

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

Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 1616 H.D. 1
RELATING TO HEALTH

REPRESENTATIVE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: February 16, 2018 4:00pm Room Number: 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** We appreciate the intent of H.B. 1616 H.D. 1, and defer to the Governor's
2 Supplement Budget request for the Department of Health's (DOH) appropriations and personnel
3 priorities. H.B. 1616 H.D. 1 requests an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year
4 2018-2019 be appropriated to the DOH for one advanced life support ambulance to be: (1) based
5 in Puna on the island of Hawaii; and (2) used during daily peak hours from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00
6 p.m., and to include the acquisition of a vehicle and equipment and funding personnel costs for
7 state-certified emergency medical service personnel.

8 **Department Testimony:** The Department recognizes the significant challenges to providing
9 health care and emergency medical services to the expanding county of Hawaii. This measure
10 seeks to augment the Hawaii County emergency medical services system for the residents and
11 visitors of the county. DOH contracts with the Hawaii County Fire Department to operate 15
12 ground ambulances and one medical helicopter on the Island of Hawaii. According to the United
13 States Census figures, between 2010 and July 1, 2016, the population of Hawaii County
14 increased 4.5% from 185,079 to 193,680. No additional ambulances have been authorized for
15 Hawaii County since 2005.

16 The DOH Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Branch meets regularly with all of
17 Hawaii's emergency service providers to review Hawaii's 911 response capabilities and system
18 challenges. This Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Provider group discusses the current
19 deployment of 911 ambulance resources statewide and assesses the need for any additional
20 ambulance units to meet the growing health and safety needs of Hawaii's residents and visitors.

1 Based on these discussions, the group identified Puna and surrounding areas of Hawaii County
2 Kauai County, and City and County of Honolulu as the areas of highest need.

3 These priorities were confirmed by examining Hawaii County ambulance response time data
4 from the DOH pre-hospital EMS database. The mandated DOH contracted response times for
5 Puna surrounding areas located in Hawaii County is 20 minutes or less. A review of EMS data
6 over a 7-year period (2010 – 2016) demonstrated that Puna area response times exceeded the
7 mandated 20 minute threshold between 16% - 39% of the time. Adding an additional ambulance
8 unit and personnel resources to this district would improve Hawaii County response times.

9 Should the legislature decide to increase services to the Puna area the Department recommends
10 the service hours be 24/7 to provide added flexibility to EMS personnel in emergency response.
11 The addition of 24/7 services would increase the funding needs to \$1.5 million per year.

12 The State's investment in 911 ambulance services statewide in contracts with the counties for
13 EMS services totals approximately \$75 million with almost \$42 million from billing being
14 returned to the State's General fund in FY 2017.

15 Given the increasing demand for emergency medical services statewide, the DOH respectfully
16 recommends consideration of the need for resources for additional ambulance units for all three
17 counties.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Harry Kim
Mayor



Wil Okabe
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i Office of the Mayor

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February 14, 2018

Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 308
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Luke and Committee Members:

Re: HB 1616, HD 1, Relating to Health [Puna Ambulance]
Hearing Date: 02/16/18 – 4:00 pm; House Conference Room 308

I strongly support HB 1616, HD 1. A new ambulance for the Puna District of the Big Island would be of tremendous value, and there is little I can add to the preamble of HB 1616, HD 1 which does an excellent job of laying out the case.

"The district of Puna is the fastest growing district in the State; and thus, has increasing calls for emergency medical services. Currently, the high demand for Puna emergency services means Hilo ambulances need to travel to Puna for emergency calls. Hilo ambulances sometimes need to travel over thirty miles with some of those miles on substandard unpaved roads...Every Hilo ambulance that responds to a Puna emergency means one less ambulance available for Hilo, the second largest city in the State; and thus, an ambulance based in Puna not only benefits Puna, but also benefits the rest of East Hawai'i Island."

It "takes an average round-trip of almost two hours to respond to each Puna emergency call. Emergency calls from Puna have increased to over five thousand calls per year. It is common for paramedics to have over ten transports in each work shift, which equates to twenty or more hours for each twenty-four hour shift. Because of this increase in calls, Hilo paramedic units, which are the busiest on the island, are often dispatched into the Puna district to cover the area when the Puna paramedic units are responding to other calls. This results in fewer Hilo paramedic units being available to respond to Hilo emergency calls."

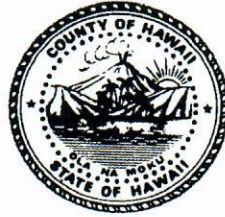
A new advanced life support ambulance will help reduce death and disability among residents and visitors alike. Please act favorably on HB 1616, HD1.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Kim
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

Eileen O'Hara
Council Member
Council District 4

Chair: Environmental
Management Committee



Phone: (808) 965-2712
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Vice Chair: Planning Committee and
Agriculture, Water & Energy
Sustainability Committee

County of Hawaii
Hawaii County Council

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 1402 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

Honorable John Mizuno
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol

January 24, 2018

Aloha Chair Mizuno and Committee Members:

I am writing in strong support of HB 1616 and urging your approval of this important measure. As the County Council representative for lower Puna, and as a 35 year resident of the community, I can attest to the need for increased emergency medical services in the district.

Puna is the fastest growing district in the State, and currently relies on ambulances dispatched from Hilo to assist with the high volume of calls received daily. A new life support ambulance based in Puna will not only serve the Puna district, it will also mean less reliance on Hilo's limited resources.

Finally, Puna has a high rate of elderly and aging, a demographic that statistically relies more on emergency medical services. Residents and visitors alike will be served by the new ambulance and countless lives will undoubtedly be saved. Please approve HB 1616 in your committee and help to urge its passage throughout the legislative process.

Mahalo,

Eileen O'Hara, County Councilmember

Hawai'i County, District 4

HONOLULU EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

3375 KOAPAKA STREET, SUITE H-450 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96819-1814
Phone: (808) 723-7800 • Fax: (808) 723-7836



KIRK CALDWELL
MAYOR

JAMES D. HOWE, JR.
DIRECTOR

IAN T.T. SANTEE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

February 15, 2018

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
The Honorable Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Finance
House of Representatives
Twenty-Ninth Legislature
Regular Session of 2018

Re: HB1616 Relating to Health

Dear Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Cullen, and Members:

The Honolulu Emergency Services Department, Emergency Medical Services Division, is in support of HB1616 with amendments.

The City and County of Honolulu Emergency Services Department is the contracted provider to the State of Hawaii Department of Health for Emergency Medical Services for the 992,605 residents and 5,461,880 (2016) visitors who live on and visit Oahu.

As one of the three contracted providers in the State we work cooperatively with the other providers to ensure the proper function and timely delivery of EMS services to all citizens and visitor in our State.

As a group we have determined that the current needs to ensure the timely and proper functioning of EMS services statewide includes new 24 hour ambulance units on Kauai, Hawaii, and Oahu. This determination of need is based primarily on the need to increase service to meet the increasing demands for service due to the following three populations:

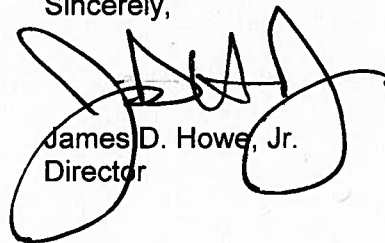
- Continual annual increases in visitor arrivals and subsequent injuries sustained by this group while visiting our State requiring pre-hospital medical services (increased 10.45% since 2012 on Oahu),
- The annual increase in our senior population 65 years and older, our State policy of aging in place, and the significantly higher demand for pre-hospital emergency medical services as this population group ages (37.4% of total population on Oahu), and
- The high use demand placed on EMS services by our Homeless Population (4,940 on Oahu).

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
The Honorable Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice-Chair
February 15, 2018
Page 2

The current level of EMS service on Oahu has absorbed this increase in demand over the past 6 years but is experiencing annual declines in response time capability. Response time is critically important in survival outcomes for many pre-hospital medical emergencies including cardiac arrest, stroke, and major trauma. In 2013, the Division was capable of meeting or exceeding response time 86.1%. In 2017, the ability to meet or exceed response time was 78.1%.

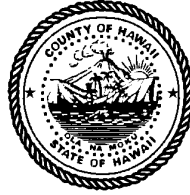
As such, the Honolulu Emergency Services Department is in support of HB1616; however, we would request that the Bill be amended to include one EMS unit for the Island of Oahu to meet the pressing need for increased pre-hospital emergency medical services as identified above.

Sincerely,



James D. Howe, Jr.
Director

Harry Kim
Mayor



Darren J. Rosario
Fire Chief

Renwick J. Victorino
Deputy Fire Chief

County of Hawai'i
HAWAI'I FIRE DEPARTMENT
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February 15, 2018

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
Committee on Finance
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Luke:

SUBJECT: HB 1616 HD1, RELATING TO HEALTH
Hearing Date: Friday, February 16, 2018
Time/Place of Hearing: 4:00 pm, Conference Room 308

I am Darren J. Rosario, Fire Chief of the Hawai'i Fire Department (HCFD). The HCFD support HB 1616, HD1 Relating to Community Paramedic Services.

The Puna district is centrally served by Hawai'i Fire Department (HFD) ambulances stationed out of the Keaau (Medic 5) and Pahoa (Medic 10) Fire stations. These units are strategically positioned 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 Keaau and Kau.

The district of Puna is nearly the geographical size of Oahu, has a population of 45,326 and is the fastest growing district 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 along with physician shortages, EMS has become the access point to health care for many residents of Puna.

The volume of EMS calls have increased progressively each year, and with the projected population growth this trend will undoubtedly continue and impact our ability to deliver high quality EMS services. EMS cases in Puna account for more than 30% 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 2 hours. 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.

The 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.

An additional ambulance in the district of Puna will greatly enhance the County of Hawai'i's EMS system. The proposed "peak hour" staffing from 0800-2200 hours would be an enhancement, however a 24-hour ambulance unit is the most ideal staffing model to meet the needs of our islands residents and visitors.

The HCFD urge your committees' support on the passage of HB 1616, HD1.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 932-2901 or darren.rosario@Hawai'icounty.gov should you have any questions.

Respectfully,



DARREN J. ROSARIO
Fire Chief

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2018 1:56:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Speedy Bailey | American medical Response | Support | No |

Comments:



HAWAII FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 1463, AFL-CIO
1018 PALM DRIVE, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814-1929
TELEPHONE (808) 949-1566 FAX: (808) 952-6003
WEBSITE: www.hawaiifirefighters.org

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2018**

February 16, 2018

Committee on Finance

**Testimony by
Hawaii Fire Fighters Association, Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO**

H. B. No. 1616 HD1 RELATING TO HEALTH

The Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA), Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO represents approximately 2,100 active-duty professional fire fighters throughout the State with more than 345 HFFA members serving in the County of Hawaii Fire Department – the only fire-based emergency medical service (EMS) among the four County Fire Departments and State Airport Rescue Fire Fighters.

HFFA **supports H.B. No. 1616 HD1** as Hawai'i Island has experienced a number of factors that justifiably warrants the need for the additional EMS units, including the increase in EMS call volume; population growth; and the sheer land mass of the island.

Access to primary and acute medical care within the Puna district of East Hawaii Island has been chronically challenging as services are currently as much as 30 miles away for many residents. The volume of EMS calls have slowly increased each year without a correlated increase in EMS services to the areas and with the projected population growth, this will no doubt continue to impact the ability to deliver high quality EMS services to our Hawai'i Island residents.

The request presented in H.B. No. 1616 HD1 would aid not only our first responders in meeting the ever-increasing demands and needs for emergency medical services on Hawai'i Island, but it would also better serve our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and HFFA respectfully requests favorable consideration of this measure.

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2018 4:08:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Scott Foster | The Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i. | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2018 3:39:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melodie Aduja | OCC Legislative Priorities Committee, Democratic Party of Hawaii | Support | No |

Comments:

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2018 11:57:17 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| kenneth faria | Individual | Comments | No |

Comments:

We can not ignore the increased call volume for the island of Oahu, there needs to be additional funding for the emergency medical service system so that we can increase the ambulance units which are severely stressed at the moment.

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2018 12:24:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kea Smith | Individual | Comments | No |

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleading with you that you please amend HB1676 and HB1616 to include appropriation monies to DOH for AT LEAST one, preferably three to five additional ambulance for Honolulu County. I am currently a paramedic employed with Honolulu EMS and have been working in EMS for the past 9 years. In my tenure we've only been granted one additional ambulance (Ewa Beach) during this time and that was due to the closing of Hawaii Medical Center - West. EMS transports in 2012 were approx. fifty thousand. In 2017 transports increased to approx. fifty-six thousand. Thats a roughly 12.82% increase in hospital transports by Honolulu EMS just over a five year period. Please be reminded too that those numbers are just transports, EMS responds to thousands of more calls that in the end are not transported to hospitals but do receive emergency care on scene. In 2017 we responded to over 100,000 911 calls for emergency assistance. Doing this strains our (18) 24 hour and (2) 12 hour ambulance crews. The paramedics and emergency medical technicians that staff these ambulances and the tax paying public are paying the ultimate sacrifice due to the lack of EMS resources provided to them in Honolulu County. EMS crews are being burnt out and fatigue sets in. The high turnover rate continues and we often find ourselves short staffed as employees move to other departments (HFD/HPD/AMR) or change to other less demanding healthcare fields (nursing). The tax paying public and our visitors find themselves having to wait longer for EMS and response times increase due to the massive inundation of 911 calls for emergency services that continue to increase year after year. Again I'm sure Hawaii and Kauai county are too in need of additional EMS resources but PLEASE don't forget about Honolulu and our increasing population and increasing call volume to 911 for emergency services.

Sincerely,

Kea Smith

Paramedic

City and County of Honolulu

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2018 2:12:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Beverly Crum | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Aloha,

Please take a moment to consider the purchase of an additional ambulance for Oahu as well as Kauai and Hawai`i Island. As a member of the community on Oahu, Windward side, my neighborhood consistently needs EMS services and there are long wait times for critical emergencies right here. The number of calls on Oahu is substantial and this island deserves resouces as well. I am sure that Kauai and Hawai`i are in need of more but there are just so many more people on this island, I urge you all to consider adding one additional ambulance for Oahu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Beverly Crum

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2018 2:28:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jansen | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

It has come to my attention as an EMT that there is legislation being pushed to add budgets for additional units to Kauai and Big Island. This is great as EMS coverage is generally sparse compared to our fellow Fire fighter units that are located well throughout the islands for quick/timely responses to the areas that they are stationed. They probably need these additional resources and I hope they get the funding to help provide more units to the ever increasing 911 calls they get so that they can give adequate pt care and reduce response times to their island's communities.

However I would like to bring attention to Oahu. As I mentioned I am an EMT and I work for the City and County of Honolulu EMS system and since I started 7 years ago, I believe we've added two leeward units since that time. They have helped in taking care of the communities in which they are stationed.

Another thing I have noticed since the time I have started, it was a rare case for windward units or surrounding town units to be pulled into town to respond to 911 calls for help during an 8 hour shift period. Currently as I work a 12 hour shift, I hear multiple units (Kaneohe, Kailua, Wailupe, Hawaii Kai, Aiea, and sometimes more) being sent into the central Honolulu area to cover the increasing 911 calls.

While it is welcome to have the back up response from outlying areas, it becomes an increasingly difficult problem to have proper coverage (ie: how long it takes for a 911 call to be placed for a unit to arrive at scene). This is because pulling one unit out of a units stationed area to cover for anothers leaves that area wide open and more often then not, the outlying areas are larger and take longer to respond to when a 911 call comes in. Additional units can be shifted from outlying areas, but then those units communities are put at risk due to there not being proper coverage. At some point there will be incidences that a unit has to respond to a critical call and no units are available to respond due to the scarcity of resources.

It is vital to have more units to spread the burden of the increasing call volume on the Honolulu 911 response systems. Currently in a 12 hour period, some units push 12+ calls in a shift, which is more than one call an hour. That volume is manageable, but this is basically pushing our system to the limit. We are all well trained and will give the best patient care possible, but at some point the overwhelming call volume will catch up to us and critical patient care may be too far away to respond or too busy to get to the

patient's side in a timely fashion. In a 911 response system minutes and sometimes seconds matter to give life saving patient care.

I understand budgets are tight, but having an extra unit or two, especially in the town area will allow us the manpower and coverage to properly give critical pre-hospital patient care. Having more units will decrease the need for outside units to cover another units and their areas. This also insures that those outlying districts will have units available to respond to 911 calls in their area instead of having to cover another units area.

The increased population growth of Oahu is outpacing the growth of the 911 response system and we direly need funding for additional units to provide timely pre-hospital patient care that we as first responder want to give. I do not have the numbers, but our administration has been keeping track of our increased call volume and I believe there is data to back up my testimony. So please take the time to look into the Honolulu C&C EMS response situation and consider finding additional funding to provide additional needed units to our 911 response system on Oahu.

Thank you for your time,

Jansen Fukuda
EMT for C&C Honolulu EMS

TL:DR: C&C Honolulu EMS needs additional funding to make up for the ever increasing 911 call volume so that proper and timely patient care can be given.

LATE

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2018 7:23:13 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kendrick Farm | Individual | Support | Yes |

Comments:

LATE

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2018 7:59:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| JANNA | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I am submitting my testimony in favor of this proposal because this benefits the residents of Puna and Hilo, produces cost-savings for the state and at the same time, increases employment opportunities. Having an ambulance in the Puna district decreases the response time to calls, reducing deaths and injury. This also increases employment opportunities for residents of the island of Hawaii as they will need to employ more emergency medical service personnel to occupy the Puna district between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Although they will be spending money to employee new personnel, this will produce cost saving from death's, travel and overtime for personnel and accidents due to traveling caused by fatigue of emergency personnel.I am submitting my testimony in favor of this proposal because this benefits the residents of Puna and Hilo, produces cost-savings for the state and at the same time, increases employment opportunities. Having an ambulance in the Puna district decreases the response time to calls, reducing deaths and injury. This also increases employment opportunities for residents of the island of Hawaii as they will need to employ more emergency medical service personnel to occupy the Puna district between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Although they will be spending money to employee new personnel, this will produce cost saving from death's, travel and overtime for personnel and accidents due to traveling caused by fatigue of emergency personnel.

LATE

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2018 11:21:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Elena Cabatu | Hilo Medical Center | Support | No |

Comments:

Please accept Hilo Medical Center's support for HB 1616.

HB-1616-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2018 1:57:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/16/2018 4:00:00 PM



| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Lisa Poulos | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

Representatives;

I support HB1616 HD1 and HB1676 HD1 which appropriates funds for a 24/7 ambulance for Kauai and for another ambulance based in Puna.

I would also like to request that monies be appropriated for more ambulance units on Oahu. Although there is bill SB2374 which provides a Community Paramedic Services Pilot Program; Establishes and appropriates funds for a three-year community paramedic services pilot program which I hope will be part of the solution, this does not help the immediate issue of our Oahu EMS services being over being stretched to and beyond its limits. Below is the news story from just last night on Hawaii News Now

Thursday, February 15th 2018, 6:02 pm HST HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) -

Honolulu's plea for a new Emergency Medical Services station is on life support at the state Legislature. Given present resources, managers of Oahu's paramedics and emergency medical technicians say they're already stretched to the limit – and they desperately need help in order to continue saving people's lives.

"We really need help. We are in a critical stage where one of these days, we're not going to be able to respond to all the calls that we get in a timely manner," said Honolulu EMS Chief Dean Nakano. "I hate to say it, but one of these days, somebody is going to have to wait for an ambulance and the outcome is not going to be good. Nakano says there are only 20 ambulances on Oahu to serve nearly one million residents, plus around 10 million visitors annually. He says they simply can't keep up with the amount of calls. Our call volumes been going up steadily, at a average of 10,000 more calls each year, and we still have the same amount of ambulances," Nakano said.

EMS officials say the last new ambulance they received was in 2012. Sometimes, Nakano says, they are stretched so thin that an ambulance from Hawaii Kai will get called out to Nanakuli. "At this point, we're not meeting our required response times, because like I said, we're stretched to the limit," he said.

From personal experience I know how overworked our EMTs and medics are. My daughter is a medic with the City and County. She regularly works past her shift filling out paper work that she was not able to complete during her working hours because of the amount of calls they received. Often in a 12 hour shift they have 14 or more calls. She is often physically and emotionally drained by just the sheer number of calls they need to respond to; they have very little recovery time, if any before the next call comes in.

I know there are many needs and we have a limited supply of funds, but we need to make sure our residents have the safety services they need and take care of our emergency medical providers so that we give the best care to all.

Mahalo, Lisa Poulos