

**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'OKOLE

**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)

March 23, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair  
Honorable Members

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS  
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Ikaika Olds, 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: **Wednesday, March 25, 2026 @ 09:30 am; Conference Room 329**

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

---

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports SB3203, 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.

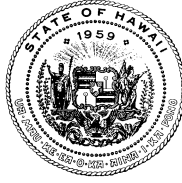
*SB 3203: testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued.*

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.

Thank you for hearing SB 3203.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of (SB3203)  
RELATING TO AIR MEDICAL SERVICES**

REPRESENTATIVE GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 9:30 AM | Room Number: 329

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 (EMS) Special Fund to provide a long-term, sustainable funding  
6 source through ongoing air medical and ambulance licensing revenues to support these  
7 positions and program functions.

8 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure, offering testimony.

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 this measure 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 EMS Special Fund. Over this initial implementation period, the revenue  
25 generated from air medical and ambulance licensing would serve as the long-term, sustainable

1 funding mechanism to support these positions and programmatic functions within the  
2 Department.

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 This measure 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 EMS system.



## 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 HEALTH  
Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair

Date: March 25, 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  
Laeton Pang, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

## 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

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

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, President • Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President Elect • Angela Pratt, MD, Immediate Past President  
Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

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

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



To: The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair  
The Honorable Sue L. Keohokapu-Loy, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair  
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Homelessness and Human Services

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

Hearing: Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 9:30am, Conference Room 329

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



ALOHA CARE

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**.



To: The Honorable Greg Takayama, Chair  
The Honorable Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Vice Chair  
Members, House Committee on Health

From: Jacce Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: March 25, 2026

Re: Support of SB3203 – Relating to Air Medical Services

The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of SB3202, which establishes 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.

Our health system includes Molokai General Hospital, North Hawaii Community Hospital, and soon to be built Kona Regional Hospital -all which serve rural and neighbor island communities who depend on reliable interisland air medical services for certain medical care. With limited medical air service in a State that experiences on average 2,500 air ambulance trips per year, a more stable and reliable solution is needed.

Our Transfer Call Center nurses process approximately 240 calls per day to ensure patients receive the right care. The Center is managing throughout the Pacific Basin in real time, and today they often have to make multiple calls to locate an available air transport provider - a step that can introduce critical delays when time is not plentiful, particularly for patients needing emergent care on the neighbor islands. A centralized system would reduce these delays and allow nurses to focus on clinical coordination rather than brokering transport.

Improving the speed at which transport is secured directly enhances timely access to care for patients across our state and supports more efficient patient flow. Transparent performance data promotes accountability and fosters healthy competition among providers, which ultimately improves service and access for patients. This reflects the same model we use successfully within our own system with the Aukahi Command Center: centralized coordination supported by real-time

*The mission of The Queen's Health System is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.*

data—and extending that approach statewide will remove unnecessary friction, support frontline teams, and strengthen the entire transport ecosystem in service of timely patient care.

Queen's currently serves on the air medical working group and looks forward to continued work with stakeholders on this topic. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB3203.