



Sierra Club Hawai'i Chapter

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LATE TESTIMONY

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

March 2, 2011, 11:00 A.M.

(Testimony is 2 pages long)

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1405

Aloha Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Chapter of the Sierra Club, with 8,000 dues-paying members and supporters, supports HB 1405. This measure would require the Office of Planning to establish a statewide system of greenways and trails.

Hawai'i offers some of the most stunning hiking trails and beaches in the world, attracting residents and visitors alike for their beauty and challenge. Access to Hawaii's coast and mountain areas for recreational, cultural, or subsistence uses is a core value that residents have respected for generations. While we often take for granted our ability to enjoy and hike on our public land, we need to ensure that these historical trails are protected and connected together to offer maximum use. In addition, long-term planning helps ensure measures are put into place to encourage access to private property for recreational use such as hiking and camping.

Hawai'i's trails and greenway systems are already of an incredible value. The Sierra Club currently leads hundreds of hikes each year, with thousands of high school students, residents, and tourists participating each year, with a strong preference to highlighting the cultural and environmental background of Hawai'i. These programs are incredibly popular and help tie Hawai'i's youth to our *'aina* and the history of our islands.

While the Sierra Club supports the passage of the bill in its present form, we respectfully suggest it might be broadened to look include an examination of other elements of smart growth, including an analysis of the long-term land use planning needed to support Hawai'i's energy and food needs.

The Hawaii State Constitution, article XI, section, is explicit about the need to "conserve and protect agricultural lands, promote diversified agriculture, increase self-sufficiency," and the obligation to "assure the availability of agricultural suitable lands." Despite this rather clear directive, Hawai'i has moved in the wrong direction. We import approximately eighty-five per cent of our food. Currently, Hawaii has a fresh supply of produce for no more than ten days.

Ninety per cent of the beef, sixty-seven per cent of fresh vegetables, sixty-five per cent of fresh fruits, and seventy per cent of all milk consumed in the state are imported.

Further, over the past 50 years, approximately 53% of Class A and B lands have been reclassified to urban use. On Oahu alone, almost 4,000 acres of prime farmland have been reclassified in the past 20 years.

The figures involving energy self-sufficiency are surprisingly similar and bleak. Some 50 million barrels are imported annually, nearly 80% of which originate from foreign sources. In addition, over 805,000 tons of coal are imported into our state. These sources provide power for over 92% of Hawaii's electricity generation. The combustion of these resources also contributes over 23 million tons of climate changing greenhouse gas into our atmosphere annually.

Our current strategy for increasing diversified agriculture and promoting energy self-sufficiency plainly isn't working. The definition of stupidity is doing the same thing over again and expecting different results. Plainly Hawai'i needs to look at new solutions.

We believe the current language of HB 1405 could be modified to require the Office of Planning to look at the state's requirements for food and energy security and to make suggestions to ensure our land use planning advances these goals. If there is a willingness to move in this direction, we are happy to provide proposed amendments.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.