

LATE

Senate Energy and Environment Committee
February 12, 2008
Testimony offered by Rev. David Baumgart Turner
RE: SB2016 Relating to Global Warming Task Force

Chair Menor, Vice Chair Hooser, and Members of the Committee:

My name is David Baumgart Turner. I am one of the founding members of Hawaii Interfaith Power and Light, an organization seeking to mobilize the congregations of our faith community to respond to Global Warming. I am also a partner with Sustainability Partners, Inc. a firm that specializes in long-range planning for organizations and communities striving to build a sustainable future. I am testifying on my own behalf in favor of SB 2016.

There is almost unanimous scientific consensus on the present reality of global climate change and the deleterious impact of global climate change if societies as a whole choose to ignore, disregard or minimize these changes. There is also almost unanimous consensus that different regions and populations will be impacted by the effects of global climate change in different ways. Thus, though it is possible to look at documents such as the most recent report from the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change and obtain a comprehensive view of the impact of climate change on the planet as a whole, it is also important for planning purpose to assess such impacts on a specific region as well.

For example, on the second page of this testimony you will find a map created by Dr. Chip Fletcher, UH Faculty member in the Geology and Geophysics Department. This map shows the portion of the Waikiki area that would be vulnerable to flooding were there to be a 1 meter rise in Hawaii's tide. Were the map extended this area would also engulf most of downtown Honolulu, the reef runway and most of the Honolulu airport and much much more. Most scientific projections tell us that a minimum one-meter rise can be expected within this century. Clearly, the impact on our natural resources, our economy, and our population will be staggering.

There is therefore a great need for a task force similar to what is being proposed in SB2016 to be empowered to assess and propose effective adaptation responses to global warming in Hawaii. As a part of this legislation, I believe it would also be appropriate to add a section that allows for a preliminary compilation and distillation of the most recent research conducted that relates to the impact of climate change on Hawaii. For many years, different aspects of this global climate change equation, as it applies to Hawaii, have been explored by various government, for profit and non-profit entities. The resulting studies should be invaluable for the people of Hawaii but they are often narrowly focused and often inaccessible to all but a narrow slice of the scientific community. What is needed is a single document that summarizes the present research in a clear and concise manner, and is presented in a way that is accessible to those entrusted with planning responsibilities as well as the general public.

Done properly, such a document can serve as a key component for any future planning for the state of Hawaii which takes seriously the reality of global climate change. Without such a summary document, Hawaii faces the prospect of traveling into uncertain waters without even the semblance of a road map.

Although Hawaii only produces 0.3% of the green house gas emissions for the United States, legislation such as SB2016 continues to offer the opportunity for Hawaii to lead the nation in responding to global warming. The Hawaii State Legislature has already shown such leadership when it passed ACT 234. The passage of SB2016 will, I believe, serve to strengthen such landmark legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony this day.

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