

JAN 25 2006

A BILL FOR AN ACT

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina
2 revealed severe shortcomings of the health care system serving
3 the residents of the Gulf Coast. Other regions of the country
4 have been induced to assess the ability of their health care
5 systems to withstand natural disasters.

6 The Office of Domestic Preparedness of the Office of
7 Homeland Security issued a directive to each state requiring
8 them to assess their ability to evacuate and shelter residents
9 in the event of a disaster. Of particular concern were the
10 special populations served by hospitals and long term care
11 facilities.

12 Hawaii sent a disaster relief team to Louisiana that
13 included members of various health care organizations. They had
14 first-hand knowledge of Katrina's destructive force and its
15 effect on health care.

16 From Katrina it became apparent that smaller residential
17 health care facilities on the Gulf Coast, such as nursing homes,
18 were not constructed to withstand strong winds. Hawaii is in a



1 similar situation. Recent discussions with nursing home
2 executives revealed that they were uncertain whether their
3 facilities could resist the effects of a hurricane. Most felt
4 they would be compelled to evacuate their residents because of
5 this uncertainty. However, the capacity of shelters that are
6 specially designed for nursing home residents is insufficient.

7 State officials are currently working to establish special
8 needs shelters and to improve evacuation procedures. However,
9 these officials concede that the number of actual and potential
10 shelters are inadequate to house and protect the large numbers
11 of potential evacuees.

12 The evacuation of nursing home residents should be
13 considered only after all other options have been considered.
14 Allowing nursing homes to "shelter in place" their residents and
15 staff is often the safest and most practical solution. However,
16 this option requires confidence in the structural integrity of a
17 nursing home.

18 Hospitals are typically more prepared to address disasters
19 in general than nursing homes. For example, hospitals have
20 comprehensive plans that will be implemented in the event of a
21 pandemic or terrorist attack. However, the Katrina experience



1 department of health for the purposes of this Act.

2 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2006.

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SB. NO. 3268

Report Title:

Hurricane Preparedness; Structural Analysis; Hospitals

Description:

Funds a study to conduct a structural analysis of each hospital and nursing home facility to determine their ability to withstand hurricanes. Makes appropriation.

