

LATE
HB 2510 HD1

Testimony on **HB 2510 HD1** before the Committee on Legislative Management
Tuesday, February 12, 2008; 2:00 PM; Capitol Room 423

From: John T Harrison, PhD

Chair Magaoay, Vice Chair Tokioka, and Members of the Committee:

The Environmental Center on two prior occasions has conducted comprehensive studies of the State EIS system (Cox, et al., 1978; Rappa, et al., 1991.) Each of these prior studies was commissioned in response to recognition of the need to reconcile evolving State environmental management needs with the statutory and regulatory frameworks of the EIS system. Each contributed recommendations for amendments in provisions of these frameworks, most of which subsequently were adopted.

In the 17 years that have elapsed since the most recent review of the EIS system, numerous changes have occurred in the theory and practical application of environmental management. Advances in understanding of ecological relationships, growing appreciation of more subtle implications of human impacts on natural systems, and evolving policy formulations within government agencies with environmental management responsibilities have created new challenges for professional environmental managers. These challenges have led to both general and particular shortcomings in the ability of existing EIS procedures to deal adequately with new and continuing development proposals.

Findings of the Hawai'i Supreme Court published on August 31, 2007 illuminated in detail definitive legal standards relating to interpretation of the State's EIS law. Subsequent legislative proceedings further underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to evaluate existing law and practices relating to environmental management in Hawai'i. The breadth and scope of public concern regarding environmental planning, policy, and sustainable practices now is comparable to levels that induced the legislature to convene the Temporary Commission on Environmental Planning in 1973, ultimately leading to our EIS law (HRS 343) and our Environmental Policy Act (HRS 344.) No less comprehensive an effort now is warranted, and the findings in Section 1 of HB 2510 HD1 reflect this urgency. Anything less than a thorough examination and critique of the State's EIS infrastructure and environmental planning and policy processes would amount to simply tinkering at the margins of what has proven to be the foundation of Hawai'i's future.

I strongly support expedited approval and enactment of this measure, to allow the important work begun by Dr. Doak Cox, Governor Burns, Senator Kenny Brown, and countless others to be carried forward deliberately and comprehensively.

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