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KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
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STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1059 HD1,
RELATING TO HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

MARCH 28, 2025

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to **SUPPORT** House Bill 1059 HD1.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) strongly supports House Bill 1059 HD1, seeking to shift vacant civil service positions to exempt positions within our agency. The current civil service recruitment process is often slow, severely hampering our ability to address urgent staffing needs especially in the fast-paced environment we operate in.

Presently, HIEMA has **45 total Civil Service positions** – 22 filled and 23 vacant. Many of the 23 vacant positions have been difficult to fill, due to either - positions requiring specialized skills and experience, or non-competitive compensation relative to the market. We reiterate our urgent focus on filling EMS Level 5 and 6 supervisory positions because EMS is a new category and will require some time to build a dedicated workforce.

Moving to exempt positions would empower our agency to swiftly hire qualified candidates who can quickly integrate into HIEMA. This not only enhances our capacity to serve our communities effectively but also facilitates the onboarding of skilled individuals equipped with the necessary knowledge to address pressing needs within our emergency management enterprise.

Once these new hires are established, transitioning them into civil service roles will be a seamless process that will ultimately bolster HIEMA's workforce and improve retention efforts. We strongly recommend the legislature to support this vital bill that will enable us to fill these critical positions without delay.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support testimony on House Bill 1059 HD1.

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HB-1059-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/25/2025 7:08:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/28/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

So this bill is crap. We oppose the Governor of the state unilaterally filling every position with his minions. The state is a disaster, and you all are adding fuel to the dumpster fire.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Seante
Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 28, 2025

H.B.1059, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO opposes the purpose and intent of H.B. 1059, H.D. 1, which converts the Emergency Management Specialist series positions at level V and higher in the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency from civil service status to exempt status.

The HGEA raises serious concerns for the need to exempt Emergency Management Specialist at level V and higher. We would like to emphasize that if there is employees within these existing positions they would lose their civil service rights. The use of exempt employees, which are considered "at will" by the state, is completely contrary to the principles of civil service. Exempt employees do not have the same rights and benefits of civil service employees. We have consistently opposed the creation of more exempt positions in state government and have advocated for sensible civil service reform.

This proposed measure goes to the larger issue which is that the civil service system must become more flexible, competitive, and adaptive to the current job market and public demands. The state needs to invest in its current and future civil service workforce – increasing the position pay and offering modern and attractive recruitment and retention incentives, along with reforming the state's administrative rules to streamline hiring is paramount. Hiring of exempt employees is a band-aid fix and does not address the underlying recruitment and retention issue that faces our workforce. Furthermore, we urge the state to reprice these positions if they are not competitive with the market rate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition of H.B.1059, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director