



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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

KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.G.A., M.P.H.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB3126
RELATING TO EMERGENCY AEROMEDICAL SERVICES.

SEN. GLENN WAKAI, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND
MILITARY AFFAIRS

SEN. JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: February 2, 2024

Room Number: 225

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** \$18M general fund appropriation for comprehensive statewide air
- 2 ambulance program. However, multiple variations and configurations will reduce cost.
- 3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) strongly supports SB3126, which is
- 4 part of the Governor's Administrative Package.
- 5 The State of Hawaii is serviced by one private sector air ambulance provider, down from two as
- 6 market conditions forced the exit of a provider in 2022. In November 2022, a tragic accident
- 7 disrupted interisland transport of patients from remote and rural settings to healthcare facilities
- 8 for almost six months. Although commercial airlines sometimes transport patients, the
- 9 commercial carriers are not equipped for advanced life support patients. If the private air
- 10 ambulance service is down, few alternatives are available for sick patients.
- 11 DOH asserts that the risk to life safety is untenable with only one air ambulance service provider
- 12 and proposes a comprehensive statewide air ambulance back-up and resiliency program to
- 13 provide a second line of defense behind the market-based air ambulance network. This backup
- 14 network may be totally or partially contracted with the private sector, or preferably, as a
- 15 comprehensive statewide public/private partnership, and create a greater degree of parity to

1 ground ambulance service, a critical public safety and health policy authorized by the Legislature
2 decades ago that puts Hawaii's residents in proximity to a 24/7 911 ground ambulance service.

3 The public/private comprehensive statewide air ambulance back-up and resiliency program may
4 be tailored to meet unique needs of rural counties, but shares certain core components:

- 5 • \$18M for acquisition of new twin-engine state-of-the-art helicopters funded by the State,
6 including parts and maintenance, through a long-term lease-to-own agreement.
- 7 • County or State funding of maintenance, air, and medical personnel, as well as
8 infrastructure such as flight hangars.
- 9 • Helicopters, though the property of the lease holder, the State of Hawaii, that are
10 deployed to the counties who may in turn operate for non-medical missions such as
11 search and rescue, fire suppression, and law enforcement.
- 12 • Coordination with local health systems to negotiate sustainable reimbursement rates, as
13 well as subsidies and sponsorships.

14 These costs will be recurring, so this is a long-term investment in Hawaii's healthcare
15 infrastructure, but one that will most certainly save lives.

16 In addition to pilots, flight nurses, and flight medics a comprehensive statewide air ambulance
17 back-up and resiliency program will require logistical support staff to implement and manage the
18 program.

19 Early feedback on this proposal from first responders and hospitals has been encouraging and has
20 corroborated the need for statewide air ambulance back-up system. Many more details need to
21 be discussed, including how the program participants and stakeholders may share in the costs to
22 maintain these assets. Nevertheless, DOH respectfully requests the Legislature to keep SB3126
23 moving as stakeholders work towards consensus.

24 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

To: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Chair
The Honorable Brandon Elefante, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

From: Jacce Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health System

Date: February 2, 2024

Re: Support for SB3126 – Relating to Emergency Aeromedical Services

The Queen's Health System (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB3126, which establishes an Emergency Aeromedical Services Partnership Program to be administered by the Department of Health in counties with a population less than 500,000. Our most vulnerable and high risk patients deserve a reliable interisland aeromedical service provider in the event of an emergency. We have observed patients from neighbor island facilities, including Molokai General Hospital and North Hawai'i Community Hospital, with serious medical conditions ranging from complicated pregnancies to cardiovascular failure in desperate need of medical attention having to wait to be airlifted and treated on Oahu. With only a single service provider in a State that experiences on average 2,500 air ambulance trips per year, a more stable and reliable solution is needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB3126.

The mission of The Queen's Health System is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.

SB-3126

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 2:50:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/2/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Lightfoot	Testifying for Global Medical Response	Support	In Person

Comments:

Thank you to the Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs and Committee of Health and Human Services for prioritizing SB3126 relating to emergency aeromedical services. We are in **support** of SB3126 relating to emergency aeromedical services.

Global Medical Response owns and operates Hawaii Life Flight, REACH, Guardian Flight, and AirMed International. Hawaii Life Flight and REACH are the primary aeromedical providers serving Hawaii. Global Medical Response also owns and operates American Medical Response (AMR) in Hawaii for ground transportation.

REACH and AMR continues to operate Maui MedEvac as one team. This model, as identified by SB3126, serves as an excellent model for Hawaii statewide.

The Maui Medevac model is a great example of a public (State and County)-private (AMR and REACH) partnership and collaboration. This EMS model has worked for 20 years to service rural Maui County and has proven to be an effective redundancy for our statewide aeromedical system. We, GMR, are supportive of a public-private collaboration.

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony in **support** of SB3126.

SB-3126

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 2:39:29 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/2/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Bailey	Testifying for American Medical Response	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of Aeromedical Services Partnership.

Friday, February 2, 2024; 3:00 pm
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

To: Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Brandon Elefante, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Affairs

**Re: Testimony in Support of SB 3126
Relating To Emergency Aeromedical Services**

My name is Michael Robinson and I am the Vice President of Government Relations & Community Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH). Hawai'i Pacific Health is a not-for-profit health care system comprised of its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox and over 70 locations statewide with a mission of creating a healthier Hawai'i.

I write in support of SB 3126 which establishes an Emergency Aeromedical Services Partnership Program to be administered by the Department of Health (DOH) in counties with a population of less than 500,000. The measure also proposes cost sharing for the program operations and maintenance, and revenue sharing between the State and the counties of Hawai'i, Kauai and Maui.

Emergency aeromedical services or air ambulances play a crucial role in transporting a critically ill patient from the neighbor islands to Oahu for treatment. Understanding some of the challenges involved with air ambulance services, an overlapping, possibly redundant, safety net of similar services may be beneficial. Such a partnership may lead to positive outcomes, and HPH is open to continued discussions on this subject.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Council Chair
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

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Director of Council Services
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

January 31, 2024

TO: The Honorable Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and
Military Affairs

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Alice L. Lee
Council Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alice L. Lee".

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF FEBRUARY 2, 2024; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
SB 3126, RELATING TO EMERGENCY AEROMEDICAL SERVICES**

I support this measure to establish, administer, and maintain an emergency aeromedical services partnership program.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I **support** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Maui Island includes remote, rural communities difficult to access via roads, and the County includes the Islands of Lanaʻi and Molokai, making timely access to emergency healthcare challenging.
2. Creating the emergency aeromedical services partnership program will help reduce death and disability among visitors and residents by ensuring more timely response to medical emergencies.
3. Maui County's medevac service is cited as a suitable model for the cost-sharing aspect of the measure, and additional, reliable, aeromedical transport service is essential.
3. This measure is consistent with Maui Island Plan policy 4.6.1.f: "Encourage expansion and improved access to emergency care in all communities."

Thank you for your consideration.