



HAWAII FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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THE SENATE
THE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2017

February 28, 2017

Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

Testimony by
Hawaii Fire Fighters Association, Local 1463

S.B. No. 611, S.D. 1 RELATING TO FIRE SPRINKLERS

The Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA), Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO, represents more than 1,900 professional active-duty and 800 retired fire fighters throughout the State. The HFFA, on behalf of our members, opposes S.B. No. 611, S.D. 1 which proposes to repeal the sunset date of Act 83, SLH 2012.

The safety of the community and fire safety personnel is of utmost important to HFFA and our members. This bill prohibits the State and Counties from even considering whether or not a requirement for the installation sprinkler systems would be in the best interest of their community. HFFA believes that allowing Act 83, SLH 2012 to sunset affords the State and Counties to do determine if required installation or retrofitting of automatic fire sprinkler systems is appropriate for their respective communities and is in the best interest of the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**ALAN M ARAKAWA
MAYOR**



**JEFFREY MURRAY
FIRE CHIEF**

**ROBERT SHIMADA
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF**

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February 27, 2017

LATE

The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Committee on Commerce, Consumer
Protection, and Health
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 230
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Baker:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 611, Senate Draft (SD) 1 Relating to Fire Sprinklers

I am Jeffrey A. Murray, Member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department (MFD). The SFC and the MFD strongly oppose SB 611, SD 1, which proposes to permanently prevent the counties in the State of Hawaii (State) from mandating automatic fire sprinklers in new one- and two-family dwellings.

This bill prevents the four counties from incorporating safe building codes particular to their counties. The proper forum for national, model building codes to be reviewed, vetted, and adopted at the State level is the State Building Code Council (SBCC), which is represented by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the building industry, architects, structural engineers, building, and fire code officials. The SBCC is continuing its research into the possible use of a 5/8" meter for a residential sprinkler system. This is the standard domestic size meter used on the neighbor islands, which could mean there would be no additional water meter upgrade or cost. We do know that in a majority of homes being built, a one-inch meter is not needed to supply a residential sprinkler system. To date, there is no mandate to require residential sprinklers at the State or county level.

We recently received the following cost proposal submitted in February 2016 from a developer on a Department of Hawaiian Home Lands project for 20 turnkey single-family homes in a 45-lot subdivision on Oahu:

Model	Bedrooms	Baths	Stories	Net Living Area	House Price	Sprinkler System Price	Sprinkler System Price/s.f.	% Sprinkler Price/House
A	2	1	1	759 sf	\$211,039	\$7,741	\$10.20	3.6%
B	2	2	1	952 sf	\$251,022	\$9,200	\$9.70	3.6%
C	3	2	2	1,132 sf	\$281,385	\$9,639	\$8.50	3.4%
D	4	3	2	1,496 sf	\$320,815	\$12,120	\$8.10	3.7%

The sprinkler system cost ranged from approximately \$8-\$10 per square foot and included costs for the design, meter, permit, installation, and profit margin. This revealed a very low percentage compared to the total price of the home. We suggest that the high-cost of housing are related more to supply and demand and the rising prices for land, labor, and building materials.

There is little to no maintenance for a residential sprinkler system. A separate domestic and sprinkler system is maintained by a visual pressure gauge check and an annual flow test, which can be accomplished using a garden hose. A combined system will not need a flow test since the system operates in conjunction with the domestic system.

Eighty-five percent of fire deaths occur in the home, and 84% of the time only one sprinkler head controls the fire. Smoke alarm reliability ranges from 50%-78%, depending on the study. The reliability of a residential fire sprinkler system is 96.6%. Working smoke alarms may alert occupants in time for escape, but do nothing to suppress a fire. The age of a home has little to do with fire occurrences, but are more directly related to human behavior.

The International Residential Code has had a residential sprinkler provision since 2009. California and Maryland require sprinklers in new one- and two-family dwellings statewide along with the District of Columbia. Either through legislation or the code adoption process, 26 states prohibit sprinklers. Eighteen other states do not have a statewide residential sprinkler mandate, but allow local jurisdictions to require them.

Studies have shown that automatic fire sprinklers are effective in reducing fire losses, injuries, and fire-related deaths. There is no equivalent alternative that is as effective in stopping fires as an automatic fire sprinkler system. Although modern homes today have safety building provisions, they are also constructed of light-weight structural components that are susceptible to collapse in a short time during fire exposure. Modern furnishings contribute to rapid fire acceleration and spread, thus reducing escape times greatly.

The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair
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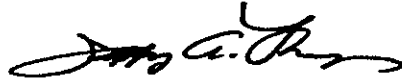
Additional studies performed in California and Maryland demonstrated that the cost of automatic fire sprinklers does not prevent or deter homeowners from purchasing a home. In fact, there was an increase in home sales in some areas.

Life, safety, property conservation, and environmental protection are priorities for the SFC and the MFD. Allowing the passage of this bill to restrict the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler in new one- and two-family homes increases the risk to the public, property, environment, and fire fighters.

The SFC and the MFD strongly urge your committee to defer the passage of SB 611, SD 1.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call my office at (808) 270-7561.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

JEFFREY A. MURRAY
Fire Chief



LATE

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, & Health
Tuesday, February 28, 2017
10:30 a.m.
Conference Room 229
RE: SB 611 SD1 – Relating to Fire Sprinklers**

Chair Baker, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and members of the committee:

My name is Marshall Hickox, President and Owner of Homeworks Construction and the 2017 Vice President of the BIA.

I am in **strong support** of S.B. 611 SD1, which repeals the June 30, 2017, expiration date of Act 83, SLH 2012, which prohibits counties from requiring installation or retrofitting of automatic fire sprinklers in (1) new or existing detached one- or two-family dwelling units used only for residential purposes; and (2) non-residential agricultural and aquacultural structures located outside an urban area

As it should be S.B. 611 will help keep new homes affordable for Hawaii’s families and leave the choice of fire sprinkler installation up to the individual.

My company builds homes for what I would call the Average Joe. These are hardworking local families that are primarily building a new home out of NECESSITY. They are most commonly second or third generation owners of the property, living in an older single wall home. These families are in need of new home not only because they are desperate for more room and space but because these older homes are past their prime. Burdened with constant and expensive maintenance, outdated windows, old electrical, bad plumbing, and lack basic safety such as hurricane clips and egress windows sometimes starting fresh makes more economical sense. These hardworking families need more space for a growing family, to move in Mom and Dad so they can care for them, or in some cases Mom and Dad need to add more space so they can help support their younger children starting a new family. Whatever the reason may be these families are more often than not building on the tightest of budgets. Putting together their savings and borrowing on the equity their parents spent their lives building up in the property. Most are making hard and tough choices because they are not qualifying for the amount they truly need to build the home that fits their needs or wants. Choices of

“A Quality Home Starts With A Quality Contractor”

whether to share bedrooms, should they just put a carport instead of garage, maybe fewer bathrooms, making the home smaller, or lowering the level of finish or quality of desired fixtures which just means more money in the future. This is all to save a few thousand dollars so we can make a NECESSITY a reality, so they can better their lives and take care of each other in comfort, so they can afford the ADA bathroom for their parents or an extra room for a planned second child, or so they can afford a better quality of flooring. The reality is if they are making these sacrifices already what will adding more regulation and more cost mean they have to give up next? For many this mandate would, without any doubt affect their ability to build at all and at best they would need to make major additional sacrifices so that they could still afford to move forward. The long and short of it is that Mandated fire-sprinklers WILL put a new home out of reach of many, many people and push others in to building a home that does not truly meet their needs.

With Hawaii working desperately to find ways to get hard working families into new homes how can we justify adding such a huge cost that shows a practically non-existent benefit? With the constant cost increases we have no control over; shipping, labor, materials, health insurance, increased taxes; on gas, vehicles, excise, and property, etc. In construction, probably more than any other industry these costs are all passed on to these families. Let's do the right thing and not mandate something that puts the hard earned, once in a lifetime dream to own a new home, out of reach of hard working families.

Thanks you so much for your time and consideration.

I **strongly support** S.B. 611 to keep residential sprinklers optional.

Sincerely,



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