

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

April 1, 2025

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair,  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025  
Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Place: Conference Room 308, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director  
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

**Re: S.B. 828 SD1 HD1 RELATING TO WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION MEDICAL BENEFITS**

**I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

The **DLIR supports** this measure that amends Section 386-21.9 (HRS) to expand the definition workers' compensation medical benefits for firefighters to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system, cancer of the buccal cavity, colon, pharynx, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma unless an employer proves that the cancer or disease was not associated with firefighting duties.

**II. CURRENT LAW**

§386-21.9 provides medical care, services, and supplies for firefighters suffering from cancer, including leukemia, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, or cancer of the lung, brain, stomach, esophagus, intestines, rectum, kidney, bladder, prostate, breast, female reproductive organs, or testes if a claim is accepted or determined as compensable by a firefighter with five or more years of service as a firefighter.

§386-21.9 also stipulates §386-21 shall remain applicable; provided that the employer shall be liable for medical care, services and supplies for a minimum of one hundred ten per cent, and not to exceed one hundred fifty per cent of fees as prescribed in the Medicare Resource Based Relative Value Scale applicable to Hawaii as prepared by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

§386-21 defines medical care, services, and supplies and provides that

immediately after a work injury sustained by an employee and so long as reasonably needed, the employer shall furnish to the employee all medical care, services and supplies as the nature of the injury requires.

§386-73.5 states that the DLIR Director has original jurisdiction over all controversies and disputes arising out of workers' compensation.

§386-85 states that in the absence of substantial evidence to the contrary it shall be presumed that a claim is covered for a work injury (presumption clause).

### **III. COMMENTS ON THE SENATE BILL**

The DLIR supports this measure to ensure that firefighters receive timely and appropriate medical treatment to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, colon, pharynx, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma when determined that aforementioned cancer or disease was associated with firefighting duties.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
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STATE OF HAWAII  
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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
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March 31, 2025

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Committee on Finance  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 306  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 828, Relating to Workers' Compensation Medical Benefits

I am Kazuo Todd, Chair of the Hawai'i State Fire Council (SFC). I am writing in strong support of SB 828, which expands workers' compensation medical benefits for firefighters by including additional cancers and diseases that have been scientifically linked to occupational exposures. As Fire Chief of the Hawai'i Fire Department, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that occupational cancers have on firefighters and their families.

Firefighters are routinely exposed to toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and hazardous environments in the course of their duties. The expansion of workers' compensation medical coverage in this bill is a necessary step in recognizing and addressing the heightened cancer risks that firefighters face due to the nature of their work. SB 828 would provide critical medical coverage for adenocarcinoma, mesothelioma, malignant melanoma, and additional cancers affecting key organs, ensuring that firefighters receive the care they need.

This bill is essential for the following reasons:

1. **Recognition of Occupational Health Risks:** Firefighters are at a significantly higher risk of developing certain cancers due to chronic exposure to hazardous substances. Expanding coverage acknowledges the reality of these risks and ensures appropriate medical support.
2. **Support for Firefighters and Their Families:** A cancer diagnosis is not only physically and emotionally devastating but can also create severe financial strain. Ensuring workers' compensation coverage provides a necessary safety net for affected firefighters and their families.
3. **Improved Recruitment and Retention:** Strengthening workers' compensation protections helps attract and retain skilled firefighters, ensuring that Hawai'i's fire departments remain fully staffed and operational.
4. **Balanced and Fair Approach:** This bill maintains a fair process by allowing an employer to contest a claim if they can prove that a firefighter's illness was not job-related. This ensures accountability while still prioritizing firefighter health.

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair

Page 2

March 31, 2025

Firefighters dedicate their lives to protecting the people of Hawai'i, often at great personal risk. The article: "Firefighters have high levels of PFAS in aftermath of Maui fires" published in today's *Star Advertiser* demonstrates cancer-related occupational risks for firefighters. It is our duty to ensure they receive the medical care and support they deserve when they face the long-term health consequences of their service. I urge the committee to pass SB 828 to protect the health and well-being of those who selflessly serve our communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kazuo Todd", written in a cursive style.

KAZUO TODD  
Chair

KT/GL



## 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)

April 1, 2025

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

#### Senate Bill 828 SD1 HD1 – Relating to Workers Compensation Medical Benefits

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 828 SD1 HD1 – Relating to Workers' Compensation. This bill would expand workers' compensation medical benefits for firefighters to include coverage for adenocarcinoma or mesothelioma of the respiratory system; cancer of the buccal cavity, colon, pharynx, and thyroid; and malignant melanoma. Specifies that an employer may prove that the cancer or disease was not associated with the firefighting duties to deny medical benefits under workers' compensation law. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The physical and environmental exposures from firefighting duties may be the cause of firefighters' cancer diagnosis. The cancers listed in this bill may have long latency periods before diagnosis. Given these risks, it is essential to ensure that those who develop cancer due to their occupational exposure receive appropriate workers' compensation medical benefits.

The Americans with Disabilities Act protects individuals with cancer and by expanding cancer or disease coverage for firefighters' workers' compensation medical benefits ensures access to the medical care, services, and supplies that they need.

This bill supports our firefighters' who risk their lives every day to protect our communities.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director

**HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT  
KA 'OIHANA KINAI AHI O HONOLULU  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

636 SOUTH STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
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RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



SHELDON K. HAO  
FIRE CHIEF  
LUNA NUI KINAI AHI  
  
JASON SAMALA  
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF  
HOPE LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

March 31, 2025

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Committee on Finance  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 306  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 828 Relating to Workers' Compensation Medical Benefits

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). I strongly support SB 828, which expands workers' compensation medical benefits for fire fighters by including additional cancers and diseases that have been scientifically linked to occupational exposures. As Fire Chief of the HFD, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that occupational cancers have on fire fighters and their families.

Fire fighters are routinely exposed to toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and hazardous environments in the course of their duties. The expansion of workers' compensation medical coverage in this bill is a necessary step in recognizing and addressing the heightened cancer risks that fire fighters face due to the nature of their work. SB 828 would provide critical medical coverage for adenocarcinoma, mesothelioma, malignant melanoma, and additional cancers that affect key organs to ensure that fire fighters receive the care they need.

This bill is essential for the following reasons:

1. Recognition of Occupational Health Risks. Fire fighters are at a significantly higher risk of developing certain cancers due to chronic exposure to hazardous substances. Expanding medical coverage acknowledges the reality of these risks and ensures appropriate medical support.

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Page 2  
March 31, 2025

2. Support for Fire Fighters and their Families. A cancer diagnosis is not only physically and emotionally devastating, but can also create severe financial strain. Ensuring workers' compensation coverage provides a necessary safety net for affected fire fighters and their families.
3. Improved Recruitment and Retention. Strengthening workers' compensation protection helps attract and retain skilled fire fighters and ensures Hawai'i's fire departments remain fully staffed and operational.
4. Balanced and Fair Approach. This bill maintains a fair process by allowing an employer to contest a claim if they can prove that a fire fighter's illness was not job-related. This ensures accountability while still prioritizing fire fighter health.

Fire fighters dedicate their lives to protecting the citizens of Hawai'i, often at great personal risk. The article, "*Firefighters Have High Levels of PFAS in Aftermath of Maui Fires*," which was published in the *Star Advertiser*, demonstrates cancer-related occupational risks for fire fighters. It is our duty to ensure they receive the medical care and support they deserve when they face the long-term health consequences of their service.

I urge your committee to pass SB 828 to protect the health and well-being of those who selflessly serve our communities.

Should you have questions, please contact Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO  
Fire Chief

SKH/GL:cn

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director

**BRADFORD K. VENTURA**  
Fire Chief

**GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA**  
Deputy Fire Chief



**DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY**  
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200 DAIRY ROAD  
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April 1, 2025

The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Committee on Finance  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 306  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita,

**SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 828, RELATING TO WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION MEDICAL BENEFITS**

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of Maui Fire Department. I am writing in strong support of SB 828, which expands workers' compensation medical benefits for firefighters by including additional cancers and diseases that have been scientifically linked to occupational exposures. As Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that occupational cancers have on firefighters and their families.

Firefighters are routinely exposed to toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and hazardous environments in the course of their work. The inclusion of this bill is a necessary step in recognizing and addressing the heightened cancer risks that firefighters face due to the nature of their work. SB 828 would provide critical medical coverage for adenocarcinoma, mesothelioma, malignant melanoma, and additional cancers affecting key organs, ensuring that firefighters receive the care they need.

This bill is essential for the following reasons:

1. **Recognition of Occupational Health Risks:** Firefighters are at a significantly higher risk of developing certain cancers due to chronic exposure to hazardous substances. Expanding coverage acknowledges the reality of these risks and ensures appropriate medical support.
2. **Support for Firefighters and their Families:** A cancer diagnosis is not only physically and emotionally devastating but can also create severe financial strain. Ensuring workers' compensation coverage provides a necessary safety net for affected firefighters and their families.
3. **Improved Recruitment and Retention:** Strengthening workers' compensation protections helps attract and retain skilled firefighters, ensuring that Hawaii's fire departments remain fully staffed and operational.

The Honorable Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Chair

Page 2

April 1, 2025

4. **Balanced and Fair Approach:** This bill maintains a fair process by allowing an employer to consent a claim if they can prove that a firefighter's illness was not job-related. This ensures accountability while still prioritizing firefighter health.

Firefighters dedicated their lives to protecting the people of Hawaii, often at great personal risk. The article: "Firefighters have high levels of PFAS in aftermath of Maui fires" published in today's Star Advertiser demonstrates cancer-related occupational risks for firefighters. It is our duty to ensure they receive the medical care and support they deserve when they face the long-term health consequences of their service. I urge the committee to pass SB 828 to protect the health and wellbeing of those who selflessly serve our communities.

If you have any questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at (808) 723-7169 and [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,



BRADFORD K. VENTURA  
Fire Chief



## HAWAII FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 1463, AFL-CIO  
1018 PALM DRIVE, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814-1929  
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025  
April 1, 2025

Committee on Finance

Testimony by  
Hawaii Fire Fighters Association

S.B. No. 828 RELATING TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION MEDICAL BENEFIT LAB, FIN  
S.D. 1, H.D. 1

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the committee,

The Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA), Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO represents more than 2,000 active-duty and 1,000 retired professional fire fighters throughout the State of Hawaii. The HFFA, on behalf of all our members, strongly supports S.B. 828, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, which expands medical benefits for firefighters under workers' compensation to include additional types of cancers.

“The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study identified that fire fighters have a 9% greater chance of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% greater chance of dying from cancer than the general U.S. population.” Fire fighters are exposed to carcinogenic agents from fire combustion products that can be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through dermal exposure, fire fighting foam, diesel exhaust from fire apparatus, and even the turnouts, which provide thermal stability, contain PFAS. The Grace LeMasters’ study found a direct correlation occupational exposure and the increased risk for cancer.

S.B. No. 828, S.D. 1, H.D. 1 provides the workers’ compensation coverage for our fire fighters diagnosed and require cancer treatment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we ask the Committee to pass S.B. No. 828, S.D. 1, H.D. 1.

**SB-828-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:43:17 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Hadlock	HFFA Local 1463	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good afternoon. I am writing as a firefighter in the Honolulu Fire Department with 19 years of service and an executive board member of the HFFA Local 1463. I am in support of this bill for its potential to help save the lives of emergency responders whose job puts us at significantly higher risk of cancers. Too many times to keep track I have known fellow firefighters who get diagnosed with cancer. This bill is a great step toward supporting the emergency workers who put our lives on the line in order to serve the public and end up suffering unnecessary stress and financial trouble due to a lack of coverage of some cancers that are an occupational hazard. I humbly request that you join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you,

Michael Hadlock

**SB-828-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:27:05 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanoa Shannon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kanoa Shannon and I am a 22 year FF with the County of Maui, Dept of Fire and Public Safety and also the Maui division chair for Hawai'i Firefighters Association.

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill (S.B.) 828. The intention of the bill, is to expand health and medical benefits for FF's under worker's compensation (WC) language and laws to include additional types of cancers.

Many different cancers are now becoming more prevalent in the fire service and is also a higher contributing factor to FF deaths during active duty as well as after retirement. Carcinogen exposures in many different incident situations hugely contribute through absorption, ingestion, and inhalation. We have many different levels of PPE that protect us in the different environments, but none of them protect us at a 100%, in fact most structural firefighting gear (aka turnouts) contain Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (aka PFAS). These 'forever chemicals' can lead toward serious health problems that include liver damage, thyroid disease, obesity and cancer.

The fire service commitment and dedication in public safety to our communities is hard to quantify and in this situation we ask for proactive support in progressing and including language and laws that protect FF health and medical benefits to all members in the fire service.

The usual generic mission statement for the fire service states, 'we are committed and dedicated to protect and preserve life, environment and property' with LIFE starting as the top priority. We

are asking in return nothing different, simply to support everything that it will take to commit and dedicate to protect and preserve our lives as FF's.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 828 as we ask the committee to pass this bill

A hui hou

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 828

Aloha,

My name is Jace K. Schaefer Jr., and I am the Kaua'i Division Recorder with the Hawaii Fire Fighters Association and a Fire Fighter with the Kaua'i Fire Department. In total I have 20 years of service in which I have dedicated my life to the people of Kaua'i. I'm here today to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 828, which will expand health and medical benefits for firefighters diagnosed with cancer.

For two decades, I've proudly served the people of Kaua'i and witnessed firsthand the dangers my fellow firefighters face every single day. We run towards danger when others run away, knowing the risks we take. We do it because we are dedicated to protecting our community. But the dangers don't always disappear when the fire is out. We carry them with us. The smoke, the toxins, the countless carcinogens we're exposed to takes a toll on our bodies.

We know the risks, but we accept them as part of the job. What we shouldn't have to accept is being denied the care we need when those risks become a reality. I've seen colleagues, friends, and brothers and sisters struck down by cancer. Strong, dedicated firefighters, men and women who put their lives on the line for others, suddenly facing a battle for their own lives.

The current workers compensation system often makes it difficult for these firefighters to get the support they need. The burden of proof falls on them to prove their cancer is directly linked to a specific fire, a near-impossible task given the latency period of many cancers and the multitude of exposures we face.

Senate Bill 828 offers a crucial change. It recognizes the inherent risks of our profession by creating a presumption of compensation for specific cancers diagnosed in firefighters with at least five years of service. This is not about giving firefighters special treatment; it's about acknowledging the sacrifices we make and ensuring that we are taken care of when we need it most. This bill isn't just about firefighters; it's about our families.

It's about ensuring that a firefighter diagnosed with cancer can focus on their treatment and recovery, not on fighting a bureaucratic system to get the care they deserve. It's about providing peace of mind to our families, knowing that if the worst happens, they will be supported.

Senate Bill 828 is a critical step in protecting those who protect others. I urge you to support this bill and help ensure that my fellow firefighters, and all future firefighters, receive the care and support they need when facing a cancer diagnosis.

Mahalo,

Jace Schaefer Jr.  
Kauai Fire Department  
HFFA Kauai Division Recorder

# FIRE FIGHTER CANCER AWARENESS MONTH: TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA



- Occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service.
- 75% of those honored at the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in September 2024 died of occupational cancer (230 of 306).
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies firefighting as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), IARC's highest carcinogenic hazard classification. This classification puts firefighting on par with tobacco and benzene as carcinogenic to humans.
- The IAFF and Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN) are committed to providing fire fighters with the best possible methods of prevention to reduce their risk of cancer and supporting those with a cancer diagnosis.
- Throughout January, we will be raising awareness of the cancer epidemic in the fire service by providing resources on the following topics:
  - Presumptive coverage and workers' compensation
  - Reproductive health
  - Behavioral health
  - Personal responsibility and culture change
- Resources include factsheets, calls to action, survivor stories, and more.
- Learn more at [iaff.org/cancer-awareness-month](https://iaff.org/cancer-awareness-month).

