

Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization
64-1067 Mamalahoa Hwy.
Kamuela, HI 96743

LATE TESTIMONY

January 31, 2008

**Re: Amend HB-2485 to include a Wildfire Mitigation Fund for
communities and nonprofits**

Dear Members of the Twenty-Fourth Legislature:

To effectively prevent wildfire disasters, a variety of mitigation activities across the wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas and neighboring landscape are required. Depending on the landscape conditions and fuel types, a variety of activities may be used, e.g. grazing, mechanical control, conversion of fuels, network of traditional fuelbreaks, aerial spraying, etc. So although implementing Firewise principles within built communities is important, it is critical to ensure that these activities are linked to the rest of the WUI area and the contexts and conditions of larger landscapes.

Funding Firewise alone will not provide the type of mitigation needed to prevent wildfire disasters.

A good example of why we need a mitigation fund not restricted to Firewise, is presented at Puako. The Puako Hazard Assessment (the basis for launching community Firewise activities) identifies key hazards and mitigations such as blocked access ways and the need for fuelbreak maintenance, but does not address the larger forest and grass management issue - the real threat to the community. If the entire forest is not managed for wildfire, on a windy day it is very possible that a fire started near the highway would quickly sweep through the forest, threatening lives and homes. This did happen in 1987 when several homes were lost to wildfire. Local communities need access to funding for mitigation activities that go beyond Firewise.

Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization has funded the majority of Firewise work on this Island. We support funding Firewise, but we know that without a broader approach to wildfire mitigation, including a Wildfire Mitigation fund that can be accessed by local communities Firewise will not be effectual in preventing wildfire disasters.

Sincerely,



Gail Byrne
Executive Director
Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization

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