

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
DIRECTOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai
715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 806, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO FIREWORKS
Before the House Committee on
FINANCE**

Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 12:00 p.m.

State Capitol Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Testifiers: Jared Redulla

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) strongly supports House Bill 806, House Draft 1. The illegal use of fireworks continues to be a significant public safety concern on Oahu, affecting the quality of life for residents and posing risks to both people and property. This bill appropriates funds for the Department of Law Enforcement to conduct targeted sting operations on Oahu to enforce fireworks ordinances and laws, aligning with our ongoing efforts to combat illegal fireworks.

Building upon the success of the Illegal Fireworks Task Force established by Act 67, Session Laws of Hawai'i, 2023, these sting operations will provide an additional tactical approach to address illegal fireworks activities specifically on Oahu. The operations will enhance our ability to identify, investigate, and prosecute individuals who violate fireworks laws and ordinances.

The funding provided through this bill will support necessary law enforcement personnel, overtime costs, equipment, and operational expenses required to conduct effective sting operations. These operations are crucial for deterring illegal fireworks activities and maintaining public safety, particularly during peak periods of fireworks usage.

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

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

KA 'OIHANA MĀKA'I O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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RICK BLANGIARDI
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ARTHUR J. LOGAN
CHIEF
KAHU MĀKA'I

KEITH K. HORIKAWA
RADE K. VANIC
DEPUTY CHIEFS
HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE RI-HR

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
and Members
Committee on Finance
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 308
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita and Members:

SUBJECT: House Bill No. 806, H.D. 1, Relating Fireworks

I am Raynor M. Ikehara, Major of the Narcotics/Vice Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD supports House Bill No. 806, H.D. 1, Relating to Fireworks.

The HPD supports all legislation that aims to reduce the use of illegal fireworks by strengthening current fireworks laws.

The HPD urges you to support House Bill No. 806, H.D. 1, Relating to Fireworks.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raynor M. Ikehara", is written over a horizontal line.

Raynor M. Ikehara, Major
Narcotics/Vice Division

APPROVED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur J. Logan", is written over a horizontal line.

Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police



Hawaii Representatives & Senators:

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Hawaii, I am writing to express our strong opposition to any prohibitions and enforcement measures targeting fireworks. We believe Hawaiians have the right to pursue and engage in any activities that bring them joy and fulfillment.

Fireworks prohibitions and regulations infringe upon the freedom of our citizens to partake in this time-honored custom, diminishing the spirit of celebration and unity that fireworks bring.

Implementing strict enforcement measures to crack down on fireworks usage would only serve to burden law enforcement resources, and divert needed attention away from more pressing issues. Prohibitions and heavy enforcement will lead to unnecessary conflict between police and citizens, eroding trust and creating an atmosphere of fear and animosity. Causing harm against another person is already illegal, and crimes can already be prosecuted without these new tyrannical enforcement measures.

The Libertarian Party of Hawaii stands firm in our support of individual freedom and opposes any measures that encroach upon our citizens' rights.

In Freedom,

Abbra Green

Executive Secretary, Libertarian Party of Hawaii

lphisecretary@gmail.com



Hawaiian Humane Society
People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: Feb. 24, 2025

To: Chair Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita
Vice Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi
and Members of the Committee on Finance

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of HB 806, HD1: Relating to Fireworks
Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025, 12 p.m., Room 308 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for House Bill 806, HD1, which appropriates funds for the Department of Law Enforcement to conduct sting operations on Oahu to enforce fireworks ordinances or laws.

DLE has played an important role in the incredible work of the Illegal Fireworks Task Force. We support extending this focus by appropriating funds for the department to conduct sting operations for the enforcement of fireworks laws.

Hawaiian Humane supports any attempt to restrict fireworks from residential neighborhoods. The ample evidence that tons of illegal fireworks are still making it onto the local black market despite the successful interdictions at our ports shows that the magnitude of this problem is staggering. After the tragic deaths and injuries on O'ahu this year, it should be clear to our community that lighting off explosives in our neighborhoods poses an unacceptable risk.

Hawaiian Humane has long educated our community about keeping pets safe from the terror of fireworks around New Years and July 4, but these bombs increasingly go off for months at a time without warning. That makes it impossible for pet owners to prepare and creates sustained stress on people and animals, which can do lasting damage to their emotional, mental and physical health.

Please pass HB806, HD1, support the work of the Department of Law Enforcement, and prevent future tragedies. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-806-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 3:52:57 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support. We must use every tool in the tool box to prevent another tragedy loike what happened on Jan. 1, 2025, with six now dead from one major explosion, and at least another dead because of illegal fireworks.

HB-806-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 8:32:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT!

HB-806-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 9:50:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Strongly Oppose

HB-806-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 6:57:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beverly Heiser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB806, HD1 that Appropriates funds for Department of Law Enforcement to conduct sting operations on Oahu to enforce fireworks ordinances or laws.

The Department of Law Enforcement’s (DLE) annual report to the 2025 Legislature proves that sting operations are effective. In a joint operation with Honolulu Police, two Oahu men were indicted and charged with a felony for illegal distribution of aerial fireworks. Both pled “no contest”. One of the felons recently had his sentencing hearing and was given a fine of \$5,000 for possession without a license and for selling to someone who did not have a valid permit. He was sentenced to four years of supervised release. Covert operations conducted by the Illegal Fireworks Task Force (IFTF) resulted in a total of 20 citations, 6 issued on July 4, 2024 and 14 issued during the holiday season in 2024. So far, two who were cited on July 4th have taken pleas deals in District Court.

The actions taken by the IFTF appears to be very promising, and can succeed if they are provided the additional personnel and funding for whatever is needed to increase effectiveness of the operation. The IFTF have coordinated the best efforts thus far, that have shown notable results in combatting illegal fireworks.

The Aliamanu tragedy was sad, and it is hopeful that the lives lost and those suffering from life-changing critical injuries were not in vain but will provide the wake-up call to take the use of illegal fireworks seriously. This all starts with legislators creating laws to invoke stiffer penalties and higher fines, and allows enforcement to the fullest extent of the law to instill a fear of getting caught and induce deterrence. This may require more appropriations committed this year to be effective, but how do you put a price on lives lost, life-changing deformities, and psychological issues that may require medical attention for the rest of one's life? Yes, enough is enough.

Please pass **HB806, HD1**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify

HB-806-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:40:13 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Zehr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to present my testimony regarding [Bill Number]. While the safety of our residents is paramount, the amended bill's enforcement-heavy approach expands government power in ways that risk infringing on personal liberties, misallocates scarce taxpayer resources, and neglects practical alternatives. I urge the committee to consider a balanced, regulated framework that addresses safety concerns without sacrificing our cultural traditions or fiscal responsibility.

Fireworks inherently pose risks such as injuries, fires, and air quality issues. However, historical evidence—from alcohol prohibition to the War on Drugs—demonstrates that broad bans often push activities underground, leading to more hazardous conditions. A regulated approach offers a pathway to mitigate these risks without resorting to an all-encompassing criminalization.

Rather than imposing blanket bans and expansive surveillance, a regulated market could address safety concerns while respecting individual freedoms. Key elements of this model include:

- **Licensing and Permitting:**
Only vendors meeting strict safety criteria would be allowed to sell fireworks, ensuring that products in the market adhere to high safety standards.
- **Designated Zones and Time Restrictions:**
Establishing specific areas and times for legal fireworks displays would reduce risks to bystanders and minimize disturbances for those with respiratory issues, PTSD, or other sensitivities.
- **Safety Education and Public Awareness:**
Community-based education campaigns can empower individuals to use fireworks responsibly, reducing accidental injuries without resorting to intrusive law enforcement.
- **Taxation and Revenue Generation:**
Taxing legal fireworks sales could generate revenue to fund safety initiatives and offset public emergency costs, rather than draining resources on extensive enforcement operations.

The bill's current proposal to divert significant taxpayer funds toward law enforcement operations is both inefficient and unsustainable:

- **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Regulated sales would reduce emergency responses and related costs. Redirecting enforcement funds into a system that both mitigates risks and generates tax revenue is fiscally prudent.
- **Resource Prioritization:** With law enforcement already stretched thin, focusing on violent crimes and serious public safety issues is critical. Expanding surveillance for a largely cultural practice diverts attention and resources from areas where they are truly needed.

Fireworks are a vital part of Hawaii’s diverse cultural heritage, celebrated during events such as Chinese New Year, Filipino festivals, and local holidays. A regulatory approach can honor these traditions while protecting public safety:

- **Community Engagement:** Involving local communities in developing guidelines ensures that regulations are sensitive to cultural practices while addressing safety concerns. For instance, designated zones can both facilitate celebratory displays and reduce public disturbances.
- **Targeted Protections for Vulnerable Populations:** Specific measures—such as noise mitigation strategies and carefully timed displays—can protect those with respiratory conditions, PTSD, or other sensitivities without imposing a blanket ban on fireworks.

Enforcement should be focused on cases of clear negligence or criminal behavior rather than indiscriminately targeting all fireworks use:

- **Focused Enforcement:** Law enforcement should concentrate on incidents where fireworks usage blatantly violates safety standards or causes demonstrable harm. This approach minimizes the risk of infringing on the rights of responsible citizens.
- **Civil Liability Measures:** When negligence leads to harm, holding the responsible parties financially accountable can serve as a deterrent—without necessitating pervasive surveillance or criminalization of all fireworks activity.

While the safety of Hawaii’s residents is a shared priority, **HB806 in its current form is an overreach** that criminalizes a culturally significant practice and misdirects valuable public resources. A balanced, regulated framework offers a more effective and liberty-respecting solution. I respectfully urge the committee to reject the enforcement-heavy provisions of this bill in favor of measured, regulatory measures that safeguard both public safety and individual freedoms.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Zehr

HB-806-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 1:45:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 12:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frank Schultz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support