



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB 851**

**Relating to Health**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 10, 2015 8:30 AM Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Appropriates an unspecified amount of EMS Special Funds (ESF) in fiscal  
2 year 2015-2016. The measure requests an additional advanced life support ambulance unit  
3 including a vehicle, personnel, and equipment.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department recognizes the significant challenges to providing  
5 health care and emergency services to the Puna Community. The Department is projecting a  
6 shortfall in ESF to fund the existing ambulance contracts across the state for FY16 and FY17.  
7 The Department respectfully defers to the Governor's Executive Budget request for the  
8 Department of Health's appropriations and personnel priorities. Funding an additional unit  
9 would have a negative impact on existing services.

10 This measure seeks to augment the Hawaii County emergency medical services system for the  
11 residents and visitors of the Puna area. Hawaii County currently operates 15 ground ambulance  
12 units on the island of Hawaii. The last unit added was unit 3, Hawaii Ocean View Estates, in  
13 fiscal year 2005. Hawaii County has budgeted funds to secure and administer a backup 911  
14 contract with American Medical Response to aid with increased 911 calls.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

16 **Offered Amendments:** none

*From the office of -*  
Council Member  
District 4 - Puna Makai



Office: (808) 965-2712  
Fax: (808) 965-2707  
Email: [gilagan@hawaiiicounty.gov](mailto:gilagan@hawaiiicounty.gov)

**GREGGOR ILAGAN**

25 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

February 9, 2015

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair  
And Members of the Committee on Health

Dear Chair Belatti and Committee members,

On behalf of the residents of Puna, I am grateful for your support for an advanced life support ambulance, and I ask that you recommend approval of House Bill 851.

There has long been a dire need for an ambulance to serve this fast-growing district, and now that need has become even more critical.

Today, an active lava flow remains upslope of Highway 130, and this flow is expected to remain active for the foreseeable future. The loss of access to the highway will have a tremendous impact on the ability of emergency medical service personnel to respond to life-threatening emergencies.

When lava crosses the highway, it will require a 10-mile detour through gravel emergency routes and private subdivision roads to reach Hilo Medical Center. An advanced life support ambulance will provide increased levels of care and will lead to better outcomes for patients in Puna.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Greggor Ilagan  
Council Member

**William P. Kenoi**  
*Mayor*



**Darren J. Rosario**  
*Fire Chief*

**Renwick J. Victorino**  
*Deputy Fire Chief*

**County of Hawai'i**  
**HAWAII FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
25 Aupuni Street • Suite 2501 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720  
(808) 932-2900 • Fax (808) 932-2928

February 6, 2015

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Committee on Health  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 329  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Belatti:

**Subject: H.B. 851, RELATING TO HEALTH**

I am Darren J. Rosario, Fire Chief of the Hawai'i Fire Department (HFD). The HFD supports H.B. 851 to make an appropriation for an Advanced Life Support (ALS) Ambulance to be based in the Puna District.

The EMS needs of the residents of Puna are centrally served by HFD Medic's 5 and 10 out of the Kea'au and Pāhoa Fire stations respectively. These units are strategically based to serve the bulk of Puna's population handling 91% of EMS calls in Puna. Medic 19 out of the Volcano Fire Station serves a less populated area of Puna but fills a wide geographical gap (45 miles) between Kea'au and Ka'u.

Furthermore, the district of Puna is currently under the imminent threat of the "July 27 lava flow" that is poised to severely impact services to thousands of lower Puna residents. Essentially, the lava flow will cut them off from critical transportation infrastructure, which is their lifeline to amongst other things, health care. The area of lower Puna, currently impacted by the lava flow is home to nearly 10,000 people who live scattered about the nearly 100 square miles predicted to be isolated by the impact area. Furthermore, a recent survey conducted by the University of Hawai'i at Hilo shows that 1,101 households within the impact area house at least one person with a disability. Access to primary and acute medical care will be severely delayed due to lengthened travel times. The current time from Pahoa to Hilo via highway 130 is approximately 30 minutes without traffic. Once the flow crosses highway 130 and the alternate Makai routes, travel by ground will then go through the Chain of Craters road and take approximately 2 hours without traffic. Given these challenges an ALS ambulance in the community is an absolute necessity to the well being of the residents within the flow.



Retrospective data analysis from the Hawai'i Fire Department shows that approximately 180 EMS incidents are generated from within the impact area per month.

The County of Hawai'i has been proactively preparing since the threat became a reality. One proactive measure taken has been the creation of a new full service Fire Station, the "Pāhoa Village Fire Station", located within the impact area, in the town of Pāhoa. In addition to Fire Protection Apparatus, the station houses a fully staffed Advanced Life Support Ambulance fully funded by the County of Hawai'i to assist in meeting the acute health care needs of the community. Funding of each county's Emergency Medical Services System is a function of the State of Hawai'i. The current EMS budget provided to the County of Hawai'i by the State of Hawai'i cannot cover the expenses of operating this additional ALS ambulance; State EMS/DOH has indicated they cannot fund it either. For the best interest of the health care needs of lower Puna, the County of Hawai'i has been funding the Pāhoa Village ambulance since November 1, 2014. In addition, the Hawai'i Fire Department (HFD) has developed a partnership with private ambulance provider American Medical Response (AMR) to serve in a "back up" role within lower Puna. HFD is also developing a partnership and has conducted training with private air medical service provider Hawai'i Life Flight to assist in patient transport out of the impact area for time sensitive EMS cases.

- In 2007-2008 the Puna district accounted for 3,970 or 21% of all EMS calls in the County of Hawai'i.
- In 2013-2014 the Puna district accounted for 5,149 calls or 27% of all EMS calls in the County of Hawai'i.

The District of Puna is roughly the size of the Island of Kauai, has a population of 45,326 and has become one of the fastest growing districts in the State of Hawai'i with a population increase of 44% since 2000. Over the next 15 years the population of Puna is expected to grow to 75,000, nearly half the current population of Hawai'i Island.

Access to primary health care in Puna is challenging for the community, for many Puna residents primary care services are as much as 30 miles away, coupled with economic and transportation challenges EMS has become the access point for health care to many in Puna. This will be even more dominant in the face of isolation from the lava flow event.

The volume of EMS calls have crept up year by year with no increase in EMS services to the Puna district; with the projected population increase this will no doubt continue and impact our ability to deliver high quality EMS services. As mentioned 911 EMS cases in Puna account for more than 27% of all 911 calls in Hawai'i County, to compound this, the round trip time from response to back in quarters on a patient transport is approximately two hours with the current roadway infrastructure in place. This will increase to a 4 hour minimum once the lava flow

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair  
February 6, 2015  
Page 3

crosses Highway 130. It is become common for Medics 5 and 10 to have ten or more transports in a twenty-four hour shift the resulting simple math means; our personnel can essentially be on the road for nearly twenty-four consecutive hours. As a result the potential for fatigue, errors in judgment, driving and overall safety are of great concern for our personnel.

This increase in Puna's call volume is also having a collateral impact on two of our departments busiest units located in Hilo (Medic's 1 and 3) who respond to a combined 34 % of all Hawai'i County 911 EMS calls. Medic's 1 and 3 cover the Puna District when the Puna units are unavailable. Since 2007 there has been a 50% increase in responses from Medics 1 and 3 into the Puna District and there are numerous times when the majority of our East Hawai'i EMS assets Medics 1, 3, 5, 10, 19 are all covering calls in the Puna District leaving the most populated area (Hilo) without adequate services. This has resulted in increased 911 back costs to AMR. In the 2011 – 2014 fiscal periods we averaged nearly \$15,000 per month in 911 back up charges to AMR.

This request is presented to meet the ever-increasing demands for Emergency Medical Services on Hawai'i Island specific to Puna (with collateral effects in Hilo), its needs based on the impending lava flow induced isolation, and aiding our department in maintaining the highest level of EMS delivery to the community as its needs change.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 808-932-2903 or [fire@hawaiicounty.gov](mailto:fire@hawaiicounty.gov) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



DARREN J. ROSARIO  
Fire Chief

creagan3 - Karina

---

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2015 1:28 PM  
To: HLTtestimony  
Cc: nipfire@hawaii.rr.com  
Subject: \*Submitted testimony for HB851 on Feb 10, 2015 08:30AM\*

Categories: Purple Category

**HB851**

Submitted on: 2/9/2015

Testimony for HLT on Feb 10, 2015 08:30AM in Conference Room 329

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Robert H. Lee	HI Fire Fighters Assn	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](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)

creagan1 - Dannah

---

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2015 2:18 PM  
To: HLTtestimony  
Cc: zabal7@upwhawaii.org  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB851 on Feb 10, 2015 08:30AM  
Attachments: HB851 life support unit for Puna.ocx

**HB851**

Submitted on: 2/9/2015

Testimony for HLT on Feb 10, 2015 08:30AM in Conference Room 329

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Al Lardizabal	United Public Workers	Support	Yes

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](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)