



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-First Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 4, 2021

H.B. 73 – RELATING TO EMERGENCY WORKERS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of H.B. 73 which amends the definition of “emergency worker” to include communications dispatchers.

H.B. 73 appropriately adds telecommunications dispatchers, including police, fire, and emergency medical dispatchers to the definition of an emergency worker in the penal code under Section 707, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The inclusion of telecommunications dispatchers not only recognizes the efforts of our hard-working dispatchers who handle crisis situations at all hours of the day, but also honors their invaluable role as the unsung heroes in every emergency. Dispatchers must utilize multiple life-saving procedures and technologies to obtain critical information from a caller to make lightening fast decisions that could be the difference between life and death for our families and neighbors and deserve this recognition.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 73.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 4:37:25 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Curt S. Morimoto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Representative Chair Mark Nakashima: Thank you for scheduling this HB73 for hearing. I've worked in the EMS profession for (45 years) and have witnessed first-hand the importance of EMERGENCY DISPATCHERS in numerous 911 jurisdictions. I urge you and your committee members to please APPROVE. Emergency 911 telecommunication dispatchers attend the highest NATIONAL level emergency MEDICAL dispatch courses for REQUIRED certification. Their duties & responsibilities should be recognized in the same manner as the other "emergency" classification workers listed in this bill. Thank you for your consideration to SUPPORT!!

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/2/2021 3:37:42 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Victor K. Ramos	Maui Police Department	Support	No

Comments:

We support the passage of HB73. To truly understand why, I strongly urge and encourage members of our esteemed legislature, to take a little time and visit your respective Public Safety Answering Points (Emergency Dispatch Centers). What you will see, hear and even feel, will be enough to convince you that Telecommunications Dispatchers (Emergency Service Dispatchers) are in fact, "Emergency Workers."

In truth, we consider them the "first, First Responders."

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Committee Vice Chair

Tracy L. Pellazar
Supervisor-Emergency Services Dispatch
Maui Police Department, Communications Section
55 Mahalani St. Wailuku, HI 96793
(808)870-1490

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Support of HB 73, Relating to Emergency Workers

My name is Tracy Pellazar and I'm an Emergency Services Dispatch Supervisor. I have been with the Maui Police Department going on 18 years now. From the beginning, we have been the main point of contact, the "hub" for all emergencies on the island (and in our county). We dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Medics, as well as answer 911 calls and Administrative Calls. Our workload has never lessened, but actually continues to increase as times change. We work alongside our fellow policemen, firemen, and medics, our shifts overlapping and intertwining. We are considered "first responders" by many, being that we are the first contact for any emergency. Several of our training courses, parallel those of our "on-the-road" responders. We too have saved lives, however, our life-saving incidents occur via the phone. We have assisted with giving birth, helped someone give CPR, given instructions on opening an airway, directed someone to a safe area, and much much more. We may not be physically on scene, but we have definitely had a part in these incidents. We do much more than people know, a lot is done behind the scenes.

Our job consists of a lot of multi-tasking. At any given time, we are answering 911s, dispatching units and relaying information to another agency, all at the same time. We do a lot of typing, however, our position should not be consider a "clerical" position. Our position incorporates a wide range of other job skills/duties with a more intense level of difficulty, and knowledge.

I fell in love with being an Emergency Services Dispatcher from the beginning, and I continue to love my job, and I'm considered one of our "lifers". It's not only a "job" but this is my life and alongside my fellow dispatchers, we take this position very seriously. We just want recognition where we feel it is due. I hope that you will consider my testimony in your decision.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in this important matter, and allowing me to testify.

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/2/2021 4:41:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Davlynn Racadio	Maui Police Department	Support	No

Comments:

I am respectfully requesting your support to acknowledge our Emergency Services Dispatchers and the Supervising Emergency Services Dispatchers (their current work titles in Maui County) as "Emergency Workers". They work shifts to support our Police, Fire and Medical Units. They take all 9-1-1 calls, enter them into the computer system, then dispatch the needed responders to locations that responders might not know where it is but they will guide them there and in the meantime, they are still on the 9-1-1 call speaking calmly to a hysterical caller and the caller would never know that the same person is querying for information at the address or the name of the responsible. In the meantime, the administrative phones are ringing, people reporting COVID violations, lost property or abandoned vehicles.

These people go under intensive training to be able to answer a call with knowledge and expertise. They are trained to get as much information from the caller to "paint a picture" to the responding units so that they will be prepared (for an angry husband, a grandfather who lit the couch on fire or a child not breathing). They spend countless hours learning different areas for their respective Counties so that they can get a unit there as quickly as possible. They work long hours to support the responders, someone has to answer 9-1-1 and send help when it is needed. This is what they do 24/7/365.

Their job description should be: an individual employed by a public safety agency, as the initial first responder, whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch emergency and non-emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio or other communication device, and includes an individual who promotes from this position and supervises individuals who perform these functions.

These people are my heroes. I offer you the opportunity to stop in and see what it is like to work in a room with constant phones ringing, radio chatter, text to 9-1-1 calls, and see how these heroes support our Communities.

I can be contacted for any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Davlynn Racadio

Maui Police Department/Communciations

55 Mahalani Street, Wailuku, HI

Phone 808-244-6338

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 5:51:41 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kathleen Soule	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly request you pass HB73, in support of dispatchers being included as emergency workers. If it wasn't for the dispatchers, the rest of us EMS workers would not be able to do our jobs! They are the first line of defense for EMS.

Mahalo!

Kathleen Noelani Soule, EMT, Maui County EMS

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 6:10:50 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
douglas vant groenewout	american medical response	Support	No

Comments:

dear honored consituants. please accep this written testimoy in support of hb 73 which will recognize dispatchers which indeed provide invaluable emergency intervention towards the poeple of hawaii. i have been in ems fro thirty years and have borne witness to lives saved from the distachers work. thank you doug vant groenewout

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 7:28:00 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melia K. Johnson	Maui Police Department	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am an Emergency Service Dispatcher for the Maui Police Department. I have served my community in this capacity for over 12 years. Through out this time I, along with my fellow ESD's have provided this essential service to our community around the clock with a workforce of less than 50 %. To say that this has not caused a significant amount of stress to our personal lives, our families, and love ones would not be accurate. However, we willingly make the sacrifice to work 12 to 16 hr shifts 5 to 6 days a week so that we can keep our responders safe and updated and we can answer the call for help. We are professionals. We understand how important our role is. We are not secretaries or administrative clerks. We are First Responders! We have been trained to clearly assess a situation and provide instruction to the emergency at hand whether it is giving CPR instructions, trying to convince the caller to not commit suicide, trying to calm a mother who just lost a child, or speaking with a victim to give them hope, and yet there is so much more that we do. We ask that you recognize our profession as a First Responder and honor the sacrifices that we and our families have made to keep our community safe.

Sincerely,

Melia K. Johnson

ESD II, Maui Police Department

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 10:00:13 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
James Haruguchi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I'm a paramedic for Maui County. I strongly believe that dispatchers should be labeled as emergency workers. Dispatchers are an essential part of providing emergency care/services and should be labeled as such.

31st Legislature
State of Hawaii
Hawaii State Capitol
415 S Beretania St
Honolulu, HI 96813



David Mendonsa
Paradise Medical Services, LLC
640 Komo Ohia
Wailuku, HI 96793

February 3, 2021

Dear Chair and Representatives,

I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for Dispatch and Communication Centers regarding the dispatching of 911 calls. I understand the process of call taking, as I have worked in the 911 dispatch center for Honolulu City & County EMS and participated in dispatch training with Hawaii County Fire Department Dispatch. It is stressful. It is complicated. It is multi-tasking and tracking all response elements and providing pre-arrival instructions to the reporting parties. It is stressful and worrisome work.

From the field perspective, I have responded to numerous 911 calls since 1990. I have depended and relied on dispatch centers for Kauai, Maui, Honolulu, and Big Island. Dispatch is the control center. You can get the sense of the EMS system by sitting in the dispatch center. I value and rely on Dispatch and Communication Centers for vital communication. They have provided me with accurate addresses and cross streets, language interpretation, inter-agency communications, communication updates during hazardous conditions, and many more difficult situations.

Allow me to commend Dispatcher's for the performance they all do. Mahalo.

Thank you again for allowing me to share my experiences and express my support for Dispatch and Communication Centers. Please consider Dispatchers as critical EMS/Public Safety personnel. Please allow me to express my support for HB73 - Hearing to amend the definition of "emergency worker" to include dispatchers. Please feel free to contact me anytime.

Respectfully,



David Mendonsa, PA-C, MCHS, MPA
EMS Provider, Healthcare Provider
Prior- Service Member, UH EMS Faculty, Aeromedical Provider

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 10:28:51 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Travis Ing	Individual	Support	No

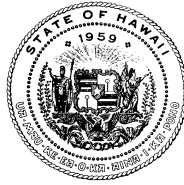
Comments:

First Responders are essential to maintaining public health and safety. They are the first line against any chaos and mayhem that threaten the community. Every single day, thousands put their life on the line to protect you so you can live your life. What no one ever remembers is that 911 Dispatchers are the ones that allow this to happen.

They are the **actual** first line of contact between help and the ones in need of it. Without them, Police, Fire or Medical services *cannot* do their jobs. They deal with people in times of their greatest need and comfort or even save lives themselves over a phone. Communications Dispatchers are the literal unseen heroes of first responders.

They are **not** clerical workers. A clerical worker does not try to keep their victim safe from an enraged family member with a knife until the police arrive with only a phone connection. Clerical workers do not give CPR instructions over the phone to save a dying person. Clerical workers do not calm the public and help them when called about an incoming missile attack, tsunami watch or lava flow nearing their home. Clerical workers do not have to work 24 hour shifts and be forced to do overtime if someone calls in sick. No one bats an eye if a clerical worker is sick. When a coms dispatcher is sick, someone **must** fill their shift. I supervised a Communications Center for 9 years. These are the most selfless and committed people I have ever met.

These people do not ask for much, but they do deserve our respect. They should at the **very least** be classified as emergency workers.



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

WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB0073
RELATING TO EMERGENCY WORKERS**

REPRESENTATIVE MARK M. NAKASHIMA, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE SCOT Z. MATAYOSHI, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: 2/4/2021

Room Number: Via Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure may impact the priorities identified in the Governor's
2 Executive Budget Request for the Department of Health's (Department) appropriations and
3 personnel priorities.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department supports this measure and offers the following
5 amendments.

6 **Offered Amendments:**

7 (2) Firefighter, emergency medical services personnel, emergency medical technician, ambulance
8 crewmember, Hawaii State On-Scene Coordinator, or any other emergency response personnel;

9 7) Telecommunications dispatcher, including any call taker, police, fire, or emergency medical
10 dispatcher, or Hawaii State Hospital telephone operator; or any combination of these; emergency
11 dispatcher; or any other telecommunications dispatch personnel who, while operating a 9-1-1 automated
12 terminal, utilizes multiple robust lifesaving procedures and technologies to obtain critical information
13 from the caller, analyzes the information given and, from specialized mapping systems, sends the
14 appropriate and closest available emergency unit, and communicates the best course of action for the
15 caller to take before the arrival of the field first responder."

16 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 11:31:17 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Chris Rose	Individual	Support	No

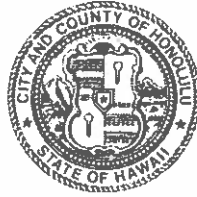
Comments:

I am a paramedic on Lanai. We monitor Molokai dispatchers all day. They are the first voice a person calling 911 hears. Their professionalism, experience and training saves the lives of the callers and the responders. Any emergency responder will tell you how critical our emergency Dispatchers are to the success of the entire emergency services organization. No one calls 911 because they are having a good day. Dispatchers are emergency workers and need to be recognized as such. Please pass HB73. Now more than ever have they proved there worth as emergency workers.

POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

801 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET · HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 529-3111 · INTERNET: www.honolulupd.org

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR



SUSAN BALLARD
CHIEF

JOHN D. McCARTHY
AARON TAKASAKI-YOUNG
DEPUTY CHIEFS

OUR REFERENCE AF-AS

February 4, 2021

The Honorable Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
House of Representatives
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 325
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nakashima and Members:

SUBJECT: House Bill No. 73, Relating to Emergency Workers

I am Aaron Farias, Acting Major of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD supports House Bill No. 73, Relating to Emergency Workers.

This bill would classify telecommunications dispatchers for police, fire, and emergency medical services as emergency workers under Hawaii Revised Statutes 707-700 (definitions for the chapter relating to offenses against persons). This will effectively align our 911 emergency response operators and police communications officers with law enforcement officers, firefighters, and armed services members during declared emergencies.

Like the Federal 9-1-1 SAVES Act (Supporting Accurate Views of Emergency Services Act of 2019) introduced as H.R. 1629 of the 116th Congress (2019-2020), this bill seeks to advance public safety telecommunications personnel above administrative or clerical classifications but as specialized in performing lifesaving work along with and in support of first responders.

The HPD urges you to support House Bill No. 73.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

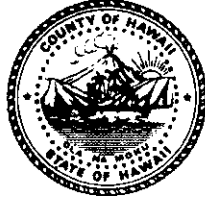
Handwritten signature of Susan Ballard in black ink.

Susan Ballard
Chief of Police

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Aaron Farias in black ink.
Aaron Farias, Acting Major
Communications Division

Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor



Paul K. Ferreira
Police Chief

Kenneth Bugado, Jr.
Deputy Police Chief

County of Hawai`i

POLICE DEPARTMENT

349 Kapi`olani Street • Hilo, Hawai`i 96720-3998
(808) 935-3311 • Fax (808) 961-8865

February 3, 2021

Representative Mark M. Nakashima
Chairperson and Committee Members
Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
415 South Beretania Street, Room 325
Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

RE : HOUSE BILL 73, RELATING TO EMERGENCY WORKERS
HEARING DATE : FEBRUARY 4, 2021
TIME : 2:00 P.M.

Dear Representative Nakashima:

The Hawai`i Police Department strongly supports House Bill 73, with its purpose to amend the definition of "emergency worker" in the Penal Code to include communications dispatchers.

I am very familiar with our department's Dispatch Communications Center and have direct knowledge of the expectations placed on Dispatchers. Dispatchers are considered the truest first responders because they answer every emergency call before Police, Fire or Medical personnel are dispatched. They are solely responsible for calming hysterical callers, who are going through what might be the worst moments of their lives. While maintaining their composure and multi-tasking, Dispatchers must quickly and accurately obtain critical information and dispatch Police, Fire and/or Medical services to the caller. The Dispatcher's actions and ability to obtain accurate information are pivotal to the First Responders, which can greatly impact the outcome of the response.

Their roles are intertwined with that of the First Responders because of the additional support services provided to the Responders throughout the duration of each call. As a result, their roles and responsibilities are clearly graver than that of non-emergency dispatchers both in the enormity and complexity of work that they are called upon to perform.

It is for these reasons, we urge this committee to approve this legislation. Thank you for allowing the Hawai`i Police Department to provide comments relating to House Bill 73.

Sincerely,

PAUL K. FERREIRA
POLICE CHIEF

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 12:38:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Michael Werner	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of this bill. I have been a fulltime emergency worker on Maui for over 31 years. I have been an Ocean Safety officer, a Fire Captain and a Fire Battalion Chief. In those roles I have been in direct contact with our Dispatchers during emergency incidents. Dispatchers are a vital link to our success. The duties required of their positions related to emergency incidents easily qualifies them as an "Emergency Worker". Besides being the liaison to Fire and Police, they are often remote "first responders". They provide lifesaving direction to 911 callers over the phone such as giving CPR instruction. I have been in some heavy situations where my lifeline was the Dispatcher responding to my call over the radio. Please consider my testimony for your decision related to this bill.

Sincerely,

Michael Werner

Testimony of the Enhanced 911 Board
Before the
Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Thursday, February 4, 2021
2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference

On the following measure:
H.B. 73, RELATING TO EMERGENCY WORKERS

Chair Mark Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

My name is Courtney Tagupa, and I am the Executive Director of the Enhanced 911 Board.

The Enhanced 911 Board **strongly supports** H.B. 73, recognizing public safety call takers and dispatchers' brave work by reclassifying them as emergency workers. Currently, the Federal government describes call takers and dispatchers as administrative occupations. This classification does not accurately describe dispatchers who undergo extensive training and whose work can mean the difference between life and death. Public safety dispatchers or public safety telecommunicators play a vital role in emergency response. They routinely communicate with individuals in great distress, harm, fear, or injury, including during active shooter situations. Dispatchers are trained to coach callers through first aid, collect vital information for officers, and negotiate in various hostile situations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 73.

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 1:45:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jacob Nixon	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a dispatcher for the Hawaii County Fire Department, we are, without a doubt, emergency workers. I am the first person to have contact with someone who needs emergency help, and sometimes the last person when I hear someone take their last breath. I deal with life, death and emergency situations on a daily basis. I am part of the emergency response team from the beginning to the end. I work long hours, all times of the day, I am subject to recall and when there are emergencies I come to work and don't get to go home to my family if I am already at work. This is really a no brainer, please support this bill, it is long overdue.

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 1:48:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
LeShey Makuakane	Hawai'i Fire Department	Support	No

Comments:

February 3, 2021

As a public servant of the County of Hawaii, Big Island, for **3** years, as a telecommunications Fire Dispatcher with the Hawaii [County] Fire Department, I support the Proposed HB#73 concerning the amendment of the definition of emergency workers **to include communication dispatchers who in the course of their duty have to utilize a multitude of skill sets in order to ensure the situation is addressed as expediently and efficiently as possible.**

Our dispatch center is a fast paced, high stress environment and handles crisis situations at all hours of the day. I am the eyes and ears for the first responders and at times have to make lightning fast decisions that could be the difference between life and death. I am a nationally certified Emergency Medical Dispatcher who is highly trained and disciplined to ask the right questions to properly assess the situation and communicate vital information to the responding units and provide verbal medical direction to callers needing emergency services which includes guiding callers through the process of performing CPR and delivering babies. In doing so, I carry a lot of liability. I also manage all calls for emergency help during severe weather (ex: Hurricane Lane), natural disasters (ex: Leilani Lava Eruption) and ballistic missiles which I know Secretaries in our current bargaining unit does not do; And I share the responsibility to serve the public with professionalism and Aloha.

I humbly ask the Honorable Representatives for your support.

Thank you very much for allowing me to submit my testimony. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

LESHEY MAKUAKANE

2621 Kinai St.

Hilo, HI 96720

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**Testimony of the Office of the Public Defender,
State of Hawai'i to the House Committee on
Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs**

February 4, 2021

H.B. No. 73: RELATING TO EMERGENCY WORKERS

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender **opposes** H.B. No. 73.

This measure expands HRS § 707-700 by including additional qualifying occupations to the definition of an “emergency worker” to the ever-growing number of occupations which have been singled out for special protection against assaults in the normal course of their employment. The expansion of this definition will directly impact the offense of Assault Against an Emergency Worker, in violation of HRS § 707-712.7. This statute elevates a misdemeanor assault to a class B felony.

While we understand the desire to carve out special protections for certain classes of individuals who are assaulted in the normal course of their employment, this measure is just another example of the expansion of misdemeanor level assaults to felony level assaults -- *not* based on the act itself but based on the job description of the victim. Over the years, this list of qualifying occupations has steadily grown to include many special categories and specific occupations.

It is our position that *all* employees should feel safe as they go about performing their requisite duties. As we have cautioned in the past, with the passage of time, more and more special categories and occupations will be added to this list. As the list grows, additional employees and groups will be asking themselves whether they should request special consideration and be included for special protection.

The flood gates of special protection requests are already open as each year we see the growing list of special employment categories to the assault statute elevating a simple misdemeanor assault to felony level status. We urge caution and we ask the Legislature to reevaluate the necessity for this measure and the necessity of expanding this ever-growing list. It is no small matter to be thrust into Circuit Court to face a felony charge for actions that would be treated as a misdemeanor in most other situations.

Of particular concern with H.B. No. 73 is the inclusion of emergency personnel who are not on the ground or out in the community during emergencies or disasters. We applaud the work of 911 Operators and Communication Dispatchers, and we understand that their work is essential and critical during an emergency. However, these personnel are not in-the-field during an event, their location from callers to emergencies is remote. They work in controlled office environments and they are not in need of special protection like in-the-field first responders -- our police officers, our firefighters, our EMT responders, or members of our National Guard. A 911 operator or a communication dispatcher who operates a “9-1-1 automated terminal” is not actively managing people face-to-face and in-person in-the-field. We submit that a 911 Operator or a Communications Dispatcher who is located in a secure office building far from actual on-site operations should not be included in the definition of an “emergency worker” for purposes of application to HRS § 707-712.7.

Finally, enhancing the penalties (i.e., elevating a misdemeanor offense to a Class B felony) will not keep 911 Operators and Communication Dispatchers safer, will not deter crime, and will only serve to fuel mass incarceration. Data and research show that increasing the severity of punishment does little to deter crime. Laws and policies designed to deter crime by focusing mainly on increasing the severity of punishment are ineffective.¹ Not only do more severe punishments not deter crime, but longer periods of incarceration exacerbate recidivism.² The consequences of a felony criminal conviction are far-reaching and pose barriers to reentry long after a sentence has been served. These collateral consequences make it far more difficult to find employment, housing, and seek higher education and are not limited to individuals; they are experienced by families and communities, for generations to come.³

Moreover, enhanced penalties have additional consequences that harm communities in the long run and fuel mass incarceration. Our jails and prisons are filled above not only design capacity but also operational capacity. A significant portion of the State’s prison population are incarcerated in a contracted private, for-profit prison in Arizona; they are exiled thousands of miles away from their families, friends and

¹ National Institute of Justice, “Five Things About Deterrence.” *See* <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-deterrence>

² Prison Policy Initiative, “Recidivism and Reentry.” *See* https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/recidivism_and_reentry/

³ Prison Policy Initiative, “Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people.” *See* <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>

crucial support networks. According to a recent study by the Prison Policy Initiative, in 2018, Hawai‘i had an incarceration rate of 487 per 100,000 people.⁴ Although Hawai‘i ranked 37th among the 50 states, if every state were an independent nation, Hawai‘i would have the 43rd highest incarceration rate in the world.⁵ Only three foreign countries have a higher incarceration rate than Hawai‘i.⁶ Thus, Hawai‘i locks up a higher percentage of its people than many wealthy democracies do.⁷

We all want safe workplaces and to feel protected and secure. Violence against any employee threatens that, and we have a responsibility to stop, prevent, and condemn violence in any form. But expanding HRS §707-700 and enhancing penalties for conduct based on the job description of the victim and not the act does not do that. There are already adequate laws that ensure that those who compromise 911 Operators and Dispatchers safety are penalized.

We must work together to decrease our reliance on more and longer incarceration as an answer to crime and start seeking alternative solutions to address crimes focused on root causes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

⁴ Prison Policy Initiative, “Hawaii profile.” See <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/HI.html>

⁵ Prison Policy Initiative, “States of Incarceration: The Global Context.” See <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2018.html>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Prison Policy Initiative, “Hawaii profile.” See <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/HI.html>

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 1:55:42 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Allison Ford	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Emergency dispatchers should also be considered as emergency workers. They are the first point of contact in emergency situations and are the link between the public and other at emergency workers. We receive nationally recognized certification as emergency dispatchers to provide service to the public.

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 2:15:13 PM
Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
lyndsey kahuhu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a 911 dispatcher, we are trained to be the "first" person on scene because we are the first person that person initially speaks to regarding any type of assistance from police, medics, or fire. We are treated as if we are just clerical workers but yet we do so much when it comes to actually helping a loved on or a fellow resident or even a visitor administer CPR to a loved one or provide medical assistance until someone can physically be there with the on scene that is a first responder. Initially, that first help in the first responder world comes from a dispatcher/calltaker. Without a dispatcher or calltaker, the community wouldn't be offered the type of help they are currently given with 911 centers all around the world. A 911 dispatcher should be consider a first responder because I have experienced multiple times where the life saving techniques I would use to instruct a wife to do CPR to her husband as well as talking to the fire department and medics to respond, saved her husband. That one phone call saved her husband to the extent where she sent a card and her contact info to find out who I was and when I eventually received the card, I ended up calling her and she let me know how well he is doing and that he was actually out playing golf with his friends. Yes, it was a few months after the intial incident happened but she mentioned that if it wasn't for my guidance she wouldn't have had been able to do what she did to help her husband until someone got there.

I also had a suicidal caller who I spoke to for about 20 minutes before anyone found him and we were actually able to send someone down to talk to him. And when I say down, I mean down because he was standing at the edge of the cliff ready to jump and end his life. I was able to talk him down to the point where he went to the emergency room and got help. He is still alive till this day. I was also given a letter of commendation from my supervisor signed off by the Chief Of Police.

There are many more stories. Many more of us that can sit here and say that we have saved a life or two or more. I love my job. Since COVID, we have been under an extreme amount of pressure with working permanent 12 hour shifts 5 days a week sometimes 6 depending on the sick calls that come in. We don't get a break like most people. We have to take an extreme call, disconnect and have to continue our day as if nothing every happened. Dispatchers all around the world aren't looked at as first responders because we are never noticed. There are many firefighters, medics, and

police officers who have said a million times how they could never do what we as dispatchers/calltakers do that is way we are the unsung heroes and we should be represented as first responders.

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 2:15:39 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kazuo Todd	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

February 3, 2021

Honorable Senators and Representatives,

Re: **I support SB#184 & HB#73**, amending the definition of “emergency worker” in Section 707-700, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

I have been a firefighter for the County of Hawaii these past 16 years and I support the proposed SB#184 and HB#73 concerning the amendment pertaining to the definition of emergency workers to include communication dispatchers who in the course of their duty have to utilize a multitude of skill sets in order to ensure the situation is addressed as expediently and efficiently as possible.

Our dispatch center is a fast paced, high stress environment and handles crisis situations at all hours of the day. The job of a dispatcher has rapidly changed over the last decade from a person who answers a phone to get an address for response to a specialist who wears multiple hats. Some of the things they have to do include:

- Operating a multi-line telephone console system, alerting system, and TDD system for the deaf and hearing-impaired
- Determining and assigning the level of priority of the call and enter the data into a computer-aided dispatch system
- Performing emergency medical dispatch and crisis intervention services
- Asking vital questions and provide pre-arrival instructions for emergency medical calls
- Monitoring and operating a radio console and various computer equipment
- Receiving and responding to a variety of emergency and non-emergency services and complaints
- Asking questions to interpret, analyze and anticipate the caller’s situation as to resolve problems, provide information, dispatch emergency services, or refer callers to other agencies

- Dispatching and coordinating the responses of public safety agencies
- Identifying appropriate number and type of equipment or apparatus to dispatch

Training for their position lasts for over a year. The attrition rate is horrendous in every dispatch center in the State of Hawaii. The responsibility, level of expectation, stress and difficulty of the job are excessive. If any position deserves to be considered an emergency responder dispatchers definitely fall within that category.

Thank you very much for allowing me to submit testimony. Your support of this bill is greatly appreciated.

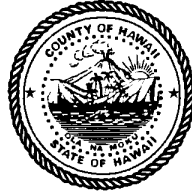
Sincerely,

Battalion Chief Kazuo Todd

Hawaii Fire Department

Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor

Lee E. Lord
Managing Director



LATE

Robert R.K. Perreira
Acting Fire Chief

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

February 3, 2021

Representative Mark M. Nakashima
Chairperson and Committee Members
Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
415 South Beretania Street, Room 325
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HOUSE BILL 73 Relating to Emergency Workers
HEARING DATE: February 4, 2021
TIME: 2:00 pm

Dear Representative Nakashima:

The Hawai'i Fire Department strongly supports House Bill 73, which amends the definition of "emergency worker" in the penal code to include communications dispatchers.

Telecommunication dispatchers are an integral part of our response to emergency operations. They are truly the first responder for each and every 911 call. Dispatchers are tasked with calming any situation, obtaining vital information, staying composed, multi-tasking, delivering lifesaving directions and dispatching emergency units. This all happens prior to any response by Police, Fire or Medical personnel. This is truly "emergency work".

In Hawai'i County, the Hawai'i Fire Department dispatcher is also trained and certified in Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD). EMD allows for critical lifesaving task to be communicated to the 911 caller such as the proper placement of an unconscious victim, how to open an airway, and even CPR instructions. These types of critical tasks are the type of emergency work our communication dispatchers do twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The Hawai'i Fire Department respectfully requests this committee to approve this legislation and we thank you for allowing us to provide testimony related to House Bill 73.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Perreira".

Robert R.K. Perreira
Acting Fire Chief



LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 2:49:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
John Jakubczak	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

RE: HB 73

Relating to Emergency Workers

Hearing: Thursday, February 4, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

Conference Room 325

Dear Chairman Nakashima:

The following testimony is being submitted in support of House Bill 73 RELATING TO EMERGENCY WORKERS.

I am submitting this testimony as a private individual and not in my capacity as a law enforcement officer with the County of Maui. However, it is in my capacity as a law enforcement officer for the past 33 years, that I have come to appreciate and recognize the tremendous efforts and contributions of the Emergency Services Dispatchers throughout the State of Hawaii, which include Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services and Military dispatchers and call takers to be identified as Emergency Workers.

Emergency Services Dispatchers throughout the state are the first to receive information of an emergency and to set in motion the quickest and most appropriate response necessary to achieve the ultimate goal of keeping the public safe and, quite possibly, saving a life.

While serving on the State of Hawaii E9-1-1 Board, I have had the honor and privilege of seeing and hearing of the passion, dedication and commitment of these professionals. They are truly a major component in the emergency services provided to our communities by all "Emergency Workers". The Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services and Military Police/Fire/Emergency Services units would not be able to accomplish our missions without their actions during an emergency services response incident.

I would also like to point out that on several occasions, these Emergency Services Dispatchers have saved lives over the phone by giving instructions to callers on how to

stop severe bleeding to the injured, as well as, aiding in the delivery of babies on occasion, well before medical personnel arrive on scene.

Mahalo for allowing me this opportunity to voice my support for this bill for our Emergency Services Dispatchers. They deserved to finally be recognized for all they do for our state and communities.

Sincerely,

John D. Jakubczak

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 3:07:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Karen Bugado	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Honorable Representatives,

RE: I support HB#73 amending the definition of "emergency worker".

As a public servant of the County of Hawaii, Big Island, for 22 years, as a telecommunications Fire Dispatcher with the Hawaii (County) Fire Department, I support the Proposed HB#73 concerning the amendment to the definition of emergency workers to include communication dispatchers who in the course of their duty have to utilize a multitude of skill sets in order to ensure the situation is addressed as expediently and efficiently as possible.

Our dispatcher center is a fast paced, high stress environment and handles crisis situations at all hours of the day. We are nationally certified in Emergency Medical Dispatch protocols to properly assess situations and communicate vital information to responding units and provide life saving directions to callers needing emergency services. These include performing CPR and delivering babies. We also manage calls for severe weather incidents and natural disasters.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Karen Bugado

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 5:07:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dean Rickard	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The emergency dispatcher’s role can best be characterized as the true “first” first responder. They are the first to be called upon when our citizens are impacted by an emergency – and the first to document information for every emergency call taken. HB 73 represents a significant shift in the way we should recognize the critical work that our emergency dispatchers do on a daily basis – answering and processing 9-1-1 calls, dispatching and deploying emergency services personnel, and managing critical radio communications and information. This proposed legislation acknowledges the critical link that emergency dispatchers have in the delivery of emergency services within our community, and I fully support the favorable passage of HB 73 as a step in the right direction to recognize them as emergency workers.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Dean Rickard

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 7:58:46 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lisa Kahuhu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Lisa Kahuhu and I am the proud mother of a 911 Dispatcher for the Maui Police Department. Thank you so much for taking up this very important measure. 911 Dispatchers are the first, first responders for all of the community in their most trying times and need for help. It has really puzzled me for years how they can be classified in HGEA Bargaining Unit 3 as clerical. It just doesn't make any sense. They are Emergency Workers, they give up a good portion of their lives serving the community and saving lives!. My daughter has worked sometimes 172 hours in 2 weeks, but she does it because she loves her island community, she loves helping people and saving lives. My daughter has received a few commendations from the Chief, but one in particular is when she talked an adult male who was planning to take his life by jumping off a cliff on the pali out of committing suicide. His wife called 911 distraught but didn't know where her husband was. My daughter was able to call him on his phone and through a calming conversation she was able to determine his location. The police and medics arrived, but he didn't want them to come any closer or he was going to kill himself. My daughter was able to calm him enough and convince him to allow the medics to come down and help him. He lived! Normally a 911 dispatcher will disconnect the call after police and medics arrive, but this man needed her. If you can imagine the stress you might feel handling a call like that, only to end the call and pick up the next which literally could be anything. My daughter has also successfully walked numerous people through life saving measures for people whose loved ones weren't breathing and were unresponsive. Very rarely does the dispatcher know the final outcome, but I am proud to say that several people have sent thank yous to MPD for the Dispatcher who saved their loved ones life. I am not aware of any HGEA clerical who deal with this on a day to day basis. Additionally, they track and monitor the officers locations to help keep them safe and should something go wrong and the officer fall of the grid, the dispatcher will get help to them as well. Some days are harder than others, and I can assure you when she goes to bed at night, these calls circle in her mind. Thinking about the callers, worrying about the officers, the fireman, the medics and dispatching all of them to people in need. With deepest gratitude I thank you and ask you for your favorable support of this important measure. It can often times be a thankless job. To go from saving a life to the next call being someone screaming at you as to why the traffic is backed up. The Trauma is endless. Please honor these men and women who take the call, without them no police, no fire, no medics will be coming. Mahalo!

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 9:01:19 AM
Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Leanne Kapahu	Hawaii Fire Department	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of HB 73. We should not be classified or grouped with the other 27,000 clerical, office, secretarial members in BU03 who's work week is Monday through Friday with office hours of 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We should be classified in our own specialized group similarly to the Morgue Investigators, Water Ocean Safety Lifeguards and Deputy Sheriffs. We are an elite group of Nationally Certified EMD dispatchers who needs to maintain EMD certifications and CPR certifications annually. We take data information expeditiously 'real time' by multi-tasking talking, typing, verifying, reviewing other resources ex: mapping system, ANI-ALI information, dispatching the appropriate unit(s) on the call, while answering the radio for other calls , while reading script of protocol questions and providing life saving directives until the emergency apparatus unit can arrive on scene. We do this daily, at times six (6) days a week working an additional weeks work of overtime for all emergency and non-emergency calls. Just because we work for an 'Emergency Center' our Emergency titles should be defined, recognized and pay commesurated for the dedication, skill, aptitude and performance done daily and moreso in the times of an actual 'Emergency' ex: Leilani Estates Lava Destruction in 2018 and Hurricane Lane. During those two (2) major incidences, while being in BU03, the County of Hawaii Fire and Police 911 Dispatchers reported to work with no additional compensation, while our shared 27,000 members were ordered to remain home on paid Administrative Leave Day. The few elite Fire and Police 911 Dispatchers were never compensated with additional, ex: double pay similarly to Holiday pay, nor were we afford an additional AL day to take a future date. This highly seems fair or respectable considering we leave our families to fend for themselves while we are saving the homes and lives of the community. This shows a lack of respect and disregard and importance of the type of work we do; not to mention the highs and lows of emotions this roller coaster affecting us emotionally, mentally with rotating shift work and the inability to recruit or retain 911 operations this occupation instill on us. Suicide is a number one health issue with PTSD, anxiety, depression, poor eating health leading to other health problems as well as affecting and your personal lives (ex marital or relationship) problems that providing an out of 25 years and out also shows that you support our well being. Thank you for your consideration.

LATE

February 4, 2021

Honorable Representatives,

Re: I support HB #73

As a public servant of the County of Hawaii, Big Island, for **17** years, as a telecommunications Fire Dispatcher with the Hawaii [County] Fire Department, I support the Proposed HB#73 concerning the amendment of the definition of emergency workers **to include communication dispatchers who in the course of their duty have to utilize a multitude of skill sets in order to ensure the situation is addressed as expediently and efficiently as possible.**

Our dispatch center is a fast paced, high stress environment and handles crisis situations at all hours of the day. I am the eyes and ears for the first responders and at times have to make lightning fast decisions that could be the difference between life and death. I am a nationally certified Emergency Medical Dispatcher who is highly trained and disciplined to ask the right questions to properly assess the situation and communicate vital information to the responding units and provide verbal medical direction to callers needing emergency services which includes guiding callers through the process of performing CPR and delivering babies. In doing so, I carry a lot of liability. I also manage all calls for emergency help during severe weather (ex: Hurricane Iselle), natural disasters (ex: Leilani Lava Eruption) and ballistic missiles which I know Secretaries in our current bargaining unit does not do; And I share the responsibility to serve the public with professionalism and Aloha.

Thank you very much for allowing me to submit testimony. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

TASHA C KODANI

Hawaii County Fire Dept.

Fire Radio Dispatcher II

(808)961-8336

Tasha.kodani@hawaiicounty.gov

LATE

HB-73

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 2:07:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
HTH - Environmental Health Administration	Department of Health	Support	No

Comments:

Written only submitted; available to answer questions