

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, February 19, 2014
9:05 AM
Conference Room 211

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 2603, RELATING TO VETERANS

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee.

My name is Charles Ota and I am the Vice President for Military Affairs at The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (The Chamber). I am here to state The Chamber's *support* of Senate Bill No. 2603, Relating To Veterans.

The measure proposes to authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds for the construction of long term care facility for veterans contingent upon the receipt of federal funds.

We concur that the state will face a significant shortage of long term care facilities statewide to meet the demands of an ever-growing veteran's population. Across the nation, the Office of Veterans Affairs estimates that more than one million members of the armed forces will become veterans within the next five years. There are an estimated one hundred twenty thousand veterans in Hawaii, with forty-four thousand over age sixty-five.

We also concur that no bond issuance be made unless the federal government appropriates a percentage of funds needed to complete the facility.

We note that Hawaii's only veterans care facility, jointly funded by the federal and state governments, was completed in Hilo, HI in 2004 and has successfully operated at no operational or maintenance cost to the state.

In light of the above, we recommend approval of this measure so plans may begin now to avert a health care problem for veterans in the near future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.