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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai

715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2174
RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE
Before the House Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, January 30, 2024; 9:00 a.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 430, Via Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, 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.

The DLE recommends that should HB 2174 become law, the function of the bill would be improved by adding a requirement that search and rescue authorities submit a copy of any report or documentation to the Department of the Attorney General with the names, identifying information, addresses, and a summary of the rescue of the illegal hikers, to assist the State in the recovery of the search and rescue costs incurred. This can be accomplished with the addition of a subsection (c) similar to the following:

(c) Any State agency or authority that engages in a search and rescue operation for the purpose of searching for or rescuing any person for which subsection (b) of this section applies shall submit a copy of any report or documentation to the Department of the Attorney General with the names, identifying information, addresses, and a summary of the rescue.

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

HB-2174

Submitted on: 1/26/2024 6:54:40 PM

Testimony for WAL on 1/30/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill. Mahalo.

HB-2174

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 11:15:39 AM

Testimony for WAL on 1/30/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Sabas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in support of HB2174, which should help deter illegal hikers from accessing trails such as the Haiku stairs by requiring the rescued parties to pay for the costs of their rescue.

Illegal hikers continue to ignore warning signage posted and in so doing place our HFD, HPD and EMS personnel at great risk. These trespassers should not only be required to pay for the services that save their lives but should also be arrested and jailed.

HB-2174

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 10:44:24 PM

Testimony for WAL on 1/30/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Sabas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you Chair Kitagawa for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB2174, relating to imposing a search and rescue fee on those who leave trail areas closed to the public, or in the case of Haiku Stairs, intentionally entering a trail closed to the public, putting fire fighters at risk with each rescue.

My name is Jennifer Sabas, and my family and I have lived for decades with hikers illegally trespassing through our community to get to the Haiku Stairs. We are used to the familiar sound of helicopters whirling above our home and hovering by the mountains in search of stranded hikers, and the landings at Kaneohe District Park. We appreciate the police patrols in our neighborhoods which have reduced the numbers of hikers.

Such a fee will hopefully incentivize smarter, less risky behavior if these hikers know they will be responsible for the "unnecessary" rescues they cause.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB2174.

HB-2174

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 7:05:56 AM

Testimony for WAL on 1/30/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kauanui Sabas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As private citizen and resident of Haiku Village, Kaneohe, i strongly support H.B. 2174, which repeals the existing conditions under which government entities may seek reimbursement for search or rescue expenses and instead requires the State to impose and collect a fee for search or rescue expenses for persons who require rescue after leaving a hiking trail to enter an area closed to the public or hiking on a trail closed to the public, with a sign giving notice of the closure.

Mahalo for the oppurinity to submit testimoy in strong support of H.B. 2174.

Kauanui Sabas.

HB-2174

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 2:54:41 PM

Testimony for WAL on 1/30/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Todd Yukutake	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

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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