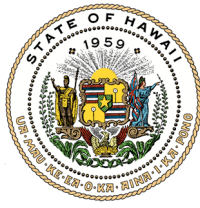


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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 SENATE BILL 227, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO FIREWORKS
Before the House Committee on
JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Thursday, March 13, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
Testifiers: Mike Lambert

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) supports Senate Bill 227, Senate Draft 1. This bill establishes the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement to combat the ongoing issue of unauthorized fireworks in Hawaii. The proposed division would build upon the success of the Illegal Fireworks Task Force established by Act 67, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, which was created to plan, coordinate, and engage in law enforcement operations to interdict illegal fireworks; develop a comprehensive strategic plan to stop the importation of illegal fireworks into Hawaii; promote compliance with state fireworks control laws; and ensure the safety and security of the airports, harbors, and other facilities in the State.

Since its establishment, the Illegal Fireworks Task Force has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in a short period, successfully removing approximately 200,000 pounds of illegal fireworks from Hawaii's communities through coordinated law enforcement operations. The creation of a permanent Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division represents a natural evolution from the Task Force's proven work and would provide the

consistent, dedicated resources needed to address this persistent public safety concern.

The dedicated funding and six new positions proposed in this bill are crucial components for the division's success. This staffing and financial support will enable the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategic plan, enhance efforts to stop the importation and distribution of illegal fireworks, and increase regulatory oversight throughout the state. The division will be able to build upon existing partnerships with federal, state, and county agencies to maximize enforcement efficiency and effectiveness.

DLE recommends the following:

1. Amending page 3, line 7 by inserting \$4,647,155.
2. Amending page 4, line 2 by inserting \$1,916,210.

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



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: March 12, 2025

To: Chair Rep. David Tarnas
Vice Chair Rep. Mahina Poepoe
and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

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

RE: Testimony in support of SB 227, SD1: Relating to Fireworks
Thursday, March 13, 2025, 2 p.m., Room 325 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Bill 227, SD1, which establishes the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement; appropriates funds; and sunsets 6/30/2028.

DLE has played an important role in the incredible work of the Illegal Fireworks Task Force, which has seized 187,000 pounds - or more than 93 tons - of illegal fireworks found in shipping containers since it was established. We support extending this focus by creating a specialized division within the department.

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 SB227, SD1, support the work of the Department of Law Enforcement, and prevent future tragedies. Mahalo for your consideration.



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



Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: Testimony in Support of SB227 SD1: RELATING TO FIREWORKS

Dear Chairs Elefante and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Wakai and Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committees on Public Safety and Military Affairs and Judiciary,

The O'ahu County Committee (OCC) of O'ahu County Democrats is in support of SB227 SD1, RELATING TO FIREWORKS, which establishes the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement, appropriates moneys, and sunsets 6/30/2028 (SD1).

On Saturday, March 1, 2025, the OCC met to vote to support a variety of fireworks-related legislation that aim to propose solutions to tackle the threat of illegal fireworks in our neighborhoods. After the Aliamanu incident in January, the OCC swift action to task our Legislation Committee to research and monitor what ideas and proposals were being considered, and believe that this is one of many that would keep our residents safe and reduce the use of and minimize the presence of illegal fireworks in the State. The OCC stands behind you in supporting this bill and urges its passage to keep our communities safe and from illegal fireworks.

Mahalo for your consideration and we ask for your support of SB227 SD1.

Richard Mizusawa
Chair, Legislation Committee
O'ahu County Committee, Oahu County Democrats

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:22:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allen Novak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wish to testify in support of SB2257.

Illegal fireworks is a serious problem in Hawai'i. The risk of fire,, Human and animal anxiety, and physical harm outweigh any claim that they have traditional value when used by unauthorized individuals.

However, since interdiction at the point of use by the consumer is difficult and impractical, the interdiction effort must be made at the ports of entry to be effective. Investigation must be made to determine not only the source of illegal fireworks entering our ports, but how and who is involved in illegal fireworks making it through the ports of entry. These are explosives and the means to detect them have long been available. Yet large quantities of illegal fireworks are able to be sold to the public.

TO: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

CONCERNING: SB227 SD1

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha, Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to support **SB227 SD1 as a first step in addressing the illegal use of fireworks that has continued to grow in Hawaii.**

I only suggest that the Committee include reporting requirements for the new group so the effectiveness of this added staffing can be monitored. There should be a delineation of the responsibility of this group versus the various policing groups, that have not been able to manage this problem after decades of promises.

Hawaii does not need another bureaucracy that exists without being effective.

Mahalo,

Larry Smith

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:18:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB227, SD1 that establishes the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement and appropriates funds.

Establishing an Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division will provide the **full-time dedication** needed to slow the flow of Illegal Fireworks entering the state. This type of enforcement is needed, due to illegal fireworks being so out of control and the extensive involvement of the black market.

Act 67 established the Illegal Fireworks Task Force (IFTF) under the Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) on June 7, 2023. The IFTF has made the most progress thus far, to interrupt the supply chain and distribution that led to some areas on Oahu noting a slight reduction of illegal fireworks in 2023. This effort has accomplished more than any other initiative to reduce illegal fireworks use, and has resulted in ongoing criminal investigations, two felony indictments, and covert operations that resulted in twenty criminal citations.

The amount seized at the docks from December 2023 to January 2024 indicates a strong need for this type of effort to continue. The report to the 2025 legislature submitted by Jordan Lowe stated that “any earnest effort to counter illegal fireworks can only be done with a dedicated criminal investigative unit with sustained staffing and funding”. The current IFTF uses State Narcotics investigators who participate only part-time due to having other duties. The report further stated fireworks are smuggled into Hawaii year-round via “shipping, air transport, and mail channels”. It confirms that there is a “flourishing fireworks black market” with “well-established networks and organizations” and a “well-established underground of people” who use illegal fireworks regularly.

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 it 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 provide your full support for SB227, SD1 and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:35:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill. Mahalo.

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:31:44 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael A. Cobb Jr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill, creating another layer of bureaucracy is just another way of increasing taxes.
Just actually enforce current laws.

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:19:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support all bills and actions that will get the fireworks proliferation under control. There is nothing cultural about fireworks which harm those with PTSD, frighten pets, create noise problems, create fires, kills and maim people, etc. We need fireworks that are run by professionals instead of war zones.

Please move this bill forward.

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:34:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 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 strongly oppose this bill, which expands government enforcement on fireworks at the expense of personal freedom, cultural traditions, and fiscal responsibility.

Fireworks have long been an integral part of Hawai‘i’s celebrations. Rather than criminalizing responsible, peaceful festivities, we should empower communities to safely enjoy these traditions.

This bill **diverts valuable taxpayer dollars**—funds that could address pressing issues like housing, rising living costs, and infrastructure—toward an expanded enforcement division. Evidence shows that broad law enforcement initiatives often yield diminishing returns compared to targeted, community-based solutions.

Targeted, Effective Alternatives:

- **Designated Fireworks Zones:** Safe, community-sanctioned areas for celebrations.
- **Education Campaigns:** Programs promoting fire safety and responsible use.
- **Focused Enforcement:** Direct resources toward combating large-scale criminal operations rather than penalizing individual celebrants.

Expanding enforcement powers tends to become permanent, **risking overcriminalization and disproportionately impacting ordinary, working-class citizens.**

In summary, this bill unnecessarily intrudes on personal liberties, misallocates resources, and is unlikely to effectively address the underlying issues. I urge you to reject this measure in favor of solutions that respect our traditions and ensure responsible use of public funds.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Nicholas Zehr

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:16:38 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:17:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel C. Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB227 SD1. Given the massive displays of illegal fireworks, a Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement is needed to track down the importers and distributors.

And an appropriation is needed in the size you determine.

Daniel C. Smith

Pearl City

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:43:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I OPPOSE this bill. Though public safety is important to me, I think that resources need to be directed to the numerous crimes that our communities are suffering from. Criminals are not being held accountable as it is, I encourage those in the position to make decisions and those in public safety to please focus on violent crimes and crimes where hard working families lose personal property.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:37:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harrison Ho	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Use the money else where.

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 1:41:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Reeser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Committee Members on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

I am writing as a resident of Makawao, Maui, where we have been dealing with year-round fireworks (both illegal and legal) and homemade bombs detonating throughout our residential neighborhood. The explosions shake our houses and terrify our animals and elderly neighbors, some with PTSD. There is no way to predict when the explosions will hit and cannot be planned for. Even on July 4th and New Year's Eve, there are no drugs or options available to protect our families, pets and neighbors from the war zones taking place in our neighborhoods due to the power and quantity of these unsafe fireworks. It is not safe to go outside during these times as dangerous projectiles are everywhere, shooting into our houses, landing on fire on our roofs and yards. This is beyond dangerous so any tools that can be used to stop it must be implemented immediately as the crisis gets worse every year. There will be more preventable accidents and deaths if nothing is done. The last thing we need is for our insurance rates to rise because we continue to let this problem grow out of control.

Mahalo for doing your part,
Cheryl Reeser

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 3:22:34 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Urasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In Support.

Mahalo

SB-227-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 9:19:09 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/13/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mariano Castillo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose sb227