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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1059
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN F. LOGAN
ADJUTANT GENERAL AND
DIRECTOR OF
THE HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

JANUARY 27, 2025

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, and members of the committees:

I am Major General Stephen Logan, Adjutant General and Director of the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA), State of Hawai'i, Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense would like to provide written testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB1059.

The purpose of this bill is to alleviate some of the high vacancies within HIEMA, through hiring flexibility by exempting certain key positions. This is particularly important in emergency and disaster response to maintain readiness and capacity and will provide HIEMA the ability to hire qualified candidates swiftly and efficiently. This flexibility is also essential to HIEMA's ability to enable new hires to quickly gain experience and insights into the agency's operations. Once new hires are established and contributing, HIEMA can revisit work performances and transition exempt staffers into civil service roles, bolstering HIEMA's workforce with individuals who are already aligned with their mission.

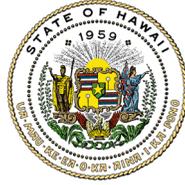
This approach not only enhances HIEMA's operational efficiency, but also strengthens their capacity to respond to emergencies more effectively.

I ask for your support in exempting key positions in HIEMA. This is a strategic tool for improving recruitment, retention, and overall agency performance in an area that cannot risk staffing challenges. Allowing civil service exemptions for key positions will streamline the hiring process and allow for a more flexible employment framework, and ensure that our state will always have in place skilled and experienced individuals in critical times.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

JANUARY 29, 2025

Aloha Chair Bellati, Vice-Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to **SUPPORT** House Bill 1059. The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency is in strong support for House Bill 1059.

HIEMA strongly supports the legislation to shift vacant, civil service positions to exempt positions within its agency. The current civil service recruitment process is often slow and encumbered by bureaucratic hurdles, which directly impacts our ability to respond to pressing staffing needs. The time period in which a position is posted through the closing period – is too long of a timeframe. Applicants don't always have the luxury of waiting up to six or eight months for a position to be filled within the state system.

As reference, HIEMA currently has 24 vacant civil service positions. Three positions were filled in 2024 from 10 recruitment lists, which were received within that same year. We would like to note that 10 positions were vacant since 2022, 19 positions total since the year 2020.

Exemption positions would empower HIEMA to expeditiously hire qualified candidates and allow us to recruit skilled individuals, who can quickly immerse themselves within our agency. This would not only facilitate a smoother integration but also equip new

hires with the skill-set and knowledge they need to effectively serve our emergency management agency and our communities.

Utilizing exemption positions creates valuable opportunity, as it provides a trial period for assessing performance while allowing these positions to experience HIEMA's mission and operations. Once they are established, transitioning them into a civil service role becomes a seamless process, enhancing HIEMA's overall workforce and retention efforts.

I urge you to support this initiative of allowing HIEMA to move its vacant, civil service positions into exempt status.

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

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HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Public Safety

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

January 29, 2025

H.B.1059 – 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, 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 workforce – increasing the position pay and offering modern and attractive recruitment and retention incentives, along with reforming the Department of Human Resources and Developments (DHRD) administrative rules on hiring time is paramount. Hiring of exempt employees is a band-aid fix to address the underlying issues within the state government workforce. For the past few legislative sessions, we have seen many bills targeted at exempting positions, and we suspect that it is due to the DHRD's inability to reduce its hiring time. Furthermore, the Legislature passed Act 234, 2024 which codifies a repricing process for positions, therefore we urge this agency to negotiate in repricing of these positions if they are not competitive with the market rate.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director