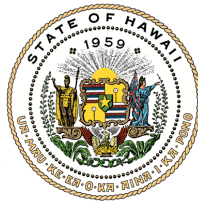


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DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

715 South King Street
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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2174 HD 1
RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

Before the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Friday, February 9, 2024; 2:00 p.m.

State Capitol Conference Room 325, Via Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) **strongly supports** House Bill 2174.

This bill changes the circumstances when an agency may seek reimbursement for search and rescue costs by providing guidance on when such costs can be recovered and requiring agencies to seek reimbursement.

State law enforcement is regularly called upon to participate in search and rescue operations for people who have ignored posted warnings, left defined hiking trails, and ventured into closed areas that have been posted. These situations typically do not involve standard search and rescue of lost or injured persons which are anticipated and part of expected operations of first responders. These are situations created by reason of an individual's choice to ignore posted warnings and efforts of government agencies or private landowners to keep them safe. When first responders are called upon to engage in these types of extensive search and rescue operations, ongoing operations must be put on hold and agencies often incur additional unbudgeted costs and expense through overtime, calling in additional responders, and costs of equipment and supplies. Requiring agencies to pursue reimbursement in these situations is a reasonable requirement.

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

HB-2174-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:22:47 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/9/2024 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Keoni Shizuma | Individual | Support | Remotely Via Zoom |

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I stand in support of HB2174.

Growing up in Kaneohe, seeing HFD’s rescuing illegal hikers from the “Stairway to Heaven” has become a regular event, as well as seeing illegal hikers going up to, and coming down from, the trail, while they transverse through private property and locked gates.

Also, having previously worked in the conservation field working for DLNR’s Department of Forestry, I have first hand knowledge and experience traversing state trails throughout the island of Oahu on a regular basis. Having spent an abundant amount of time on state trails, I have come to the conclusion that there are more than enough State trails to satisfy any hiker’s desires to be in nature or to see lovely views from the mountain ranges.

Those that leave a properly maintained trail, do so believing that they are entitled to go into an off-limit area and because of this, they should be penalized. Therefore, I feel that one amendment to this bill would be to add in a standard penalization for every individual who leaves a trail and needs to be rescued.

There is absolutely no reason why any hiker on Oahu should feel the need to go off-trail or into a closed location, off-limits to the public. Because of this, I support this bill and feel that anyone who is not on a properly maintained state hiking trail, should be responsible for reimbursing the expenses related to a rescue.

Thus, I support this bill, and hope that you consider adding in a penalization fee as an amendment, for going off-trail.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Keoni Shizuma

HB-2174-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 1:57:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/9/2024 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Todd Yukutake | Individual | Comments | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I provide comments only.

I find the fee in HB2174 more amenable and flexible than forcing the government entity to seek reimbursement for a search and rescue. However it is difficult to state a position on it unless I know the amount of the fee or what the purpose of it is. I am concerned that a large fee could discourage those needing from rescue from calling for help or delaying a call for help. Any delay in calling for help may put the rescuers and rescuees in greater danger as the hikers may get further lost in a more dangerous area or become injured, complicating a rescue.

The better option is to prevent the rescue in the first place by working with the DLNR, hiking organizations, and volunteer search and rescue groups to provide education programs and campaigns to the public and through better enforcement of current laws.

Mahalo

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HB-2174-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 7:21:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/9/2024 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Scott Kidd | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this measure