



Sierra Club Hawai'i Chapter

PO Box 2577, Honolulu, HI 96803
808.538.6616 hawaii.chapter@sierraclub.org

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

February 1, 2011, 8:00 A.M.
(Testimony is 1 page long)

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1577 WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Aloha Chair Morita and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Chapter of the Sierra Club supports the intent of HB 1577, which proposes a constitutional amendment to reaffirm and strengthen the State's commitment to environmental justice for populations disproportionately impacted by harmful environmental actions.

While we support this measure, we question whether the proposed language accomplishes the intent. Having a "commitment" is not the same as actually protecting minorities' environmental justice rights. Please consider this language instead:

Section 9. Each person has the right to a clean and healthful environment, as defined by laws relating to environmental quality, including control of pollution and conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources. Each person has the right to be free from any form of subconscious or institutional discrimination, such as actions that may disproportionately impact the health and environment of native Hawaiians, ethnic minorities, and low-income populations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

House Bill -- HB 1577

Testimony of Abbey Seth Mayer, Vice President, Government Relations
The Resort Group

Given to the House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
Feb. 1, 2011 8:00AM

Aloha Chair Morita, Vice Chair Coffman and Members of the Committee,

The Resort Group supports the proposed Amendment to Article XI, Section 9 of the Hawaii Constitution and thanks the Committee for hearing this measure.

Environmental justice surpasses the protection of natural resources for their own sake. Rather, environmental justice is focused on the protection of the poorest populations and communities, as well as all ethnic minorities, from bearing a disproportionate burden of environmental injuries and exposure to toxins.

The Resort Group supports environmental equity and believes sound environmental policy is also sound economic policy. In Hawaii, this truth is magnified by our dependence on a pristine environment for the ongoing sustainable success of our tourism industry, as well as for our residents' day-to-day lives -- for now and for our future.

We also note, as one example, that West Oahu and the Leeward Coast communities have borne the heaviest burden of Oahu's landfills over the past several decades. This burden has been ongoing, day-in and day-out for these communities' residents and visitors. The recent catastrophic failure of Waimanalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill highlights the terrible nature of this burden.

The Resort Group supports HB1577, insomuch as this proposed Amendment to Article XI, Section 9 will assist all Hawaii's people to achieve environmental equity.