



National Fire Protection Association

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The Honorable Rida Cabanilla, Chair
House Committee on Housing
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HB1795-OPPOSE

Dear Chair Cabanilla and Members of the Committee:

I write to you and the Committee today to express my strong opposition to HB1795, a bill that hinders local fire authorities from determining the best fire protection policy for their communities. This is a serious public safety issue. I have outlined some thoughts on why I am opposing HB1795.

At the very least, codes are designed to be adopted and implemented in their totality to make certain that when all code requirements are conformed to, a house is in its safest code compliant state to protect the occupants of the structure. When one component, such as fire sprinklers, is not installed in the structure, other requirements and structural components, which may have been lessened because of pre-supposed sprinkler protection, are now increasingly vulnerable to the effects of fire and may drastically increase the danger to the lives of the occupants, firefighters, and other rescuers who may respond to an incident of fire in the home. Adopting this legislation, and reducing the requirement of the code by prohibiting this adoption, is in effect allowing **SUB-STANDARD HOMES** to be built in your Counties and communities.

Ignores Reduced Life Safety: Most importantly, this bill will withhold the life-saving benefits of home fire sprinklers from the citizens in Hawaii. Each year, approximately 3,000 people die in home fires in the United States – more than all of the fatalities from natural disasters annually. In 2008, roughly 83% of all civilian fire deaths and 89% of all civilian fire injuries resulted from home structure fires. Home fire sprinklers would have saved the vast majority of these fire victims because sprinklers play a significant role in limiting life and property loss when a fire happens. For people that have a reported fire in their home, the risk of dying decreases by about 80 percent when sprinklers are present.

Interrupts Local Fire Policy: Local fire authorities rely on an array of tools – including automatic fire sprinklers – to combat the threat of fire and provide their public safety service. Local fire protection policy is based on many issues, such as local fire department deployment capabilities, firefighter safety needs, response-time goals, and insurance services rating needs. Home fire sprinklers can impact the community from local fire protection policy to local firefighting tactics and strategies. If passed, this bill will remove a valuable tool that may be used by fire departments to meet their local needs in providing the best public safety service to their communities.

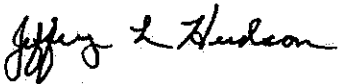
Discounts Local Hearings: Local fire authorities, Counties and municipalities that have determined they want to require residential fire sprinklers still must provide an open and public hearing process. This local

hearing process will allow discussion on all the technical details relevant to their proposal. The issue will be considered at the local level in a public forum, where pertinent issues to local conditions may be considered.

Neglects Firefighter Safety: Residential fire sprinklers provide great assistance to firefighters, especially in congested metropolitan areas and rural settings, where it takes a longer for firefighters to arrive on scene. Fire sprinklers reduce the chance of "flashover" and keep the fire at bay, while the firefighters arrive and set up for firefighting operations. Fire sprinklers buy time before the structure collapses. Studies show that with new construction techniques, called light-weight truss construction, homes do not have much time under fire conditions and can collapse on responding firefighters. Fire sprinklers will alleviate that risk. This is a problem because statistics indicate that 62% of firefighter deaths occur at residential properties and 92% of those occurring in one and two family homes.

Representative, there are so many more reasons than these few provided in this letter that underscore the importance of not prohibiting local jurisdictions from making their own decisions for the level of safety they want to provide their residents and their public safety officials and responders. I implore you, for the sake of public safety; please do not provide a tool that allows for the construction of **SUB-STANDARD HOMES** in your communities. Additionally please don't disavow the communities in your State the right to make those decisions for themselves, please take the appropriate action to not move forward on HB1795.

Sincerely,



Jeffery L. Hudson
NFA Regional Fire Sprinkler Specialist