

LATE



**Hawaii Farm Bureau**  
F E D E R A T I O N

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2012  
3:15 a.m.  
Conference Room 224

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, & MILITARY AFFAIRS

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2696**  
Relating to the State Building Code

Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

I am Janet Ashman, testifying on behalf of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFBF). Organized since 1948, the HFBF is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

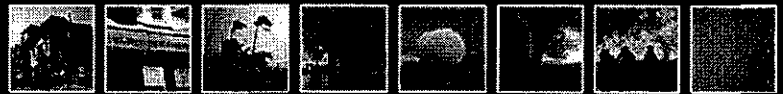
HFBF would like to express our concerns regarding SB 2696, which would among other things, abolish the State Building Code Council, provide for a transition from the current to the new proposed law, and require the counties to adopt building codes with their revisions or opt out of adoption.

As you may know, we are supporting bills introduced this session that would reduce the cost and construction time of low-risk, non-residential farm structures by exempting these structures from county building permit requirements. This exemption is necessary to allow farmers to build, at reasonable cost, structures to protect their crops and equipment from thieves, vandals, and the weather. The majority of states across the country have such exemptions for farm structures. At present, rural farm structures in Hawaii are held to the same standards as homes and commercial buildings in densely populated urban areas.

SB 2696 establishes state building standards "applicable to all construction in the State of Hawaii based on the latest edition of the state fire code, the Uniform Plumbing Code, the International Building Code, the International Residential Code, and the International Energy Code. A requirement that this code apply to all construction in Hawaii would preclude any permit relief passed in other legislation this session.

These codes may not make any sense for low-risk non-residential farm structures. We respectfully request that if SB 2696 is passed out of your committee, it be amended to contain wording that allows permit relief for agricultural structures under certain conditions.

Thank you very much for your strong support of agriculture and your thoughtful consideration of our concerns. Please contact me by calling our office at (808) 848-2074 if you have any questions.



Where building safety research leads to real-world solutions.

**LATE**

February 14, 2012

TO: The Senate  
Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs  
FAX 586-6659  
Senator Will Espero, Chair; Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

SUBJECT: **Senate Bill 2696 Relating to the State Building Code**  
Hearing February 14, 2012 3:15 pm Conference Room 224  
Honorable Members of the Committee:

## **Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety Statement in Opposition to Senate Bill 2696 Relating to the State Building Code**

The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) is a 501(c)(3) organization, wholly supported by the property (re)insurance industry. IBHS' mission is to conduct objective, scientific research to identify and promote effective actions that strengthen homes, businesses, and communities against natural disasters and other causes of loss. IBHS does this by conducting research and advocating improved construction, maintenance, and preparation practices.

Among IBHS' highest priorities is the adoption and enforcement of strong, mandatory statewide building codes. The purpose of building codes is to assure that minimum acceptable standards are used in the design, construction and maintenance of the places where people live and work. Building codes are intended to increase the safety and integrity of structures, thereby reducing deaths, injuries and property damage from a wide range of hazards. Damage reduction that results from the adoption and enforcement of strong building codes helps to keep people in their homes following a natural or manmade disaster, reduces the need for public and private disaster aid, and preserves natural resources and the built environment. Furthermore, reducing damage to the built environment means that businesses can remain open, and their presence helps to sustain local economies.

Strong, mandatory statewide building codes promote a level, predictable playing field for designers, builders and suppliers. They also allow for economies of scale in the production of building materials and construction, as well as a level of safety for first responders during and after fires and other disaster events.

Given the proven benefits of strong, mandatory statewide building codes, IBHS is very concerned that Senate Bill 2696 (and its companion, House Bill 2434) would **abolish** the State Building Code Council and make code adoption by counties **non-mandatory** through a do-nothing option—effectively **removing** the State from active involvement in building design and construction standards. By contrast, existing law permits counties to make some modifications to the Hawaii State Building Code, but there are both substantive and procedural safeguards in place to avoid inappropriate amendments and maintain an appropriate degree of uniformity.

IBHS recently completed an analysis, evaluation, and comparison of regulations and processes governing residential building construction in the 18 states most vulnerable to catastrophic hurricanes along the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico. Although Hawaii was not included in this report, Hawaii is equally vulnerable to catastrophic hurricanes and the conclusions we derived from “Rating the States” should be heeded in public policy relating to Hawaii’s building codes:

- 1) Hawaii should continuously adopt the latest version of the ICC model codes on a universal basis and not allow opt-outs (except as delineated in current law). This is important for all perils but especially for wind given Hawaii’s vulnerability to hurricanes;
- 2) Codes protect occupants only if they are incorporated into actual buildings. States also must develop and maintain procedures for training, and certifying, and disciplining code officials so to provide a level of confidence that the codes are being uniformly applied at the local level; and
- 3) On-site implementation should be accomplished through contractor and subcontractor licensing, education, and disciplinary procedures.

**Senate Bill 2696 would undermine key components that IBHS believes are essential to an effective state building code regime—components that have been reinforced through our study of building code standards and processes in the other hurricane-prone states. Of particular concern:**

- The bill would eliminate the State Building Code Council and its role in establishing consistent design and construction standards.
- The bill would allow all counties to opt-out of the Hawaii State Building Code thus eliminating uniformity and potentially undermining safety.
- The bill would negate hurricane resistance in Hawaii.
- Likewise, flood, tsunami, and fire standards would be negated.
- And, the bill would prevent the state benefiting from state-of-the-art research being conducted by IBHS and other institutions in order to promote the life safety and property protection provisions of the Hawaii State Building Code.

**IBHS supports the current State Building Code Council and its role in maintaining and modernizing the Hawaii State Building Code. We urge that Senate Bill 2696 be set aside.**