

My name is **Kiana Kauwe** and **I support SB2363**. I am the Outreach and Education Coordinator for the Save Our Seal Campaign. The SOS Campaign is a coalition of 15 Hawaii and National NGOs committed to the Hawaiian monk seal recovery.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) population of Hawaiian monk seals continues to decline (approximately 4% annually), while the Main Hawaiian Island (MHI) population is slowly growing. This difference in survival rates and population growth underscores the hope the MHI offers to the recover of this species. Knowing that the MHI is critical to the long-term recovery, it's essential to support greater outreach and education *now*.

Misinformation and anti-seal sentiment has spread throughout all the islands. Three seals were shot and killed this past year. Many believe that seals are stealing all their fish, are not from the MHI and therefore do not want seals here. This information is simply not true and needs to be countered with outreach and education *now*.

Millions of tourists visit Hawaii each year. Nowhere along their trip from the plane to the beaches are they given information about how to be pono with our fragile environment. Volunteers monitoring seal haul outs see firsthand how oblivious some tourists are. They have stories about visitors getting right next to seals or even sitting their child on top of a seal to take a picture. Monk seals are large animals that can become very aggressive when approached. Visitors need to be educated for their own safety and to understand that this is a critically endangered animal that needs its space to rest.

Space for an endangered species kiosks would be a great outreach tool to educate both tourists and residents. Many residents and most tourists are not aware that the Hawaiian monk seal is critically endangered. For those that pass with limited interest, they would gain awareness through visuals of Hawaii's endangered species. For those that have a greater interest, they can pickup materials and learn how to protect and care for Hawaii's unique and fragile environment.

Supporting this measure would be a significant step the State can take to help in the recovery of our Hawaiian monk seal. Thank you.