Health Supports MauiWES and Fire-Impacted Communities**

- On-the-ground clinic support alongside research and clinical teams
- Community and provider network-building, including support for helpers
- Distribution of PPE, medical and oral health supplies, clothing, and essential items
- Education and trauma-informed training for healthcare providers, educators, students, and families, including expert presentations, community discussions, and continuing education
- Pro bono health-related services and support
- Referral pathways and trusted resource coordination
- Multidisciplinary partnerships and statewide information-sharing



- Outreach through media, digital platforms, and in-person engagement
- Continuity across acute response, recovery, and long-term monitoring

*Much of this unseen work continues through valued volunteer efforts and limited resources. It is, at times, a band-aid on a gaping wound, and this critical contribution reflects only a fraction of what is possible. Volunteer capacity is diminishing as many helpers are themselves part of impacted communities and navigating ongoing recovery.*

**With stable funding and strengthened partnerships, MauiWES and collaborators can scale evidence-based prevention models; expand to include more keiki, families, and vulnerable populations; and build durable health infrastructure that supports both community well-being and Maui's long-term economic recovery.** Together, we are positioning Hawai'i as a leader that the world looks to for groundbreaking models of culturally based comprehensive long-term disaster-recovery that prioritizes public health and improving access to care.

**Every point of contact has mattered.** I have shared in the tears and the smiles. This work has always been collective, and Hawai'i Community Health extends deep gratitude to the MauiWES team (*led by Drs. Alike Maunakea and Ruben Juarez*) and partners for tireless work and strong leadership.

**SB 2969 is a necessary investment** in culturally grounded, community-centered, evidence-based care, and it is our kuleana to strengthen Hawai'i's disaster readiness, build lasting public health infrastructure, and protect our keiki and future generations. Having been involved firsthand from the beginning, we know the MauiWES model works. We strongly recommend appropriating funds beyond what is humbly requested here: MauiWES has proven capacity to expand healthcare screenings, prompt intervention, and rural access in ways that will serve not only Hawai'i but the nation. With Maui facing compounding recoveries from multiple unprecedented disasters -- most recently the March 2026 Kona Low floods -- the need is not hypothetical. Without MauiWES, we will not be prepared to meet what is coming.

For these reasons, **Hawai'i Community Health strongly urges your support of SB 2969.** Mahalo for your leadership and continued commitment to the health and well-being of our communities. I am happy to provide additional information at any time.

With respect and aloha,

Dayna Moore, BSN, LPN

**on behalf of: Hawai'i Community Health (HCH) and Hawai'i Health C.A.R.E. Hui (HHCH)**

Founder | Operations Manager - HCH

Founder | Director - HHCH

HCH Website: [www.hawaiicomunityhealth.org](http://www.hawaiicomunityhealth.org)

Email: [dayna@hawaiicomunityhealth.org](mailto:dayna@hawaiicomunityhealth.org)



**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 1:43:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Evelyn Del Valle	Roots Reborn	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Evelyn Del Valle, and I am a community member who grew up on Maui and now works with Roots Reborn, supporting immigrant and mixed-status families in Lahaina and across the island. I am writing in strong support of SB 2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

Growing up on Maui, I saw many of the adults around me struggle to access health care. People worked hard, supported their families, and were deeply rooted in our community, yet seeking medical care was often delayed or avoided due to cost, lack of insurance, language barriers, or fear related to immigration status. Those experiences shaped the work I do today, and I continue to see these same barriers impacting families who were already vulnerable before the fires.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents are still experiencing ongoing health concerns, including respiratory issues, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term exposure—especially for children, kūpuna, and other medically vulnerable individuals. For many families we serve, symptoms did not appear right away, and they are only now beginning to understand the long-term effects on their health.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry are critical because they provide trusted, community-based screening, early detection, and referrals to care that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. We have seen how these programs help people feel safe accessing care and give them answers they have not been able to get elsewhere.

Continued funding will help ensure that our community is not forgotten and that health issues are identified early, before they become more serious.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB 2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,  
Evelyn Del Valle





COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 2:00 pm, Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2969, SD1, HD1 - RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake and Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - *The People in Action Maui*. Roots Reborn **strongly supports SB 2969, SD1, HD1**, relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and Maui Health Registry, which appropriates funds for the University of Hawai'i to expand and sustain services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and across the state. Formed after the August 2023 wildfires, our team has worked alongside families through every phase of recovery by providing aid, navigating systems, and building community trust that remains the foundation of our work today.

More than two years after the August 2023 wildfires, the health impacts on our community are still unfolding. Many of the families we serve did not experience symptoms right away. We are now seeing breathing problems, acute mental health struggles, and concerns related to toxic exposure – often without insurance, stable housing, or access to care.

As a Community Partner of MauiWES, we have seen firsthand how transformative this work has been. Community members who had never received a comprehensive physical/screening were finally able to understand what was happening to their bodies, receive referrals, and feel seen and supported. This has been especially critical for immigrant families who are often afraid or unable to seek care elsewhere.

Senate Bill 2969, SD1, HD1 would allow this work to continue by supporting the screening and follow-up care of up to 3,000 additional residents, with a focus on children, first responders, and kūpuna – those most exposed and most vulnerable. To date, more than 2,000 residents have already been screened, and the results are alarming. Many are showing signs of respiratory illness, toxic exposure, and serious mental health challenges. Among children screened, more than half showed signs of depression, and many adults continue to struggle with anxiety and PTSD. This effort is not just about research. It is about early detection, connection to care, and making sure families do not fall through the cracks, especially those who already face barriers due to language, immigration status, or lack of insurance.

Lahaina continues to carry the burden of the deadliest wildfire in the United States in over a century. Senate Bill 2969 is a compassionate and practical step to ensure that recovery includes long-term health support — not just rebuilding homes and roads. **We respectfully urge you to pass SB2969, SD1, HD1.** We would welcome the opportunity to speak further or answer any questions. Mahalo for your continued commitment to Maui's communities.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*

El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*



## 'Ahahui o nā Kauka

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March 31, 2026

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Group Testimony in support of SB2969 SD1HD1

RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY

'Ahahui o nā Kauka is an organization of Native Hawaiian physicians dedicated to the health of the people of Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians in particular. Several of our hui members volunteered for the medical relief efforts after the Maui wildfires, experiencing first-hand the immediate devastation as well as the emerging effects on the physical, mentally, and social determinants of health. We support the continued appropriation of moneys to continue current efforts as well as to expand the Maui wildfire exposure study and the Maui health registry. In our continued dedication to the people we serve, we believe the data from this study will provide the State, local organizations, medical professionals and future policymakers with critical information needed to address current and future patient medical and mental health needs, community needs, as well as inform the long-term recovery process and support better planning for future disaster preparedness.

## COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 2, 2026, 2:00 PM

### TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 2969 SD 1 HD1 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND THE MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY

My name is Pedro Haro, and I am the Executive Director of the American Lung Association in Hawai'i. On behalf of our organization and the thousands of Hawai'i residents we serve, I am writing in strong support of SB 2969, which provides vital supplemental funding to sustain and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and the Maui Health Registry.

The American Lung Association's mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. In the aftermath of the August 2023 wildfires, our concern for the long-term respiratory health of the Maui community remains a top priority. The urban fire in Lāhainā was an unprecedented environmental event, releasing a complex mixture of heavy metals, synthetic chemicals, and toxic particulates. The respiratory risks associated with these exposures do not vanish when the smoke clears; they often evolve into chronic conditions over decades.

The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry are essential to protecting the community for the following reasons:

1. **Tracking Chronic Respiratory Illness and Latency:** Early data has already highlighted the immediate respiratory distress felt by survivors. However, environmental exposures from urban fires—which include lead, arsenic, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)—are known to have significant latency periods before manifesting as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pulmonary fibrosis, or lung cancer [1]. This registry provides the longitudinal tracking necessary to identify these trends early.
2. **Protecting Medically Vulnerable Populations:** Children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing lung conditions are at the highest risk from the lingering toxic legacy of the fires. Research into wildfire smoke and ash exposure consistently shows that vulnerable groups experience higher rates of emergency department visits for respiratory issues long after the initial event [2]. By expanding this study to 3,000 individuals, we ensure that a representative portion of these high-risk groups is monitored.
3. **Addressing Funding Gaps and Data Continuity:** As federal resources become more uncertain, it is imperative that the State of Hawai'i steps in to ensure this work is not interrupted. Gaps in longitudinal

data collection significantly undermine the ability of public health officials to establish causal links between disaster exposure and health outcomes [3]. We cannot afford to lose the momentum or the trust that the MauiWES team has built with over 2,000 participants to date.

4. Informed Public Health Policy and Future Preparedness: The findings from this registry will inform future public health responses, helping the American Lung Association and our state partners develop better air quality protections and clinical guidelines for future wildfire events in Hawai'i and beyond [4].

We owe it to the people of Maui to ensure they are not forgotten as the years pass. This registry is more than a study; it is a critical health safety net. On behalf of the American Lung Association in Hawai'i, I respectfully urge your committees to support SB 2969, SD1 HD1.

Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to the lung health of our community.

Sincerely,

Pedro Haro  
Executive Director  
American Lung Association in Hawai'i

[Pedro.Haro@lung.org](mailto:Pedro.Haro@lung.org)

Citations:

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2022). "The Chemistry of Fires at the Wildland-Urban Interface."
2. Rice, M. B., et al. (2021). "Respiratory Impacts of Wildland Fire Smoke: Future Challenges and Policy Opportunities." Annals of the American Thoracic Society.
3. Lurie, N., et al. (2013). "Research as a Part of Public Health Emergency Response." New England Journal of Medicine.  
Cascio, W. E. (2018). "Wildland fire smoke and human health." Science of The Total Environment



House Committee on Finance  
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Thursday, April 2, 2026

**ACS CAN SUPPORTS SB 2969 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY  
AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY.**

Cynthia Au, Government Relations Director – Hawaii Guam  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Thank you for the opportunity to **SUPPORT** SB 2969 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY which appropriates moneys expand and sustain services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society advocates for public policies that reduce death and suffering from cancer. ACS CAN works with federal, state, and local government bodies to support evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem.

The 2023 Maui wildfires created unprecedented environmental exposures for thousands of residents, responders, and workers. Ensuring robust, long-term data collection is essential to understanding and reducing potential cancer disparities and other health impacts that may emerge in the years ahead. Comprehensive, community-grounded data is the foundation for effective prevention, early detection, and equitable access to care.

ACS CAN strongly supports funding for fiscal year 2026–2027 for the University of Hawai‘i, in collaboration with community partners, to continue and expand this critical work. Sustained investment in the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry will help reduce the cancer burden for communities affected by this disaster and ensure that residents receive the long-term monitoring and support they deserve.

Mahalo for your consideration of this important measure and for your commitment to the health of Maui's communities and for the opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT on this important matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Government Relations Director Cynthia Au at 808.460.6109, or [Cynthia.Au@Cancer.org](mailto:Cynthia.Au@Cancer.org).



## Hawaii Medical Association

1360 South Beretania Street, Suite 200 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814  
Phone: 808.536.7702 • Fax: 808.528.2376 • hawaiimedicalassociation.org

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Date: April 2, 2026  
From: Hawaii Medical Association (HMA)  
Elizabeth Ann Ignacio MD - Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee  
Christina Marzo MD and Robert Carlisle MD, Vice Chairs, HMA Public Policy Committee

**RE SB 2969 SD 1 HD1** RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY. University of Hawai'i; Maui Wildfire Exposure Study; Maui Health Registry; Appropriation  
**Position: Support**

This measure would appropriate funds for the University of Hawai'i to expand and sustain services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (WES) and Maui Health Registry.

The Maui WES cohort study of adults affected by the Maui wildfires found significant mid-term cardiopulmonary and psychological health impacts, with social support linked to better mental health but not to improvements in physiological outcomes such as reduced lung function. These findings underscore the need for disaster response models that combine long-term clinical surveillance, targeted mental health interventions, and culturally grounded community support to protect vulnerable populations as climate-driven disasters increase.

Maui WES has combined biomonitoring, health screenings, biospecimens, and socioeconomic data to track health outcomes among affected residents and has grown to include over 2,000 participants. It represents the most comprehensive post-disaster health study in Hawai'i's history.

The health outcomes from wildfires extend beyond acute injury, affecting physical, mental, social, and economic well-being. HMA supports funding of this comprehensive research and registries. Maui WES equips policymakers, clinicians, and community partners with the evidence necessary to protect health, reduce preventable disease burdens, and prioritize vulnerable populations of Hawaii after disasters.

Thank you for allowing the Hawaii Medical Association to testify in support of this measure.

### 2026 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Elizabeth A Ignacio, MD, Chair • Robert Carlisle, MD, Vice Chair • Christina Marzo, MD, Vice Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

### 2026 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President • Jerald Garcia, MD, President Elect • Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, Immediate Past President  
Laeton Pang, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

## REFERENCES

Juarez R, Phankitnirundorn K, Ozorio Dutra SV, Bond-Smith D, Lee AG, Maunakea AK. Health and Social Support in the Aftermath of the Maui Wildfires. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2025 Aug 1;8(8):e2525430. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.25430. PMID: 40768146; PMCID: PMC12329611.

Maunakea, Alike, et al. "Invisible Battles: Maui Survivors Struggle With Mental Health Two Years Post-Fire." *Hawaii Public Radio*, 5 Aug. 2025.

Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES). *From Crisis to Recovery: Health and Resilience Two Years After the Maui Wildfires*. University of Hawai'i, June 2025, [www.mauiwes.info](http://www.mauiwes.info).

### **2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers**

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### **2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team**

Beth England, MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

Testimony of  
Jonathan Ching  
Head of Government Relations

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

Thursday, April 2, 2026  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference  
Conference Room 308

**Re: SB 2969, SD1, HD1 Relating to Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2969, SD1, HD1, which would provide critical funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and the Maui Health Registry.

**Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i SUPPORTS SB 2969, SD1, HD1.**

Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i is one of the nation's largest not-for-profit health plans, serving 12.6 million members nationwide, and more than 271,000 members in Hawai'i. In Hawai'i, more than 4,200 dedicated employees and more than 650 Hawai'i Permanente Medical Group physicians and advance practice providers work in our integrated health system to provide our members coordinated care and coverage. Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i has more than 20+ medical facilities, including our award-winning Moanalua Medical Center. We continue to provide high-quality coordinated care for our members and deliver on our commitment to improve the health of our members and the people living in the communities we serve.

Kaiser Permanente has invested significantly in this work because we have seen firsthand the long-term health needs emerging after the Maui wildfires. To date, Kaiser Permanente has invested \$587,500 in project support for MauiWES to help ensure survivors receive immediate screening, referrals, and long-term follow-up care.

Kaiser Permanente has been encouraged by strong engagement in MauiWES: more than 2,000 Maui residents have already participated, with 41% following up with healthcare providers after initial study screenings and 16% accessing mental health services for the first time. This demonstrates how essential MauiWES is for connecting survivors to care, especially those who are under-insured or historically underserved.

SB 2969, SD1, HD1, would ensure continuity of these services, including:

- Free health screenings, toxic exposure testing, and care coordination for survivors
- Expansion of pediatric services, including mental health and exposure testing for 300 children annually
- Enrollment of 2,000 residents per year into the Maui Health Registry for long-term monitoring
- Community forums, data sharing, and culturally grounded engagement reaching 1,000+ residents annually

Importantly, this study does more than document harm; it actively reduces health inequities, strengthens trust in healthcare, and supports resilience in communities disproportionately impacted, including immigrant families and Native Hawaiian residents.

Kaiser Permanente is committed to continuing our collaboration with UHERO, the University of Hawai'i Foundation, the John A. Burns School of Medicine, and Maui's community partners, but philanthropic and private support cannot sustain this critical public health infrastructure alone. State funding is essential to ensure that:

- Survivors receive ongoing monitoring and follow-up care,
- Children receive early detection for emerging health conditions, and
- Maui has the data needed to shape evidence-based recovery and future disaster response.

We request your support of SB 2969, SD1, HD1 to ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and long-term protection they deserve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important measure.



Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i

March 31, 2026

**Letter of Support for SB2969  
Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the economic well-being of Hispanic-owned businesses and the broader Hawai'i workforce, we write in **strong support of SB2969**, which would provide critical funding to sustain and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry (MauiWES).

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i has been an early partner of MauiWES and has worked closely with the study team since its inception. From the beginning, we have been deeply impressed by the study's commitment to meaningful community engagement, particularly among populations that are often underserved and underrepresented in health systems and research.

Hispanics represent approximately **11% of Hawai'i's population**, yet nearly **18% of participants in MauiWES** identify as Hispanic. This level of engagement reflects intentional outreach, culturally responsive communication, and genuine trust built between MauiWES and the community. For many Hispanic residents, this was the first time they received comprehensive health education, screening, and navigation support following the wildfires.

Several Hispanic-owned businesses and employers were directly impacted by the 2023 Maui wildfires. Many of their employees faced compounded challenges, including displacement, health concerns, language barriers, and limited access to care. We witnessed firsthand how MauiWES supported employees of these businesses by providing education, clinical screening, and referrals to services that are severely lacking in Maui, particularly for immigrant and working families.

From an economic and workforce perspective, this work is essential. A **healthy population translates directly into healthier workers, stronger businesses, and a more resilient local economy**. When employees have access to preventive care, mental health support, and trusted health information, businesses experience reduced absenteeism, improved productivity, and greater stability during recovery.

**SB2969** will allow this critical effort to continue and expand, ensuring that up to 3,000 residents—especially those most affected by the wildfires—can receive sustained health

**Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i**

[www.hcchawaii.org](http://www.hcchawaii.org)



support. It also signals that Hawai'i recognizes long-term health recovery as a cornerstone of economic resilience and workforce stability.

For these reasons, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i strongly urges your support of **SB2969**. This investment strengthens individual and family health while supporting Hawai'i's businesses and workforce.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your continued commitment to the people and businesses of Maui and the State of Hawai'i.

Respectfully,

Barbara de Lucca  
Co-founder & President  
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i



# Hawai'i Psychological Association

*For a Healthy Hawai'i*

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## COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, April 2, 2026 – 2:00 PM – Rm 308 and via VIDEO CONFERENCE

The Hawaii Psychological Association testifies strongly supports SB 2969, HD1

This measure appropriates money to the University of Hawai'i to expand and sustain a multiethnic cohort study regarding the 2023 Maui wildfires.

The full impact of the Maui wildfires and recovery efforts on the mental health of the residents of Maui and the resulting economic and emotional aftermath is still yet to be fully appreciated. Of particular concern is the stress this disaster has had on the capacities of Hawaii's mental health providers – demand for which is already at crisis-level shortages.

We support very focused efforts on determining and studying the mental health and well-being of those communities impacted; and helping us chart a path toward full recovery and prevention.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alex Lichton, Ph.D.

Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 9:19:39 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ailene Schwartzlow	Maui Healing	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the Higher Education Committee,

My name is Ailene Schwartzlow, and I am a mental health provider with Maui Healing and a Lahaina community member. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

As a community member and outreach worker on the ground in Lahaina since the August 2023 wildfires, and through our work at Maui Healing, we have been providing integrative care, trauma-informed support, and ongoing support services to individuals and families impacted by the disaster. We have seen firsthand the lasting effects of toxic exposure, respiratory distress, chronic inflammation, emotional trauma, and the deep uncertainty many residents continue to face—especially children, kūpuna, and those with pre-existing conditions.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects. Without structured programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry, many of these conditions would go untracked and untreated.

These programs are essential. They provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and critical referrals that are otherwise inaccessible for many families. Continued funding ensures that survivors are not left behind and that emerging health issues are identified early—before they become severe or life-threatening.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ailene Schwartzlow LCSW

Maui Healing





[www.AlohaILHawaii.org](http://www.AlohaILHawaii.org)

Apr 2, 2026

#### MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roxanne U. Bolden

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The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair  
House Committee on Finance  
The Thirty-Third Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**SUBJECT:** SB2969 SD1 HD1 – Relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) respectfully submits this testimony **in support of SB2969 SD1 HD1**. The 2023 Maui wildfires were the deadliest natural disaster in Hawaii history and the deadliest wildfires in the United States in over a century, and survivors continue to experience toxic exposures, respiratory illness, and profound mental health trauma—impacts that will create or worsen disabilities for years to come. Children, first responders, kupuna, and medically vulnerable community members are at especially high risk and need sustained, coordinated health monitoring and follow-up care to avoid preventable hospitalization, long-term complications, and loss of independence.

AILH appreciates that SB2969 SD1 HD1 recognizes and strengthens the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry as the most comprehensive social and health biomonitoring effort ever conducted in Hawaii, with more than two thousand residents already receiving medical and mental health screenings, biomonitoring, and referrals to care. By appropriating funds for the University of Hawaii, in collaboration with community partners, to expand and sustain this work—including follow-up and expanded services for up to three thousand individuals, with a specific focus on children, first responders, kupuna, and medically vulnerable residents—the bill directly supports early identification of wildfire-related



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## MISSION

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We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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Jennifer Hartssock

health conditions and linkage to services that help survivors remain in their homes and communities rather than entering more restrictive care settings.

From an Independent Living perspective, long-term disaster health monitoring must be accessible, culturally responsive, and designed so that disabled survivors, limited-English-proficient residents, and those living in temporary or unstable housing can actually participate. SB2969 SD1 HD1 rightly notes that the Study and Registry have already built community trust with Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Hispanic, Asian, and immigrant populations, helping to ensure that underserved groups are reached. We encourage the University of Hawaii and its partners to continue working closely with disability-led organizations and community groups on Maui to provide outreach in multiple languages, offer accommodations (including accessible communications and transportation support), and design follow-up services that honor survivors' choices and self-determination while addressing the emerging physical, respiratory, cognitive, and behavioral health impacts of the fires.

AILH respectfully urges the Legislature to pass SB2969 SD1 HD1 and to ensure that the appropriation is sufficient and sustained so that the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry can complete long-term follow-up, expand services to additional high-risk residents, and provide the data needed to guide equitable, disability-inclusive recovery policy. Investing in this work now will reduce long-term costs, support community resilience, and help ensure that wildfire survivors with and without disabilities can remain safely in their home communities across Maui.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden  
Executive Director

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 5:27:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Peggy Latare	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Dr. Peggy Latare, and I am a resident of Kailua, a retired family medicine physician, and an adjunct clinical professor at the John A Burns School of Medicine. I am in strong support of SB 2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

For the past year and a half, I have been volunteering with the MauiWES at the screening clinics. I have seen for myself, as a physician of over 40 years, just how devastating the wildfires have been on Maui residents' mental, physical, and spiritual health. Just a few weeks ago we sent two adults to urgent care for extremely high blood pressure readings, a medical emergency. We are also detecting untreated as well as undiagnosed diabetes, lung disease, mental health concerns, and as I mentioned, high blood pressure.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. One of the things that has impressed me the most about working with the MauiWES group is their ability to flex to the needs of the community. In the early days with so much job and insurance loss people had no contact with their usual medical care and the study helped them find temporary access to care- these events especially affect children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Continued funding for these programs will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies. And that the health effects of these fires will be documented for the future

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB 2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration,

Peggy Latare, MD

**Aloha e Chair Todd and members of the Finance Committee,**

My name is Alika K. Maunakea, and I am a resident of Hawai‘i. I am submitting this testimony in my personal capacity as a community member and scientist.

I am writing to express my **strong support for SB2969, relating to the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.**

The 2023 Maui wildfires were not only the deadliest natural disaster in Hawai‘i’s history, but a profound public health event whose consequences are still unfolding. While the immediate devastation was visible, the longer-term health impacts — respiratory disease, mental health trauma, toxic exposures, and disruption of housing and livelihoods — are far less visible, yet no less devastating.

As someone who has been **directly involved in the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES)** since its inception, I have seen firsthand how essential this work has been for the people of Maui. The Study and the Maui Health Registry together represent the **only comprehensive, longitudinal effort** to understand how this disaster is affecting residents’ health over time, particularly for children, kūpuna, first responders, and medically vulnerable individuals.

To date, **over 2,000 Maui residents** have participated in MauiWES, receiving health screenings, biomonitoring, mental health assessments, and referrals to care. Importantly, this effort has reached communities that are often excluded from traditional healthcare and research — including Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, immigrant, and low-income families — by building trust and delivering services directly within the community.

Findings emerging from MauiWES underscore why **continued and expanded support is urgently needed**. Published results show substantial declines in self-reported overall health, high rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms, and measurable impairments in lung function months after the fires. Biomonitoring has identified elevated levels of metals commonly associated with wildfire ash and smoke exposure, particularly among residents of Lahaina and other heavily impacted areas. These health impacts are not evenly distributed: they are **strongly shaped by housing displacement, income loss, and limited access to care**, factors that place already vulnerable communities at even greater risk.

Critically, many of these effects **do not appear in hospital or emergency department data**. Without a program like MauiWES, they would remain invisible — untreated until they become far more serious and far more costly to address. Importantly, no other effort in Hawai‘i is currently collecting rigorous, high-quality, and clinically translatable data at this scale following this unprecedented disaster. MauiWES has already become a **national model** for post-wildfire health response, informing similar efforts across the country — including serving as a reference point for the health and environmental monitoring now being assembled in the aftermath of the Los Angeles wildfires last year.

**SB2969** provides the resources necessary to **sustain this work**, ensure long-term follow-up, and expand services to reach up to 3,000 individuals statewide, with a focus on those at highest risk. This is not only a compassionate response; it is a fiscally responsible one. Early detection, prevention, and coordinated follow-up care reduce the long-term burden on Hawai‘i’s healthcare system and strengthen community resilience.

More broadly, **SB2969** signals that Hawai‘i recognizes disaster recovery as a **long-term health commitment**, not a short-term emergency response. The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Health Registry is already a model for how states can respond equitably to climate-driven disasters. Continued investment will ensure that Maui — and Hawai‘i — remain leaders in protecting the health of their people. Indeed, just as importantly, funding for MauiWES and the Maui Health Registry is also an investment in Hawai‘i’s workforce. This program is training the next generation of local professionals — including students in nursing, medicine, public health, social science, and environmental science — by combining their education with real-world experience delivering services and giving back to the community. In other words, MauiWES strengthens Maui today while also helping Hawai‘i “grow its own” multidisciplinary workforce for the long-term.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support and pass SB2969**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your continued commitment to the people of Maui.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Alika K. Maunakea, PhD

**Testimony of Dr. Ruben Juarez  
In Strong Support of SB2969 SD1 HD1 – Funding for the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and Maui Health Registry**

Aloha Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is **Dr. Ruben Juarez**, and I am one of the co-directors of the **Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry** ([MauiWES.org](http://MauiWES.org)). I submit this testimony in strong support of **SB2969 SD1 HD1**, which would provide critical funding to sustain and expand this work to up to 3000 Maui residents.

MauiWES has been transformative for the Maui community, not only as a research study, but as a trusted, community-centered health response during one of the most difficult periods in Maui's history. This effort exists because the community asked for it, and because the community continues to rely on it.

Since the 2023 Maui wildfires, our team has reached **more than 2,000 individuals affected by the fires**, and nearly **1,200 participants have returned for follow-up in the second year**. Many of these residents had not prioritized their health since the fires, not due to neglect, but because survival came first: housing instability, job loss, food insecurity, and trauma. Health was often postponed. *MauiWES helped bring it back to the forefront.*

Dr. Alike Maunakea and I personally attend MauiWES community events *at least once a month*. We do not manage this work from afar, we show up, listen, and engage directly with participants. What we have seen is powerful. While some health indicators are slowly improving, the most meaningful change has been the *restoration of agency*: people feeling empowered to understand their health, ask questions, and take action.

The impact is measurable:

- **825 participants** followed up with a healthcare provider after receiving their results
- **760 individuals** made lifestyle changes based on their health findings
- **320 people** accessed mental health services they otherwise would not have sought

We have also referred *dozens of individuals to the emergency room* based on screening results, providing, in some cases, *life-saving interventions*. These are not abstract statistics. These are parents, kūpuna, immigrant families, and wildfire survivors, many of whom were connected to care for the *first time* because MauiWES met them where they were, in their language, and through trusted community partners.

Equally important, MauiWES has helped *rebuild trust* in health and research systems that many communities had disengaged from. By returning results on the same day, explaining findings clearly, and directly linking participants to services, rather than handing them a pamphlet, we demonstrated that research can *serve communities, not extract from them*.

While there are substantial economic savings associated with this work, which I will abstain from detailing in this testimony, I want to emphasize that MauiWES has been one of the most impactful community-based research initiatives undertaken by the University of

Hawai'i to date. It represents the ideal integration of education, research, and direct community service, and it clearly demonstrates the tangible impact that the University of Hawai'i can, and does, have when it is deeply engaged with the communities it serves.

Beyond Maui, the lessons from MauiWES are now helping to *build a disaster health resilience model* that can be applied elsewhere. Just recently, our team returned from supporting communities affected by the *Los Angeles fires*, where we shared lessons learned from Maui, particularly around rapid health screening, community trust, and culturally grounded engagement. Maui is not only healing; it is *leading*, and helping other communities respond more effectively to disaster-related health impacts.

As we enter Year 3, we are ready to take on an *unprecedented next phase*. With increased support, our goals are to:

- *Enroll up to 3,000 participants, continuing being the largest social and biomedical screening study ever conducted after a disaster in Hawai'i*
- *Expand significantly to children, where participation to date has been limited to approximately 200 youth, despite clear evidence that children are among the most vulnerable to long-term impacts*
- *Build a comparison cohort from other parts of Maui, which is essential to distinguish wildfire-related health effects from broader island-wide trends*
- *Strengthen local health capacity and train the next generation of community-based researchers, healthcare workers, and translators to carry this work forward*

This is not just about data, it is about *building lasting infrastructure*, ensuring continuity of care, and creating a model that Hawai'i can rely on for future disasters.

Let me be very clear: *MauiWES is not a short-term project*. The health consequences of the fires will unfold over years, and so must the response. Our commitment to this community is *day by day*, standing alongside the people most affected, long after the headlines fade.

Continued support through **SB2969 SD1 HD1** will allow us to remain present, responsive, and accountable, while building a sustainable, community-driven health system that Maui deserves.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to the people of Maui.

Respectfully,

**Dr. Ruben Juarez**

UHERO–HMSA Distinguished Professor in Health Economics

Department of Economics & UHERO

University of Hawai'i

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 5:40:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
De Andre Makakoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is De Andre Makakoa. I am a Lahaina fire survivor still displaced since August 2023. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Mahalo,

De Andre Makakoa

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 7:45:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Courtney Goodloe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Distinguished Representatives:

Please allow MauiWES to continue the excellent, fruitful much needed care and scientific study for the benefit of keiki, kapuna and all of the Maui community. The well-being of all of us depends upon these choices made now.

Mahalo nui for all you do,

- Courtney Goodloe, Esq. -

Dear chair, vice chair and other members of the House Committee on Finance. My name is Dr. Christopher Knightsbridge. I am one of only two full-time mental health professionals working at the only behavioral healthcare clinic in Lahaina dedicated almost entirely to wildfire survivors. I also work with the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MAUIWES), and I am asking you to please support this bill **SB2969 SD1**.

When our clinic reopened, I did everything I could to make sure people understood that the suffering in Lahaina did not end when the fires stopped. I sit with it every day. I hear it in the stories of parents who still can't sleep, in kids who are anxious and withdrawn, and in families who are doing their best to hold it together while still grieving everything they lost.

I want to be clear about something important: **MAUIWES is NOT just research**. Yes, we collect data so we can understand the long-term health effects of this disaster. But we also provide direct care. Every time we hold a collection event, we screen people for medical and mental health concerns. If someone isn't connected to care, I reach out personally. Many of them end up in my caseload. Right now, that caseload is about 100 patients. I am doing everything I can, but it is not sustainable without support.

We are trying to expand services, especially for children. Our goal is to reach 5,000 participants, including 2,000 children aged 10 and older. 3 million helps us get closer to that goal. Early intervention matters. If we catch depression, PTSD, diabetes, or hypertension early, we prevent crises later. That is not only the right thing to do — it also saves the state a lot of money. A single ER visit for a suicidal crisis can cost over \$5,000. A phone call with me to receive stabilization and support costs nothing.

Hawaii deserves the same level of care as the mainland. Survivors of other national disasters have received long-term, state-backed support. The people of Lahaina deserve the same commitment. An investment of \$3 million would allow us to expand responsibly and continue this work in a sustainable way.

This is not about research funding for us. It is about making sure this beautiful community, which continues to suffer from the impacts of the deadliest wildfire disaster in modern U.S. history, is not forgotten after the headlines fade. We have dedicated our lives to helping Lahaina recover. We are simply asking for support to continue showing up for them the way they deserve.

***Please also find attached a brief fact sheet of our findings and letters of support written by The Hawaii State Council on Mental Health for our grant seeking opportunities. Their letter is NOT a letter of endorsement for any specific bill but is a generalized letter of support which highlights their support for us to seek funding to keep our important work going.***

Thank you for taking the time to listen.



**Dr. Christopher Knightsbridge, Psy.D.**  
Head of Mental Health Research Team  
University of Hawaii Wildfire Exposure Study  
(MAUIWES) \_\_\_\_\_  
[www.MauiWES.org](http://www.MauiWES.org)

# MauiWES

## Mental Health Outcomes

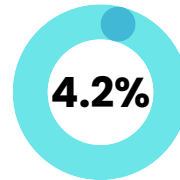
### ADULT MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS (n = 1,800 wildfire-affected adults)



Depressive symptoms



Moderate-severe anxiety



Suicidal thoughts in the past month  
(Pre-fire Maui baseline: 0.8%)

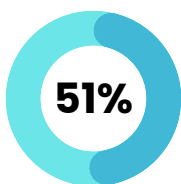


Low self-esteem

### CHANGES OVER TIME (ADULT FOLLOW-UP) (n = 424 with Year-1 → Year-2 data)

- Suicidal ideation decreased by nearly 50%
- Severe depression and anxiety declined
- PTSD remains widespread (~1 in 3 adults)

### CHILDREN MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS (Ages 8-18, n ≈ 200)



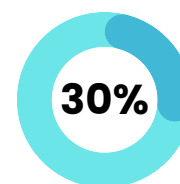
Depressive symptoms



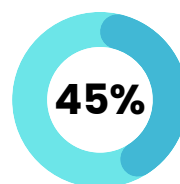
Severe depressive symptoms



Low self-esteem



Signs of anxiety disorder



PTSD symptoms

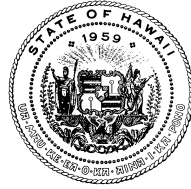
### Highest burden observed among:

Filipino, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino youth

Girls show higher depression severity, PTSD, and lower self-esteem

**RECOVERY IS UNDERWAY — BUT INCOMPLETE.**

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



KATHERINE AUMER, PhD  
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON  
LUNA HO'OMALU O KA PAPA

**STATE OF HAWAI'I**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
**KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO**  
**STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**  
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

August 12, 2025

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To Whom It May Concern:

Two years after the devastating Maui Wildfire Disaster, we join others in remembrance and reaffirm our commitment to supporting recovery and meeting community needs.

The Council commends the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) for its rigorous, evidence-based work to understand the wildfires' health and social impacts. With accessible tools like the Maui dashboard and a service component that assesses survivors' needs and links them to mental health and related supports, MauiWES models trauma-informed best practices—ensuring survivors both contribute to research and receive timely help.

We support MauiWES' effort to seek grants and funding to continue research and services but also urge stronger coordination with the Department of Health, its Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), Qualified Public Health Clinics (QPHCs), the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, and other partners. All have also been on the ground, helping survivors and the island community. By seeking and threading resources together, we can ensure all survivors and affected parties—not only research participants—benefit from a seamless network of care.

Recognizing the Department of Health's broad responsibilities, we see MauiWES as a complementary resource that can strengthen existing programs. Partnerships and diverse funding can amplify the collective impact of our public health and community systems.

As established in HRS 334.10, the State Council on Mental Health advises the Department of Health, Governor, and Legislature on statewide mental health care needs and resources. Our vision is a Hawai'i where

*Page 2. To Whom It May Concern Letter of Support for MauiWES*

people of all ages with mental health challenges can achieve recovery and live full lives in the community of their choice.

Thank you. For more information, please contact us through our email, [doh.scmhchairperson@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:doh.scmhchairperson@doh.hawaii.gov).

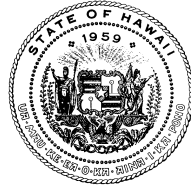
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katherine Aumer'.

Katherine Aumer, Ph.D.

c.  
DOH Director  
DOH BHA Deputy Director  
DOH AMHD Administrator  
DOH CAMHD Administrator

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



KATHERINE AUMER, PhD  
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON  
LUNA HO'OMALU O KA PAPA

**STATE OF HAWAI'I**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
**KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO**  
**STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**  
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

September 9, 2025

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Dr. Ruben Juarez  
Dr. Alika Maunakea  
Dr. Christopher Knightsbridge  
Maui Wildfire Exposure Study  
College of Social Sciences and John A. Burns School of Medicine  
University of Hawaii  
Via email

Dear Dr. Juarez, Dr. Maunakea, and Dr. Knightsbridge,

On behalf of the State Council on Mental Health, I extend our deepest gratitude for your powerful and informative presentation on the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) during our August 12, 2025, meeting.

Your team's work in enrolling more than 2,000 participants—including 200 children—provides an essential foundation for understanding the wildfire's long-term impacts. The findings you shared regarding depression, anxiety, PTSD, and toxic exposure are sobering. Your commitment to addressing these challenges—through the registry, referrals to services, and culturally informed support—is both reassuring and necessary.

We are honored to send a letter of support for your grant-seeking efforts to continue and expand this important work. Your research advances knowledge and provides a pathway for healing, recovery, and long-term well-being in the community. We encourage more defined collaboration with partners, including Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, the Department of Education, Department of Human Services MedQUEST Division, and other health coverage providers.

*Page 2. SCMH September 9, 2025 Letter to Dr. Juarez, Dr. Maunakea, and Dr. Knightsbridge*

Once again, thank you for your time, expertise, and unwavering dedication to the people of Maui and all others impacted by wildfire disasters. We are inspired by your leadership and look forward to witnessing the transformative impact of your work in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katerine Aumer', written in a cursive style.

Katherine Aumer, Ph.D.

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 8:36:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Natsuko Harkins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2969 SD1 HD1. The work they do with Maui's children and families impacted by the fires is life saving. Please give them the funds to continue and expand their great work.

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 8:41:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sirun(Christina) Yu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sirun(Christina) Yu, and I am a community health intern working with the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 2969, which would provide essential funding to continue and expand these programs.

Through my work as an intern, I have been closely involved in outreach, follow-up calls, and resource coordination for wildfire survivors. In this role, I have witnessed how the impacts of the August 2023 wildfires continue to shape people’s daily lives, long after the immediate emergency ended. Many residents describe persistent respiratory symptoms, heightened anxiety, disrupted sleep, and ongoing worry about what exposure may mean for their long-term health and for their children. These concerns often surface quietly, in moments when people finally feel safe enough to talk.

The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry create a rare bridge between research, care, and community trust. They offer residents a place where their experiences are taken seriously, health concerns are monitored over time, and referrals are made before problems escalate. For many families, especially those already facing barriers to care, these programs provide access and continuity that would otherwise remain out of reach.

This work has shaped my own future path. Working with Maui communities has deepened my commitment to trauma-informed, culturally responsive mental health care, and it has strengthened my goal of becoming a psychologist to continue serving communities affected by disaster and displacement. Continued funding through SB 2969 would allow this work to grow in a way that honors residents’ experiences and protects their long-term well-being.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB 2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive sustained care, follow-up, and protection.

Mahalo for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to the health of Hawai‘i’s communities.

Sincerely,  
Sirun(Christina) Yu

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 9:00:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tara Zamani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**My name is Tara Zamani and I was born and raised in Lahaina Maui. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.**

**Growing up in Lahaina, I have been exposed to the deep sense of connection and resilience that defines my community. Lahaina is not just a place but the people and families who look out for one another. After the wildfires, many members of my community have been facing barriers in access to healthcare due to financial hardship and the limited access to healthcare providers. When the wildfires devastated Lahaina, it destroyed homes, businesses, and centers of medical care. The Lahaina community is struggling and we need access to reliable healthcare services like the ones being provided through MauiWES.**

**The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.**

**Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.**

**For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.**

**Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.**

**Sincerely,  
Tara Zamani**

**Hi my name is Tara Zamani and I am a resident born and raised in Lahaina. I am calling to bring attention to the Sb 2969 bill to be heard by the WAM committee. Being from lahaina, I have seen firsthand the impacts the wildfires have had on my communities**

**physical and mental health. Not only this, but the limited healthcare that was offered in Lahaina prior to the fires has become much less accessible following the August 2023 wildfires. MauiWES is a very important organization that is providing mental and physical health evaluations for members of my Lahaina community that are being faced with financial disparities. MauiWES is very vital to increasing access to healthcare in Lahaina. Due to these reasons, I urge you to help Lahaina heal and bring attention to the Sb 2969 bill to be heard by the WAM committee. Thank you for your time.**

**Aloha Chair and members of the Ways and Means Committee,**

**My name is Tara Zamani, and I am a Lahaina resident and community member. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.**

**Growing up in Lahaina, I have been exposed to the deep sense of connection and resilience that defines my community. Lahaina is not just a place but the people and families who look out for one another. After the wildfires, many members of my community have been facing barriers in access to healthcare due to financial hardship and the limited access to healthcare providers. When the wildfires devastated Lahaina, it destroyed homes, businesses, and centers of medical care. The Lahaina community is struggling and we need access to reliable healthcare services like the ones being provided through MauiWES.**

**The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.**

**Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.**

**For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.**

**Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.**

**Sincerely,  
Tara Zamani**



Aloha mai kākou,

'Ō Cybil ko'u inoa.

I'm writing in support of SB 2969 SD1 as a MauiWES participant, a first responder who worked in the burn zone in Lāhainā, a community facilitator and a resident of Lāhainā asking for your help in supporting my community by allowing MauiWES to continue giving their free health check-ups because they are saving lives.

I work with fire survivors every day, many who found out they had diabetes, lung obstructions, anemia, & hypertension (myself included) at a MauiWES visit..

These invaluable checkups include heavy metal testing, blood work, lung function tests, & mental health screenings.

Where else can you go and get all of that testing for free and at the same time meet with a Doctor to go over your results *and* see a mental health provider like Dr Chris Knightsbridge or Dr. Blaidsdell?

Additionally, nursing students from UH Maui college as well as O'ahu get first hand experience working with our medically underserved community.

I will conclude by saying this is a win-win for everyone involved!

Mahalo nui loa to the committee and chairs for your time and consideration.

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 1:03:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Pcola_Davis	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

**Strongly Support**

Make Appropriations out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the follow-up and expanded services for children, first responders, kupuna, and medically vulnerable residents.

What did we **lose** and why? **Sadly...**

Also recommend Legislature understand that HB 2340 HD1 FY2025-2026, which never crossed over, due to not distinguishing between the two bills. This request for Appropriations for 2025-2026 was to continue this year.

As for mental health, if any of the current registrars were affected by the Kona Lows then we can expect a trigger affect increasing needs for mental health.. Reliving losses, houselessness, life endangering weather will show up. The good news is they will continue to have these services!

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 4:05:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alison Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Alison Lee, and I am a pulmonary and critical care physician with family who served as first responders during the tragic Maui wildfires. I am writing in **strong support of SB2969**, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

As a physician and environmental health science expert, I have seen how the Maui wildfires have affected the health of adults and children. People who were more exposed are more likely to have worse health, measurable even years after the fires. Notably the mental health impacts are large, and intergenerational - affected parents and children have lingering mental health needs, with downstream affects on health. The economic impacts are also notable and persistent. The MauiWES cohort is characterizing and bringing to the forefront these impacts in a way that has never been done before. We must know how these wildfires impact communities so that we can better support affected communities!

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support SB2969** and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,  
Alison Lee, MD MS

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

My name is Daniela Bond-Smith. I am a Research Economist at the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization. My testimony is submitted as an individual and not as a representative of the University of Hawai'i.

I wish to express my strong support for SB2969 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY. The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) provides the State, local organizations, and affected community members with critical information needed to address imminent community needs, inform the ongoing recovery process, and support better planning for future disaster preparedness.

Based on my professional experience with survey and health research, I can assure you that this project is essential. There is no alternative available data that could be used to comprehensively monitor and analyze the long-term health impacts of the Maui wildfires. The project also does an exceptional job in working with the community to ensure that community priorities are honored and affected community members are referred to essential care. Finally, it is a prudent, forward-looking investment that provides critical information for strengthening recovery outcomes and helping contain longer-term public expenditure.

I hereby ask for your support and allocation of state funding for SB2969 SD1 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Dr. Daniela Bond-Smith

Council Chair  
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair  
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Councilmembers  
Kauanoë Batangan  
Tom Cook  
Gabe Johnson  
Tamara Paltin  
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez  
Shane M. Sinenci  
Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins



Director of Council Services  
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services  
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 S. HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.MauiCounty.us](http://www.MauiCounty.us)

April 1, 2026

TO: Honorable Chris Todd, Chair, and  
Members of the House Committee on Finance

FROM: Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins *Nohelani U'u-Hodgins*  
Councilmember

DATE: Thursday, April 2, 2026  
2:00 p.m., Conference Room 308

SUBJECT: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2969, SD1, HD1, RELATING TO THE  
MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds for the University of Hawai‘i to expand and sustain services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

The 2023 Maui wildfires caused unprecedented devastation, and many survivors continue to experience potential long-term health impacts from toxic exposure, respiratory illness, and trauma. The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and Maui Health Registry have provided critical health screenings, biomonitoring, and referrals for more than two thousand residents, helping identify risks early and connect individuals with needed care.

By investing in this program, the State can ensure continued monitoring and support for wildfire survivors, particularly children, first responders, kūpuna, and other medically vulnerable residents. Expanding these services will strengthen community resilience, improve long-term health outcomes, and help prevent more serious and costly health complications in the future.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of SB 2969, SD1, HD1.

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

April 1, 2026  
Page 2

**Judith F. Clark**  
48-218 Kamehameha Highway  
808-499-9966  
[Judithforceclark@gmail.com](mailto:Judithforceclark@gmail.com)  
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

March 31, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair,  
And members of the Committee on Finance

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2969 SD 1 HD 1 RELATING TO THE MAUI  
WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY.**

As a former member of the Hawaii Trauma-Informed Care Task Force and the Maui First mental health and trauma response team, I support SB 2969 SD 1 HD 1.

The impact of the Maui Wildfire on the physical and mental health, economic status, and social networks on the direct survivors of the tragedy is huge. Family, friends, and concerned residents throughout the state have experienced vicarious trauma. The effects of those experiences and the need to prepare for and prevent future disasters will consume our resources for many years to come.

In order to take appropriate actions, we need comprehensive and accurate data about the outcomes and impacts of the fire. The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study is providing critically needed data that is needed to address the ongoing issues related to the fire.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 10:31:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Kiefer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members

I am in **strong support of SB2969**, which would appropriate funds to expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study.

The August 2023 Maui wildfires were the deadliest natural disaster in Hawai‘i’s history and one of the worst wildfires in the United States in over a century. Beyond the immediate and devastating loss of life and property, the fires created ongoing health consequences that continue to affect survivors today.

Survivors continue to face toxic exposures, respiratory illness, and mental health trauma. Wildfire smoke and ash can contain fine particulate matter (PM2.5), heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and other hazardous substances released from burned homes, vehicles, and infrastructure. Exposure to these contaminants is associated with respiratory irritation, reduced lung function, asthma exacerbations, cardiovascular stress, and long-term mental health impacts, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress.

Children, first responders, kūpuna, and medically vulnerable individuals remain at especially high risk. Children are particularly vulnerable because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air relative to their body weight. Kūpuna and individuals with underlying heart or lung disease face increased risk of serious complications, including heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks, and COPD flare-ups. First responders may face repeated or prolonged exposure, increasing cumulative risk. Pregnant people and individuals with chronic conditions may also experience heightened susceptibility to both short- and long-term health effects.

The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry, together, represent the most comprehensive social and health biomonitoring effort in the state’s history. These efforts are critical for identifying patterns of exposure, connecting residents to medical and mental health services, and building the evidence base needed to guide ongoing recovery and preparedness.

To date, more than two thousand residents have received services, including medical and mental health screenings, biomonitoring, and referrals to care. Continued outreach and follow-up are essential to ensure that health conditions are identified early and that residents receive appropriate care over time.

Additional funding is needed to expand and sustain these services, with a focus on children and other high-risk populations, and to ensure long-term follow-up through the Maui Health Registry for up to five thousand individuals. Wildfire-related health effects may emerge or persist for months or years after exposure. Sustained investment is necessary to monitor long-term outcomes, support community trust, and ensure equitable access to services, including for immigrant and underserved communities.

Strengthening these efforts not only supports Maui's recovery but also builds statewide capacity to respond to future climate-driven disasters.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure. The climate crisis is a health crisis.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kiefer, MD MPH

JABSOM

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 11:39:05 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Princess Cacpal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the Higher Education Committee,

My name is Princess Cacpal, and I am a community member. I am writing in **strong support of SB2969**, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) and the Maui Health Registry.

I have been volunteering with MauiWES for a year now and I have witnessed the impact it has made on the wildfire survivors. Initiatives like these make the people of this community feel seen and cared for. It is imperative for them to know that there are people out there willing to fight and care for them. Although the fires are over, their battles continue and we cannot not let them fight alone.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support SB2969** and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

Princess Cacpal

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 11:57:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pauli Amornkul	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Pauli Amornkul, MD, MPH. I am a medical epidemiologist who started volunteering with MauiWES last year. I connect with study participants in person or by phone to help them understand their test results, answer questions, and help to connect them with wrap around services as needed. I write in **strong support of SB 2969** to provide funding to sustain and expand the important work done by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

I started volunteering with MauiWES close to 18 months after the fires. Things were still raw. Life remained chaotic and unsettled for all of the participants I spoke with. Participants repeatedly told me how grateful they were for all that MauiWES has been doing for them. Participants felt they had been forgotten by the rest of the world as FEMA was winding down despite continued housing and life instability. “The public has moved on.” There were and continue to be many tears during my consultations. Now, nearly a year later, the sentiment remains unchanged - deep gratitude for MauiWES’ continued strong presence, advocacy, service, and support.

MauiWES has been able to connect participants with health insurance, mental health services, and screen them for early detection of potential negative health outcomes. We have detected new onset diabetes, detected blood pressures in the stage 2 hypertension range, and have had to send several participants straight to urgent care or the emergency department - in time to prevent much worse health outcomes.

I am privileged and grateful to be working *with* such a team of professionals, working *for* a community in need, and working *toward* improved quality of life for those who have been traumatized and whose lives have been upended by the fires. Many health and research questions have arisen from the data collected. The persistent elevated urine heavy metal levels is deeply concerning and begs continued surveillance, prospective monitoring, and further research.

The impact of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to

many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support SB 2969** and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

**Pauli N. Amornkul, MD, MPH**

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 2:00 pm, Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SB 2969, SD1, HD1 - RELATING TO THE MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE STUDY AND MAUI HEALTH REGISTRY.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake for my district, Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews, and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I write to you today in **strong support of SB 2969, SD1, HD1**, which appropriates funds for the University of Hawai'i to expand and sustain services provided by the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry.

The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study, or MauiWES, engages a wide array of partners led by the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization and the John A. Burns School of Medicine with numerous community and health organizations. The study addresses a critical gap in knowledge about the effects of environmental hazards and socioeconomic challenges on the health of those affected by the Maui wildfires. The focus lies on collecting data and biospecimens from over 1000 residents impacted by the wildfires, providing vital insights into the short- and long-term health outcomes such as chronic diseases, mental health issues, and the broader social implications.

The mission of the MauiWES extends beyond immediate analysis. It endeavors to establish a resilient health model, integrating biomarker and socioeconomic data to forecast individual-level risks and inform preventative strategies. This comprehensive approach aims not only to address the current crisis but also to create a blueprint for future disaster response, prioritizing health and well-being in the wake of natural disasters.

The 2025 MauiWES/UHERO Report, "From Crisis to Recovery: Health and Resilience Two Years After the Maui Wildfires" shares that data collected from the full cohort of 1,800 adults through January 2025 echoes the previous year's findings and reveals the long arc of recovery. Overall, 41% of adults report worse health compared to the previous year. Half show depressive symptoms, 26% report moderate-to-severe anxiety, and 4.2% have had suicidal thoughts in the past month. Meanwhile, 74% have elevated or hypertensive blood pressure, and over a quarter show reduced lung function. While insurance coverage has improved significantly, access to care remains a persistent barrier. About one in three participants report difficulty scheduling appointments or getting prescriptions, especially for chronic and respiratory conditions. The social recovery is equally uneven. About 41% of adults are still living in temporary housing, and 25% remain unemployed but actively looking for work. Despite these struggles, 61% report high levels of support from family and friends—demonstrating the continued strength of community bonds.

Children in the MauiWES study show signs of physical healing, but their emotional well-being raises serious red flags. Over half (51%) of children ages 8-18 screen positive for depression, with 22% in the severe range. About 30% report anxiety symptoms, and nearly 45% still show signs of PTSD—4.3% at severe levels. One in four report low self-esteem, and many are experiencing functional challenges at school and home. Cardiopulmonary health is also a growing concern. One in three children had elevated or high blood pressure, with Filipino youth most affected—15.4% falling into Stage 2 hypertension. Nearly 20% of children have impaired breathing capacity, especially among Asian and Filipino children. Girls show slightly more severe lung issues. These findings point to the need for sustained investment in pediatric care, trauma-informed school services, clean indoor air, and culturally tailored mental health programs. Without early intervention, these risks could become lifelong health burdens.

I strongly support the work of the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study being done with its partner organizations in support of recovery for Maui wildfire survivors. As a Maui resident, I request that you **vote in support of SB 2969, SD1, HD1**.

Mahalo,

Christine Andrews, JD  
Wailuku, Maui

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 1:14:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amy Jackson	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am writing to ask for your support for SB2969 SD1. I barely escaped Front Street the day of the Lahaina fire only to fight for my life just 1 year later.

I participated in the wildfire study for 100\$ cash. My daughter was turning 13 and I didn't have money for her birthday gift. The doctor at the study said my Hemoglobin was so low it wouldn't register a number on their equipment. I was sent to the Emergency Room and admitted for multiple blood transfusions and months of treatment.

I did not know I was sick. I had fatigue and shortness of breath with activity that I attributed to turning 50.

Participation in the study saved my physical life and also my mental health. I have gotten help for PTSD after the questionnaire helped me realized I needed it. As a single mother I am grateful to still be here for my children. Mahalo for allowing me to tell my story. Please continue to fund the Maui WES for healing the island of Maui and the lahui.

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 1:25:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nichole Yessamie Calagias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Nichole Yessie Calagias and I am a resident, community healthcare worker and community member. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

I am a community health worker working for the wildfire exposure study collecting data and talking story with the community who has been deeply impacted by these fires and the aftermath.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, and as one of the folks interfacing with the fire survivors and hearing first hand the impacts they are facing, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,  
Nichole Yessie Calagias

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 1:36:05 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Villalobos	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is **Stephanie Villalobos**, and I am a Maui resident, community member, and Community Care Navigator with Roots Reborn. I am writing in strong support of **SB 2969**, which would provide funding to continue and expand the **Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry**.

I personally participated in the study, and it was a very meaningful experience. Through the process, I realized how much the stress and heartbreak of losing friends in the wildfire had affected my own health. Like many people in our community, I was focused on helping others and continuing with daily life, but I had not fully processed the impact the disaster had on me.

The study helped me better understand both my physical and mental health in ways that I might not have discovered during a regular doctor's visit. In particular, the mental health screening encouraged important conversations with my physician about the emotional toll of the wildfire. It reminded me that healing from a disaster is not only about rebuilding homes, but also about caring for our health and well-being.

The impacts of the August 2023 wildfires did not end when the fires were extinguished. Many residents are still experiencing ongoing health concerns, including respiratory issues, mental health challenges, and worries about long-term exposure to smoke and toxins. These concerns are especially significant for children and for individuals who already have existing medical conditions.

Through my work in the community, I continue to see residents who are dealing with new or worsening health concerns. Many people we support are worried about their health but face barriers to care. Some do not have insurance, while others have coverage but still struggle to access affordable healthcare.

Programs like the **Maui Wildfire Exposure Study** provide something incredibly important for our community. For many residents, especially those without access to regular healthcare, the study offers a comprehensive health screening that they might not otherwise receive. At the same time, the information gathered through the study helps researchers and policymakers understand how the wildfire continues to impact our community's health.

This data is critical. It helps ensure that future resources and health programs are based on real information about the needs of the community, and that the people most impacted by the wildfire

— including immigrant families, uninsured individuals, and working-class residents — are represented and not left out of recovery efforts.

Programs like the **Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry** provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that many families might not otherwise have access to. Continued funding will help ensure that residents receive the follow-up care and support they need as Maui continues to recover.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support **SB 2969** and ensure that the health of Maui's residents continues to be monitored, understood, and protected.

Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to the health and well-being of our community.

Sincerely,  
**Stephanie Villalobos**

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 2:50:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Manmohan Yadav	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Manmohan Yadav, and I am a community member. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which provides funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

The impacts of the August 2023 wildfires did not end when the fires were extinguished. Many Maui residents continue to face ongoing health concerns, including respiratory issues, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially among children, kūpuna, and other medically vulnerable individuals.

The Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry offer trusted, community-based support, including health monitoring, early identification of potential issues, and referrals for follow-up care. For many families, these services are essential and may otherwise be difficult to access.

Continued funding is critical to ensure that affected residents are not forgotten and that health concerns are identified and addressed as early as possible. Supporting this effort means supporting the long-term health, safety, and well-being of the Maui community.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

Manmohan Yadav

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 11:21:22 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristelle Turalva-Albano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Kristelle Turalva-Albano , and I am a Lahaina wildfire survivor & nursing student and community member. I am writing in strong support of SB2969, which would provide funding to continue and expand the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry.

I am a community health worker working for the wildfire exposure, study collecting data and talking story with the community who was deeply impacted by these fires and the aftermath.

The impacts of the wildfires did not end in August 2023. Many residents continue to experience ongoing health concerns, including respiratory problems, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about long-term effects, especially for children and other medically vulnerable individuals.

Programs like the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and the Maui Health Registry provide trusted, community-based care, early detection, and referrals that would otherwise be inaccessible to many families. Continued funding will help ensure that people are not forgotten and that health issues are identified before they become emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB2969 and ensure that Maui residents continue to receive the care, follow-up, and protection they deserve.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of our communities.

Sincerely,  
Kristelle Turalva-Albano

**SB-2969-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 12:23:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
A. Nakaima	Office of Representative Cochran, HD14	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and House Finance Committee Members,

Beyond the research study, Representative Cochran **strongly supports** continuation and expansion of the services to address the ongoing health issues of wildfire survivors. A separate consideration relevant to this bill is that West Maui is lacking a hospital (the two hospitals on Maui are both on the East side, in Wailuku and Kula), but a hospital and other health services are needed more than ever. Rep. Cochran has heard that the need for mental health services for children is growing, not subsiding after 2.5 years. Suicide prevention also is direly needed -- there are hushed stories from the past year of individuals found dead and hanging in apartments after they were supposed to have vacated when evicted. PTSD seems to be affecting all who were in the fire.

In addition to the research, some of the services and the system of services could be evaluated for effectiveness and to help navigate towards desired outcomes and greater impact.