



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of (SB3203)
RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Monday, February 09, 2026 at 1:05 PM | Room Number: 225

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this measure be
2 considered as a vehicle to provide the needed funding so long as it does not supplant the
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governor's executive budget request, and emphasizes
4 that emergency air medical transport licensure and accreditation fees will be deposited into the
5 Emergency Medical Services Special Fund to provide a long-term, sustainable funding source
6 through ongoing air medical and ambulance licensing revenues to support these positions and
7 program functions.

8 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure offering comments.

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

12 Air medical services are an essential component of Hawaii’s healthcare delivery system,
13 emergency medical systems of care, and overall healthcare infrastructure. Due to Hawaii’s
14 geographic isolation, multi-island structure, rural and remote communities, and limited access
15 to specialty and tertiary care on neighbor islands, timely access to emergency aeromedical and

1 interfacility air medical transport is critical to ensuring equitable, lifesaving care for residents
2 and visitors across the State.

3 Air medical transport is not a supplemental service in Hawaii; it is a foundational element of
4 emergency response, trauma care, stroke care, cardiac care, and disaster preparedness. These
5 services are relied upon daily to bridge geographic barriers and ensure continuity of care across
6 islands.

7 EMSIPSB recognizes that while demand for emergency and interfacility air medical transport
8 has continued to increase, the State currently lacks permanent, dedicated resources within the
9 Department to comprehensively monitor, manage, coordinate, and develop this critical
10 component of the emergency medical services system. The Air Medical Working Group,
11 convened pursuant to 2025 Senate Concurrent Resolution 86 (SCR86), confirmed that Hawaii
12 requires a formalized governance structure and designated staffing within the Department to
13 provide statewide oversight, coordination, performance monitoring, quality improvement, and
14 disaster readiness for air medical services.

15 Senate Bill 3203 (SB3203) represents the initial and necessary implementation step for the
16 Department to operationalize the recommendations outlined in the SCR86 (2025) Air Medical
17 Working Group Report. By establishing statutory authority, dedicated staffing, and sustainable
18 funding mechanisms, this measure enables the Department to begin systematically
19 implementing the Working Group's recommendations to improve coordination, efficiency,
20 equity, and outcomes for air medical resources across all islands.

21 It should be noted that the positions proposed under SB3203 are intended to be initially
22 established using Rural Healthcare Transformation Funds for the first five years. This approach
23 allows time for emergency air medical transport licensure and accreditation fees to be collected
24 and deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund. Over this initial
25 implementation period, the revenue generated from air medical and ambulance licensing

1 would serve as the long-term, sustainable funding mechanism to support these positions and
2 programmatic functions within the Department of Health.

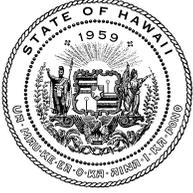
3 This phased funding strategy represents a prudent investment in rural health infrastructure and
4 is directly aligned with the goals and intent of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
5 (CMS) Rural Healthcare Transformation initiatives. Leveraging time-limited federal resources to
6 establish durable state infrastructure allows Hawaii to strengthen its emergency air medical
7 systems while ensuring long-term sustainability.

8 SB3203 provides the framework necessary for DOH to strengthen statewide governance,
9 improve coordination across counties and healthcare systems, support data-driven quality
10 improvement, enhance disaster preparedness, and promote health equity by improving timely
11 access to emergency medical care for rural and neighbor island communities. Collectively, these
12 actions will drive improved performance and patient outcomes for air medical resources across
13 the State.

14 For these reasons, the EMSIPSB strongly supports SB3203.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to
16 strengthening Hawaii's emergency medical services system.

17



**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

February 9, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, 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 3203 -- RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES**

HEARING: Monday, February 9, 2026 @ 1:05 pm; Conference Room 225

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports SB 3203, with comments.

This bill establishes a centralized statewide air medical services program within the Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Branch to improve coordination, governance, quality and disaster readiness for air medical transport services across the state.

Hawaii's multi-island geography means that air medical services are essential for timely access to trauma and specialty care. Delays can mean the difference between life and death, especially in rural and neighbor island communities.

With over 1,000 additional flights annually since 2020, our emergency systems are straining under increasing demand. Current staffing is inadequate to meet the increased demand which leads to inefficiencies and coordination breakdowns. Creating a specialized, permanent team for air medical coordination enables standardization, oversight, and integration with trauma, stroke, cardiac, and disaster response systems, reflecting best practices.

Your favorable consideration of this bill will strengthen emergency response and disaster preparedness and ensure equitable, timely access to lifesaving care for all our residents

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



ALOHACARE

To: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Maria Rallojay, Public Policy Specialist

Hearing: Friday, February 13, 2026, 2:00pm, Conference Room 225

RE: **SB3203 Relating to Air Medical Services**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of the intent of SB3203**. This measure would (1) establish the Statewide Air Medical Services Program within the Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Systems Branch to coordinate and strengthen air medical services; (2) provide for an air medical director, an air medical program manager, and an air medical coordinator; and (3) provide for annual licensure and accreditation fees to be deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund for costs of the program.

AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan founded by Hawai'i's Community Health Centers and the Queen Emma Clinics. We serve over 66,000 Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dual-eligible residents on all islands. Since 1994, AlohaCare has partnered with providers, government entities, and community-based organizations to meet the evolving needs of our safety net community as Hawai'i's only health plan focused solely on Medicaid-eligible individuals. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for equitable access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare is committed to whole-person care by improving access to care for our members. Hawai'i residents in rural and remote communities have long been accustomed to travelling to urban areas to access specialized care and routine treatment. Residents of Moloka'i and Lāna'i rely on air travel to access emergency and, oftentimes, routine medical care. Timely access to care can hinge on whether air medical transport is coordinated efficiently across counties and facilities. AlohaCare already provides medically necessary transportation for eligible members to access covered services, including when members must travel to receive appropriate levels of care. Timely coordination is important so that our members can actually access the care they need.



For these reasons, AlohaCare supports efforts that reduce avoidable delays and improve the reliability of emergency and interfacility transport because those improvements translate directly into better health outcomes and more equitable access to care. We defer to the Department of Health and the administration on the most appropriate and sustainable funding approach to operationalize this program.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of the intent** of **SB3203**.



Hawaii Medical Association

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

Date: February 9, 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 3203 RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES. DOH; State Emergency Medical Services System; Statewide Air Medical Services Program; Emergency Medical Services Special Fund

Position: Support

This measure would establish the Statewide Air Medical Services Program within the Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Systems Branch to coordinate and strengthen air medical services, provide for an air medical director, an air medical program manager, and an air medical coordinator, provides for annual licensure and accreditation fees to be deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund for costs of the program.

HMA supports this measure which can strengthen statewide coordination of aeromedical services, improve timely access to definitive care, support safer interfacility transfers, and reduce avoidable delays when minutes matter. Reliable air medical transport is a lifeline for patients across our islands—especially for emergencies and for neighbor-island residents who must reach specialty and tertiary care on O‘ahu. In addition, a coordinated statewide approach helps ensure consistent clinical standards, clear oversight, and reliable readiness for disasters and major incidents.

HMA appreciates these efforts that prioritize patient safety, workforce readiness, and transparent performance monitoring for an essential component of Hawai‘i’s emergency care continuum.

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
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REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

Brittany Lyte. "Game Changer? Free Medical Flights Start For Some Neighbor Island Residents." *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 20 Jan. 2026.

"Life Flight Network Brings Critical Air Transport Services to Hawai'i Island." *Hawaii News Now*, 11 Nov. 2025.

Wu N. State selects REACH for Maui County's aeromedical transport services. [Honolulu Star Advertiser July 11 2024](#).

Hawaii Department of Health. [DOH issues notice of award for emergency aeromedical ambulance transport service for Maui county](#).

Hawaii Air Ambulance and Medical Escort Costs. <https://airambulance.com/locations-served/hawaii-air-ambulance/> Accessed Feb 1 2026.

Consillio, K. Charges for Medevac Flights Soar in Hawaii. <https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/emsworld/news/12111684/charges-for-medevac-flights-soar-in-hawaii> Accessed Feb 1 2026

Hawaii residents complain of high prices for medevac flights. <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/29981390/hawaii-residents-complain-of-high-prices-for-medevac-flights/> Accessed Feb 1 2026

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

SB-3203

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 3:17:33 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Autumn Hill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I as an Emergency medical professional support SB3203.

Thank you

Autumn Hill

SB-3203

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 3:41:29 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/9/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phillip Wu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Phillip Wu, and I'm writing to you in strong support of establishing and funding the Statewide Air Medical Services Program.

Hawai'i's geography makes air medical transport essential—not optional. For many neighbor island residents, air ambulances are the only way to reach time-critical care. Creating a coordinated statewide program with dedicated medical leadership improves safety, accountability, and reliability across the entire emergency medical system.

Funding this program through licensure and accreditation fees is a responsible, sustainable approach that strengthens patient care and emergency preparedness statewide.

I respectfully urge you to support this measure.

Mahalo for your time and service.

Phillip Wu

SB-3203

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:49:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT this bill. This is an excellent idea.

LATE

SB-3203

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:26:55 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Bailey	Testifying for AMR	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.