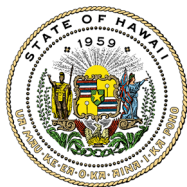


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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 141,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON
TRANSPORTATION & CULTURE AND THE ARTS
AND PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

Aloha Chairs Lee and Elefante, Vice-Chairs Inouye and Wakai, and Members of both Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony to **SUPPORT** Senate Bill 141.

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency is in strong support of the proposed bill to establish the eighth day of August as Hawai'i Disaster Drill Day. As a key agency responsible for the safety and emergency preparedness of the people of Hawai'i, HIEMA recognizes the importance of disaster preparedness in protecting lives and property, especially in a state as vulnerable as ours. Hawai'i faces a variety of natural hazards, including hurricanes, tsunamis, wildfires, and volcanic eruptions. It is imperative that we continually enhance our ability to respond to these disasters, both individually and collectively.

The establishment of Hawai'i Disaster Drill Day aligns with our core mission of ensuring that our residents are well-prepared for any emergency. By conducting annual drills on this designated day, we will foster a culture of preparedness, educate the public on critical safety measures, and enhance the coordination between state, county, federal, and private entities.

One of the most powerful tools in disaster management is education. We will be able to educate the public on disaster risks, emergency preparedness measures, and recovery plans. Public engagement, through drills and educational materials, will empower Hawai'i's residents to take control of their safety, reducing the risk of injury or death in the event of a disaster.

By establishing a dedicated day to conduct disaster drills, we will ensure that every individual in Hawai'i knows how to respond in times of crisis. From evacuations to securing emergency supplies, Hawai'i Disaster Drill Day will reinforce the critical skills that save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 141.

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

SB-141

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:47:30 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/10/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie R. Samudio	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Though I strongly support this effort, I have concerns about its implementation and would like to discuss some of these issues..

Such as: Is there a time line for development and fulfillment of this proposal? Have the executing agencies been involved in preparing this proposal? If so, to what extent have HIEMA and DEM/Civil Defense (Big Island) indicated how their evolving organization systems can add this task (staff shortages & turn over). I don't believe any of the mentioned agencies conduct drills to prepare residents (2.b.1.) though they may do so with their respective sites and personnel.

LATE

LATE

SB-141

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:04:58 PM

Testimony for PSM on 2/10/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Awai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill SB141. We would have regular drills before the 70s for emergencies and had a fire escape plan for our homes. When we shared it with our parents after some already had experienced wartime emergencies our parents learned how important it was to have a plan. Many students now do not participate and do not share information they learn in school to their parents, perhaps thinking that they will not understand. But being an island community with a mix of various races some foreign to U.S. laws and customs such programs are necessary to educate everyone in the community.

Even at my residence in a senior community, residents were not given an emergency plan especially in the case of a fire. Many residents were told to shelter in place by the past community manager. She didn't have a copy of the Fire Emergency manual, but found one with a long-time resident to show to the Fire Education Officer Otsuka, who I had asked to come to inform residents. He saw several fire escape exits blocked by residents and explained the procedures if there was a fire in your building, which depended on where the fire was located. If you couldn't walk down the stairs and if no one was able to help you, then shelter in place unless the fire was in your own unit, then call 911 and tell HFD what unit you were in and throw out a white sheet over the balcony. Even closing your bedroom door when you exited could prevent fire damage from one room to another. Some residents didn't even see why they could not smoke in their units so they hid in their bathrooms. They can't hear the firealarms at night, and see no need to leave when hearing an alarm and just grumble to shut off the alarm! Communication, education and practice drills are definitely needed in emergencies.

Are all schools in operation on Aug. 8th?? or can schools designate their own?