



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 321
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
www.hawaii.gov/labor
Phone: (808) 586-8842 / Fax: (808) 586-9099
Email: dliir.director@hawaii.gov

March 26, 2013

The Honorable David Ige, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 208
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Ige:

Subject: H.B. 90, H.D. 2, S.D. 1 Relating to Emergency Response Vehicles

I am Robert Westerman, Vice Chair of the State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Kauai Fire Department (KFD). The SFC and the KFD supports the intent of H.B. 90, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, which seeks to establish a temporary emergency response vehicle task force to determine the impact of the emergency response vehicle sirens in terms of excessive noise, the effect on public safety, and the relative effectiveness of the use of emergency lights instead of the use of sirens at night.

Fire response vehicles seek to comply with Hawaii Revised Statutes 291C-65, which authorizes emergency vehicles to use audible and visible warning devices when responding to emergencies to warn other drivers and pedestrians and request the right-of-way. Emergency response with audible and visible warning devices activated, still requires the vehicle operator to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using our roadways. When either visible or audible warning devices are not used, emergency vehicles are not considered emergency vehicles and are subject to all the traffic laws and rules.

While the fire service is sensitive to the communities' concern for noise that sirens and horns create, we need to respond as safely and expeditiously as possible to the public's request for life safety and property protection assistance with all warning devices in operation.

The SFC and the KFD supports the intent of H.B. 90, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, to discuss the issues and create a greater understanding with the various stakeholders related to emergency vehicle response.

The Honorable David Ige, Chair
Page 2
March 26, 2013

Should you have any questions, please contact SFC Administrator Socrates Bratakos at 723-7151 or sbratakos@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Socrates Bratakos".Handwritten initials in blue ink, appearing to be "RW".

ROBERT WESTERMAN
Vice Chair

RW/LR:cc

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: info@schha.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB908 on Mar 25, 2013 09:20AM*
Date: Monday, March 25, 2013 5:06:45 PM

HB908

Submitted on: 3/25/2013

Testimony for WAM on Mar 25, 2013 09:20AM in Conference Room 211

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Annie Au Hoon | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

Deborah A. Agles M.D.
Occupational Medicine
1200 Queen Emma St. #3103
Honolulu, HI 96813
Telephone: 808-591-3538
Fax: 808-356-8191
Email: DAgles@Juno.com

March 18, 2013

Sir,

I would like to submit written testimony concerning excessive noise from emergency vehicles in downtown Honolulu. I live at Capitol Place, Beretania and Bishop streets, in close proximity to fire station #2 (located on Bishop Street). On the light pole at this corner, there is a CAT siren which is manually set off by the firemen in the fire station when they go out on a 911 call (in addition to the sirens on the truck). They set off the siren not only during the day in heavy traffic, but also at night, often in the middle of the night, when there are absolutely no vehicles in the road, and they do not go against a potential traffic pattern problem (wrong way on a one way street). It seems to me that this is very unnecessary, is a significant type of noise pollution, and is disruptive. There are many health effects from loud noise; these include heart disease, hypertension, poor hearing, and immune system dysfunction / deregulation. Certainly I can feel my blood pressure go up when sirens awaken me in the middle of the night, for no logical reason. The firemen have the ability to make all lights red, and the necessity of the CAT siren is certainly in question. It is archaic, burdensome, disruptive, and utilized inappropriately. I have had a few discussions with the fire station #2 battalion chief, Capt. Hao, who acknowledges the problem but insists that the decision to use the CAT siren be at the fireman's discretion when responding to 911 calls. It should be noted that sirens on ambulances (and I am sure the CAT siren) are set at 110 to 120 decibels, which is certainly damaging to the human hearing mechanism. Some cities have implemented noise control, particularly in the evening hours. In Denver, no noise over 60 dB is allowed in residential or commercial areas between 9 PM and 7 AM. It would be lovely to see a similar control on noise in our community. Other large cities, particularly in Europe, do not have nearly the exuberant and loud response to emergencies such as we have in Honolulu.

Additionally, the 911 response seems excessive and duplicitous. Fire trucks leave fire station number two on 911 medical calls with all sirens blaring, including the pole mounted siren. Within 10 to 45 seconds, an ambulance comes from Queen's hospital along the same route, to the same emergency call. This exuberant 911 response is

excessive, duplicates efforts, and results in significant expense to the State of Hawaii. It is curious to note that with 911 medical calls, only approximately 50% of the patients are transported to hospital with true medical needs; the remainder are simple first aid or unnecessary calls (this data is from the most recent published from the Department of Health).

It seems to me that the 911 system needs to be evaluated and streamlined. Ambulances should be located at fire stations, and can respond to 911 medical calls from that locale, obviating the need for the fire truck to proceed as a first responder, and the duplicitous response. The EMT salary package and potential overtime benefits need to be addressed; EMT's can make up to \$200,000 / year because of overtime benefits. In our economy, in this day, this is frankly egregious; it is a higher salary than many doctors command, who have much longer training and greater expertise. Some of these costs could be contained by combining the ambulance and fire responses at one location.

In summary, I believe the CAT siren is unnecessary and should be removed from service. Additionally, the 911 response needs to be overhauled and streamlined. I have over 50 signatures from residents in Capitol Place agreeing with this assessment; this is enclosed for your review.

Deborah Agles, MD