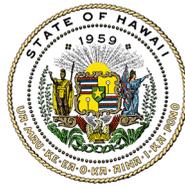


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
KAHU HO'OMALU PŪLIA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
4204 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4420

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

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1379 SD2,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

MARCH 12, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to **SUPPORT** Senate Bill 1379 SD2.

We strongly support the legislation to create Community Readiness Centers, which the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency's Hawai'i Hazards Awareness and Resilience Program (HHARP) is helping to implement. As natural disasters become more frequent, it's critical to have centralized locations where our communities have the capability to access essential support during and post disasters or emergencies.

These Community Readiness Centers will foster collaboration among local agencies, improving the response efforts and resource management in each community. The centers will have the ability to store emergency communications equipment, the capability to provide back-up power, store food and water – so that communities can re-establish themselves in the aftermath of any disaster.

Again, this undertaking is a testament to our government's commitment to supporting its people. This measure offers an excellent opportunity to enhance our emergency preparedness and response capabilities, which helps to elevate our overall emergency enterprise.

I encourage you to support this initiative, as investing in the long-term resiliency of our state means prioritizing in the safety and welfare of our kama'āina. This legislative bill will help us build much stronger and more resilient communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 1379 SD2.

James Barros: james.barros@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

March 12, 2025

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senate Bill 1379 SD2 – Relating to Emergency Preparedness

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on SB1379 SD2, which establishes the Community Readiness Centers Program to be implemented and administered by the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. Establishes the Community Readiness Centers Special Fund to fund the Community Readiness Centers Program. Renames the Environmental Response, Energy, and Food Security Tax to the Environmental Response, Energy, Food Security, and Resilience Tax and directs a portion of the tax into the Community Readiness Centers Special Fund. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates moneys to acquire lands for community readiness centers and for an emergency operations center.

DCAB believes community readiness centers should also address accessibility needs, as individuals with disabilities are among the most vulnerable during disasters. Accessible emergency facilities and preparedness measures are critical to protecting the health and safety of all community members.

A key concern is the need for "pre-shelter" shelters during public safety power shutoffs (PSPS). Many individuals with disabilities depend on electricity for ventilators, power wheelchairs, and oxygen concentrators. Even short power outages can be life-threatening.

DCAB would appreciate prioritization of accessibility considerations, including physical access, communication access, and emergency power provisions, in the implementation of the Community Readiness Centers Program. We respectfully request that the Legislature ensure these centers are inclusive and accessible to all.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director



C. Kimo Alameda, PhD
Mayor

William V. Brillhante Jr.
Managing Director

Merrick Nishimoto
Deputy Managing Director

Talmadge J. Magno
Civil Defense Administrator

County of Hawaii

CIVIL DEFENSE AGENCY

920 Ululani Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-3958
(808) 935-0031

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1379 SD2, RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

TALMADGE MAGNO
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAII COUNTY CIVIL DEFENSE AGENCY

MARCH 11, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony to **OPPOSE** Senate Bill 1379 SD2.

While we support the foundation of such a program to create Community Readiness Centers the aspect that a State entity coordinates within our community will create gaps in communications and coordination between us. The result will lead to serious issues as we prepare for disasters and in times of response and recovery where communication and coordination is vital.

Civil Defense currently works closely with multiple community, civic and non-profit groups island wide that fall within the realm of a readiness center philosophy to provide preparedness and resilience to those communities. We incorporate agreements to define our roles and responsibilities as we pledge to support each other and have successfully used this system for several years and through several disaster events. It is preferred that the County's continuing to be the primary government entity for our communities and that the State could provide guidance on the management of these programs and fund these activities through the County's with this Bill.

I highly recommend you oppose or amend this Bill to provide the County's the primary responsibility of managing their communities.

Talmadge.Magno@hawaiicounty.gov;808-935-0031



KAUA'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

ELTON USHIO, ADMINISTRATOR

DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Testimony of

Elton S. Ushio

Emergency Management Administrator, County of Kauai

Before the

House Committee on Public Safety

March 12, 2025; 9:30 AM

Conference Room #411 and Videoconference

In consideration of

SB 1379, SD2

Relating to Emergency Preparedness

Honorable Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

As the Administrator of the Kaua'i Emergency Management Agency (KEMA), I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on S.B. 1379, S.D. 2. I support the bill's intent to establish Community Readiness Centers (CRCs) in strategic locations statewide, as these facilities will play a vital role in enhancing Hawai'i's disaster resilience.

However, to ensure successful implementation, I respectfully offer the following recommendations:

1. Incorporate and Leverage County Emergency Management Agencies

- The bill designates HI-EMA as the lead agency, but does not explicitly recognize the jurisdictional expertise and kuleana of county emergency management agencies (EMAs).
- Counties are better positioned than HI-EMA to prioritize local needs, engage community partners, and identify appropriate candidate facilities based on hazard vulnerabilities and logistical feasibility.
- Recommendation: Counties should serve as local leads and decision-making entities regarding community selection and facility designation, ensuring CRCs meet the unique needs of their respective communities.

2. Establish a Pass-Through Funding Mechanism to the Counties

- The bill currently centralizes funding under HI-EMA, without a clear mechanism for distributing funds to counties.
- A pass-through funding model, similar to existing federal subgrantee awards, would allow counties to manage CRC projects while ensuring statewide program consistency under HI-EMA's guidance.
- Recommendation: HI-EMA should retain statewide program oversight, establish state-level CRC standards, and administer pass-through funding to counties based on approved CRC proposals. This would enable efficient, locally-driven implementation while maintaining statewide coordination.

In conclusion, I appreciate the Legislature's commitment to enhancing community resilience through CRCs and respectfully urge the Committee to incorporate county Emergency Management/Civil Defense agencies as integral partners in community and facility selection, local management, and funding distribution.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elton S. Ushio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Elton S. Ushio

Adminitstrator

TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

735 Bishop Street, Suite 417

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: FUEL, Adds Barrel Tax Earmark to Feed New Community Readiness Centers Special Fund

BILL NUMBER: SB 1379 SD 2

INTRODUCED BY: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Establishes the Community Readiness Centers Program to be implemented and administered by the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. Establishes the Community Readiness Centers Special Fund to fund the Community Readiness Centers Program. Renames the Environmental Response, Energy, and Food Security Tax to the Environmental Response, Energy, Food Security, and Resilience Tax and directs a portion of the tax into the Community Readiness Centers Special Fund.

SYNOPSIS: Adds two new sections to chapter 127A, HRS. One would establish a "Community Readiness Centers Program" to be implemented and administered by the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency ("Agency"). The program will set up community readiness centers in various communities to ensure emergency preparedness by providing training and emergency information, supplies, and basic medical care during and after an emergency event, store and refrigerate medical supplies and provide a place for residents to charge electrical devices and access the internet.

The Agency shall:

- 1) Identify potential sites for the establishment of community readiness center facilities,
- 2) Negotiate and arrange for purchase or lease of suitable sites,
- 3) Contract to design and construct facilities,
- 4) Install a solar and back-up battery storage system, multiple electrical charging stations, internet access, and the capability to refrigerate medical supplies at each site; and
- 5) Obtain suitable emergency supplies, including non-perishable food.

The other new section would establish a community readiness centers special fund. The monies in the fund shall be used for:

- 1) Purchase or lease of suitable community readiness centers sites,
- 2) Design and construction of community readiness centers facilities,
- 3) Installation of solar panels and back-up battery storage systems,
- 4) Installation of electrical charging stations, internet access, and capability to refrigerate medical supplies,
- 5) Purchase of suitable emergency supplies, and
- 6) administration and maintenance of community readiness centers.

Amends section 243-3.5, HRS, by adding “resilience” to the title of the Environmental Response, Energy and Food Security Tax. Makes conforming changes to section 128D-2(a), 201-12.8(a), and 304A-2169.1(b), HRS.

Amends section 243-3.5(a)(6), HRS, to deposit __ cents of the \$1.10 per barrel petroleum product into the community readiness centers special fund.

Amends section 243-3.5(b)(4), HRS, to deposit __ percent of the 19 cents on each one million British thermal units of fossil fuel sold by fossil fuel distributors into the community readiness centers special fund.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2077.

STAFF COMMENTS: This is an Administration bill sponsored by the Department of Defense and designated DEF-03 (25).

The 1989 Tax Review Commission noted that use of special fund financing is a “departure from Hawaii’s sound fiscal policies and should be avoided.” It also noted that special funds are appropriate where the revenues to the funds maintain some direct connection between a public service and the beneficiary of that service. The Commission found that special funds which merely set aside general funds cannot be justified as such actions restrict budget flexibility, create inefficiencies, and lessen accountability. It recommended that such programs can be given priority under the normal budget process without having to resort to this type of financing.

This bill creates a new special fund to implement and administer a new Community Readiness Centers program. The fund is fed by new earmarks on the barrel tax (HRS section 243-3.5). The program is to be administered by the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency.

Special funds are pots of money that exist for a specific purpose and largely bypass the legislative appropriation process. The existence of hundreds of these special funds has often confounded those who seek answers to simple questions like “How much money does the State have?”

Our Legislature is supposed to be the steward of all state moneys, but special funds make it very easy to lose track of where the money is and how it is being spent. Departments are supposed to tell the Legislature if they have special funds and how much is in them, but let’s just say they don’t always. Recently, in Report No. 20-01, the State Auditor took DBEDT to task for failing to report \$6.5 million in non-general fund moneys. DBEDT’s response? Just that they’ll “take corrective action.” Not even a “Whoops! We screwed up and promise to do better next time!” This followed closely on the heels of Report No. 19-16, where the Auditor found that \$1.04 million in non-general fund moneys administered by the Attorney General wasn’t reported. That department responded that they “shall establish procedures to assure required reports are issued.” Is it any wonder that it’s getting harder and harder to follow the money and rein in government spending?

Perhaps as the result of the foregoing concerns, the Legislature has itself established criteria for when a special fund may be maintained (HRS section 37-52.3). Those criteria are that the special fund:

- (1) Serves a need, as demonstrated by:
 - (A) The purpose of the program to be supported by the fund;
 - (B) The scope of the program, including financial information on fees to be charged, sources of projected revenue, and costs; and
 - (C) An explanation of why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process;
- (2) Reflects a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon the program users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue, as opposed to serving primarily as a means to provide the program or users with an automatic means of support that is removed from the normal budget and appropriation process;
- (3) Provides an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; and
- (4) Demonstrates the capacity to be financially self-sustaining.

Of these, at least two of the criteria are violated because there is no nexus between the program (community resilience centers) and the source of revenue (tax on fossil fuel consumption), and because there is no indication that the proposed fund can be financially self-sustaining. Establishing this special fund is inappropriate, as is the proposed method of financing the fund.

Digested: 3/7/2025



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

March 12, 2025, 9:30 a.m., Room 411

Testimony in strong support of SB 1379 SD2

Aloha Chair Au Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and members of the Public Safety Committee:

As partners of Climate Hawai'i, an initiative of the Hawai'i Executive Collaborative (HEC), we strongly support SB 1379, which establishes the Community Readiness Centers Program to enhance Hawai'i's resilience to disasters and emergencies. As climate change increases the frequency and severity of hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural disasters, these centers will serve as lifeboats for preparedness, response, and recovery in vulnerable communities across the state.

Why Community Readiness Centers Are Essential for Hawai'i

Hawai'i's unique geographic isolation makes community-based resilience essential in responding to climate-driven disasters. We must prepare before disaster strikes to ensure residents have access to emergency supplies, power, medical aid, and critical communications. This is particularly true for greater risk for vulnerable populations, including kūpuna and those with medical needs. Further, given the increasing uncertainty with federal disaster aid, local resilience solutions are critical.

Community Readiness Centers are a proven, proactive strategy that:

- *Improve Emergency Response*: Readiness centers store food, water, medical supplies, and emergency equipment, ensuring communities can sustain themselves until broader relief arrives.
- *Provide Essential Infrastructure*: Equipped with solar panels and battery storage, these centers provide reliable power for medical needs, phone charging, and emergency communication during blackouts.
- *Strengthen Local Capacity*: Training programs and partnerships with community-based organizations empower residents with skills for disaster preparedness and recovery.
- *Reduce Post-Disaster Costs*: Every dollar invested in disaster resilience saves many more in emergency response and rebuilding costs, not to mention saving lives.

A Community-Driven Approach to Resilience

The most effective disaster preparedness efforts start at the local level. We urge the Legislature to ensure that readiness centers / resilience hubs:

- Leverage existing community networks by partnering with trusted local organizations engaged in resilience efforts.
- Prioritize retrofitting existing community facilities to maximize cost-effectiveness.
- Provide training, technical assistance, and ongoing community engagement to ensure readiness centers are fully integrated into emergency response plans.

A Smart, Scalable Solution for Hawai'i

Senate Bill 1379 provides a practical, forward-thinking framework to prepare our communities for climate-related disasters while reducing future costs and strengthening local resilience. As partners of Climate Hawai'i, we strongly urge the Legislature to pass this measure to ensure Hawai'i is ready to face the growing climate challenges ahead.

Mahalo for your leadership and the opportunity to testify.

About the Hawai'i Executive Collaborative

The Hawai'i Executive Collaborative (HEC) is a nonprofit organization that serves as a convener and provides backbone support to leaders from different sectors who want to help build a more resilient economy and state. HEC members believe in the power of acting collectively and focus their energies and resources on areas where immediate and systemic changes will benefit Hawai'i

and the world. For more information on Climate Hawai'i's real-world, high-impact solutions, please visit climatehawaii.earth.

Climate Hawai'i partners supporting this testimony:

- AES Hawai'i
- aio
- Blue Planet Foundation
- Bowers + Kubota
- Catholic Charities Hawaii
- Chaminade University
- County of Kaua'i
- Elemental Impact
- Hawai'i Executive Collaborative
- Hawaii Solar Energy Association
- Hawaiian Electric
- Hua Nani Partners
- Manoa Valley Theatre
- Sun Noodle
- Young Brothers
- Zephyr Insurance
- TNC



March 7, 2025

To: Chair Belatti, and Vice Chair Iwamoto, and the House Committee on Public Safety

Subject: **SB1379**,

Aloha e Chair Belatti, and Vice Chair Iwamoto, and the House Committee on Public Safety,

Hawaii Food+ Policy is writing to you in **strong support of SB1379**, which seeks to establish the Community Readiness Centers Program to ensure that Hawaii residents have access to shelter and basic needs in the event of natural disasters, political turmoil, or any island wide emergencies. Hawaii is isolated from neighboring states and countries, making it extremely vulnerable in the event of an emergency, and at risk for running short of basic needs for victims of an emergency. The Community Readiness Centers would provide medical supplies, electrical device charging stations, and other basic needs. Community Readiness Centers would also promote awareness and education through offering emergency preparedness training to community members.

The Community Readiness Centers Special Fund would be established to fund the Community Readiness Centers Program. Additionally, this measure seeks to rename the Environmental Response, Energy, and Food Security Tax to the Environmental Response, Energy, Food Security, and Resilience Tax and direct a portion of this tax into the Community Readiness Centers Special Fund. Additionally, the taxing of non-renewable resources like petroleum and fossil fuels can contribute to the establishment of these centers.

This bill supports essential development to improve disaster preparedness in response to Hawai'i's high risk. Preparation and safety are a necessary investment for Hawaii and can minimize costs that would otherwise be prevalent without a safety plan for our communities. We ask you to **pass SB1379** to promote the safety and wellness of Hawai'i's residents.

Mahalo,

The Food+ Policy Team

#FixOurFoodSystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1379, SD2: RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

TO: House Committee on Public Safety
FROM: Tina Andrade, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: **Wednesday 3/12/25; 9:30 AM**; CR 411 & Videoconference

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members, Committee on Public Safety:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i **strongly supports SB 1379, SD2**, which establishes the Community Readiness Centers Program and a Special Fund to fund this program to enhance Hawai'i's resilience to disasters and emergencies.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, community-based organization that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 77 years. CCH has programs serving elders, veterans, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. We assist over 40,000 people annually across the state.

The local residents we serve are struggling to survive amid Hawai'i's high cost of living. They are particularly vulnerable to disasters and emergencies, with few extra resources to cope when crises arise. As an island state, we have experienced firsthand the devastating impacts of wildfires, hurricanes, and flooding. Our geographic isolation in the middle of the Pacific Ocean makes it even more critical to prioritize disaster preparedness.

As a partner in Climate Hawai'i (an initiative of the Hawai'i Executive Collaborative), we recognize the urgent need to develop effective disaster preparedness efforts at the local level.

We strongly support the establishment of **Community Readiness Centers** to ensure that the basic human needs of our local communities can be met in times of disaster. Preparedness must begin **before** a crisis strikes. These centers would work directly with local communities to provide emergency training, stockpile critical supplies, and develop essential infrastructure to support medical needs and communications during blackouts. By increasing community readiness and resilience, these centers would **save lives, reduce post-disaster costs, and protect vital resources.**

As frontline service providers for elders, veterans, children, families, immigrants, individuals experiencing homelessness, and the ALICE population, we have seen the consequences of inadequate disaster preparedness. We urge you to support efforts that will ensure our communities are ready to face the growing challenges of climate change.

Mahalo. CCH Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, (808) 527-4813..



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808) 527-4813 •



**Committee on Public Safety
Hawaii State Legislature**

Subject: Testimony in Strong Support of SB1379 – Establishing Community Readiness Centers

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nora Hull and I am a masters of social work student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and student intern at The Queen's Medical Center. The views I will express are mine and do not necessarily reflect those of the University or QMC. I am writing to express my **strong support for SB1379**, which seeks to establish a Community Readiness Centers Program, administered by the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. This bill is an essential step toward ensuring that our communities are adequately prepared to respond to and recover from emergency events.

As recent natural disasters and emergencies have demonstrated, our communities must have reliable, well-equipped locations where residents can access critical resources, including emergency preparedness training, medical supplies, and communication infrastructure. The proposed Community Readiness Centers will serve as vital hubs that not only provide emergency response capabilities but also enhance overall community resilience.

As a social work student, I understand that disasters disproportionately affect vulnerable and underserved populations. Community Readiness Centers have the potential to bridge critical gaps in accessibility, particularly for individuals with disabilities, ensuring they receive the necessary assistance and resources during emergencies. Through my field education in healthcare settings, I have worked with many individuals who, without such support systems in place, would struggle to access the services they need in the event of a disaster. This bill represents a crucial step toward addressing these disparities and safeguarding the well-being of all community members.

Community Readiness Centers will serve as an example of a thoughtful, well-planned approach to emergency preparedness and disaster response. I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB1379 and help build a more resilient and prepared Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nora Hull

SB-1379-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 3:41:49 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jan K Baldado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support SB 1379.

Mahalo nui.

SB-1379-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 7:58:42 AM

Testimony for PBS on 3/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support. Thank you.

SB-1379-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:00:09 AM

Testimony for PBS on 3/12/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this initiative.