



**OUTRIGGER
DUKE KAHANAMOKU
FOUNDATION**

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Testimony to the COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 9:30 A.M.

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE Conference Room 430

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

The Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku is in support of HCR 21 / HR 23 which urges the City and County of Honolulu to remove the Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division from the Emergency Service Department, and a establish it as a new separate department.

The Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation seeks to perpetuate the legacy of Duke Kahanamoku through support of water sports, volleyball, and water safety. As Sheriff of Honolulu from 1932 to 1961, Duke was a strong proponent of public safety, and as a master waterman, he was vigilant of others in the ocean.

The head of EMS is politically appointed and therefore somewhat beholden to the mayor's office. This keeps Ocean Safety from managing its own budget or working independently from politics, like the fire department and the police department can do. Further EMS and Ocean Safety have related but obviously different scopes of work. As a best practice, it would be optimal for individual public safety departments including EMS and Ocean Safety to be independent from politics so that the focus can be on saving lives.

Thank you,

Sarah Fairchild

Executive Director

DUKE'S CREED:

"In Hawai'i, we greet friends, loved ones or strangers with Aloha, which means with love. Aloha is the key word to the universal spirit of real hospitality, which makes Hawai'i renowned as the world's center of understanding and fellowship. Try meeting or leaving people with Aloha. You'll be surprised by their reaction. I believe it and it is my creed. Aloha to you."

DUKE PAOA KAHANAMOKU

HCR-21

Submitted on: 3/27/2023 4:25:47 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/28/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessamy Town Hornor	Ocean Safety 'Ohana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony to the COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 9:30 A.M.

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE Conference Room 430

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I am writing on behalf of Ocean Safety 'Ohana, a community-based organization that represents the unique perspective of families who have lost loved ones to the ocean - in **support** of HCR 21 / HR 23 which urges the City and County of Honolulu to remove the Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division from the Emergency Service Department, and establish it as a new separate department. We are not affiliated with the Division of Ocean Safety or lifeguards, but we realize that supporting and advocating for our lifeguards means safer beaches and coastlines for everyone, both locals and visitors.

People's lives are at stake every single day at our beaches, and as you know, drowning is a leading cause of death in Hawaii, many in the ocean. For every drowning, there is a whole family and community affected by that loss. Our lifeguards are tasked with the tremendous responsibility of saving lives in variable conditions all year long. However, the Division of Ocean Safety being sandwiched under EMS has had a stifling effect on them being able to allocate resources to do their job in the most effective way possible. A separate Department will go a long way in allowing those with expert, often multi-generational ocean knowledge to reduce drownings through direct prevention and rescues and also through more ocean safety outreach and education. The current arrangement inherently limits the Division's ability to advocate for its needs and to engage and educate the community at a meaningful level.

It is our hope that a separate Department of Ocean Safety could open up a whole new sector for innovation and knowledge sharing as well. The lifeguards in Ocean Safety as waterwomen and watermen are a tremendous asset that we should be nurturing and resourcing as we look to the future of Hawaii.

Best,

Jessamy Town Hornor

Founder, Ocean Safety 'Ohana

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HCR 21 AND COMPANION BILL HCR23

As an avid swimmer, surfer and beach-walker on the North Shore, I have been observing our hard-working and heroic lifeguards for decades on an almost daily basis.

I was shocked to learn recently that our lifeguards do not have their own Ocean Safety Department, but are instead under the auspices of EMS.

This makes no sense at all: what possible benefit could there be in having a group of individuals whose entire job description involves safety in the water being supervised by individuals who have absolutely nothing to do with water at all?

Furthermore, the focus of these two disparate professions are diametrically opposed: Ocean Safety's goal is to prevent water-related accidents and injuries from occurring, while EMS deals with accidents after they happen. Ocean Safety is primarily preventative, while EMS is primarily reactive.

Finally, a large part of the work of the men and women of Ocean Safety involves constant interaction with the public (and especially the tourist public) in an educational capacity. Having seen this over and over again, I continue to be awed by their patience, tact and aloha. This is not and should not be the forte of EMS, whose work is by nature largely technical, with little one-on-one public interface.

Ocean Safety personnel do the work of EMT's and are ready to step into that position at any time. EMT's are both not trained and not capable of doing the work of Ocean Safety.

Please recognize that the respective focus of Ocean Safety and EMS are so fundamentally different that there should be absolutely no question about allowing Ocean Safety to operate as its own separate department.

Mahalo,

Rachel Porter
Pupukea, O'ahu