

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i  
Supporting H.B. 2483 HD 1 Relating to Environment  
House Committee on Finance  
Tuesday, February 28, 2012, 2:00PM, Rm. 308

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*The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaii's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.*

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The Nature Conservancy supports H.B. 2483 HD1 to amend the Hawai'i State Planning Act to include guiding policies for adapting to the effects of climate change.

Climate change is an imminent and unprecedented threat to natural systems (e.g., forests, coastlines, coral reefs, wetlands) and to every person in Hawai'i that—whether they know it or not—depends on services from the natural environment for their livelihoods, health and welfare. Scientists have examined the evidence and rapid climate change is real; it is clearly caused by human activity; it is already a problem for habitat for plants and animals; and, if sources of CO<sub>2</sub> are not dramatically reduced, climate change could well have catastrophic results for people and their relationship with the natural environment.

Even if we drastically reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions now, we will still feel the effects of climate change. In Hawai'i, science indicates that this may include:

- More frequent and more severe storms, and increased runoff and siltation;
- Overall, less rainfall and therefore less fresh water;
- Higher temperatures that may affect the health of forested watersheds;
- Climatic conditions even more conducive to invasive plants, insects and diseases;
- Sea level rise and high wave events that will harm coastal areas and groundwater systems; and
- Ocean acidification that will inhibit the growth of protective coral reefs.

We must plan and implement mitigative and adaptive measures to ensure the resilience of our natural and human systems. Two of the most effective tools we have to help address the effects of climate change in Hawai'i is to protect our forests and coral reefs. Healthy and diverse Hawaiian forests act like a sponge, collecting rain and moisture from passing clouds, slowly delivering fresh water into streams and aquifers, absorbing greenhouse gases, and reducing runoff and siltation into near shore waters during storm events. Healthy coral reefs that are free of non-native invasive algae and runoff are better able to withstand the effects of temperature changes and acidification, while continuing to provide food and storm protection for coastal areas.

We support this measure and look forward to being a part of successful adaptation strategies in our area of expertise related to the natural environment of these islands.

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## COMMITTEE ON ON FINANCE

Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair

Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair

2 pm

Tuesday, February 28, 2012

Conference Room 225

## HB 2483 HD1 - RELATING TO ENVIRONMENT

### Comments and Proposed Amendments

My name is Shannon Wood, the president & co-founder of the *Windward Ahupua'a Alliance*, a 501c3 Hawai'i non-profit corporation, which was established in July, 2002. *WAA* works to educate & inform residents, visitors, businesses, policymakers at all three levels of government, and the media about the short and long-term impacts of climate change, global warming & rising sea levels around the world - including both legislative and administrative policy changes.

I've been professionally involved with these issues for nearly 15 years now and have not only focused on public policy issues but also have taken a number of collegiate-level marine & climate science classes and service project trips to learn more about climate change impacts on the world. I am also about to start an on-line *Civil Engineering* program later this spring in order to get the necessary qualifications so that my technical comments will be accepted.

In addition to my work here in Hawai'i, for the past three years, I've been actively involved in a national advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. and at the *United Nations* in New York City focusing on climate change/rising sea levels impacting the *Pacific Ocean*.

This *Abercrombie Administration* bill along with the *Senate* version - SB 2745 - caught me completely off-guard. After all, I've been working on these issues in this building for a very long time; however, no one told me about the Ocean Resources Management Plan Policy Group and Working Group meetings, the significant public policy shift away from mitigation to adaptation - two very different concepts - and these two bills.

If you make a decision today to fund this bill, there are three main points I'd like you to consider.

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The first issue deals with the Ocean Resources Management Plan Policy Group and Working Group.

According to the bill, the two groups, along with other stakeholders from academia, business and Native Hawaiian communities, met for a two-day conference in August 2011 to address a wide range of climate change issues to implement the Framework for Climate Change Adaptation in Hawai'i (November 2009). Monthly meetings have continued during which the foundation for this bill was laid out.

Sounds great - except the first time I heard/read about the groups was in reading the two bills. I asked a number of environmental/renewable energy colleagues as to whether they took part and how did they find out about it.

Several people did say that participation in the two-day meeting was **BY INVITATION ONLY** and that the follow-up meetings have not been publicized because they don't want public participation. I'm not sure why.

Last week, I was told that I could attend the next monthly meeting, but I wouldn't be able to participate in the discussions although I could certainly take notes.

The second issue deals with the bill's vagueness in its core language and the lack of legislative recommendations to address the critical issues we have to address NOW - not in the dim & distant future.

Partisan political realities make it very clear that there could be a significant shift in the both the *United States Senate* as well as in the *White House* plus an increase in the number of climate change deniers in the *United States House of Representatives*.

Are you aware that these deniers have had a major impact on the public's thinking in this country? Four years ago, about 75% of our population believed that climate change was on its way and we had to do something.

Recent polls indicate that the percentage of people in this country believing that climate change is imminent now hovers around 45%.

We have to protect ourselves here in Hawai'i by taking charge of our future because we cannot depend upon our national government to protect us from scientific naysayers.

Instead what the *Abercrombie Administration* and many supporters of this bill are recommending is something that contains mooshy, feel-good language that doesn't really do anything to mitigate - or adapt - to what Hawai'i is going to be like 40 years from now.

- (1) Ensure that Hawaii's people are educated, informed, and aware of the impacts climate change may have on their communities;
- (2) Encourage community stewardship groups and local stakeholders to participate in planning and implementation of climate change policies;
- (3) Invest in continued monitoring and research of Hawaii's climate and the impacts of climate change on the State;
- (4) Consider Native Hawaiian traditional knowledge and practices in planning for the impacts of climate change;
- (5) Encourage the preservation and restoration of natural landscape features (such as coral reefs, beaches and dunes, forests, streams, floodplains, and wetlands) that have the inherent capacity to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts of climate change;
- (6) Explore adaptation strategies that moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities in response to actual or expected climate change impacts to the natural and built environments;
- (7) Promote sector resilience (in areas such as water, roads, airports, and public health) by

- encouraging the identification of climate change threats, assessment of potential consequences, and evaluation of adaptation options;
- (8) Foster cross-jurisdictional collaboration between county, state, and federal agencies and partnerships between government and private entities and other non-governmental entities, including non-profit entities;
  - (9) Use management and implementation approaches that encourage the continual collection, evaluation, and integration of new information and strategies into new and existing practices, policies, and plans;
  - (10) Encourage planning and management of the natural and built environments that effectively integrate climate change policy.

The third issue has to do with money. According to staffers, the working group is tucked into the *Coastal Zone Management* program funded by *NOAA*. Funding for its current iteration is not needed; however, if you decide to add state money to the program, then I urge that you put the following into the bill's language :

1. Require the *Office of Planning* and the working group ensure that there public outreach including full participation in the meetings along with educating & informing residents, visitors, businesses, policymakers at all three levels of government, and the media about the short and long-term impacts of climate change, global warming & rising sea levels here in Hawai'i and around the world;
2. Require that annual reports including legislative recommendations be made to the *Legislature*;
3. Require that regular meetings be held not only with Hawai'i's *Congressional* delegation but also with national policy leaders in both the public & private sector on the impacts of climate change here in the Pacific - especially Hawai'i.

*Mahalo* for the opportunity to present my grave concerns about this bill and to present these suggested changes.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
February 28, 2012  
11:00 a.m.  
State Capitol - Conference Room 308  
Agenda #5**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2483 HD1 RELATING TO ENVIRONMENT**

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii supports the intent of H.B. No. 2483. The bill proposes to create a climate change adaptation policy for the State of Hawaii by amending the Hawaii State Planning Act to include climate change adaptation priority guidelines.

The Chamber is the largest business organization in Hawaii, representing more than 1,000 businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the "Voice of Business" in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of its members, which employ more than 200,000 individuals, to improve the state's economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

As drafted, the bill proposes to amend Chapter 226, HRS to require the office of planning to focus on preparing for and adapting to the expected impacts of climate change. The purpose of this bill is to encourage collaboration and cooperation between county, state, and federal agencies, policy makers, businesses, and other community partners to plan for the impacts of climate change and avoid, minimize, or mitigate loss of life, land, and property of future generations.

The Chamber believes that guidance through effective public policy legislation is the first step the State needs to develop plans for the anticipated impacts of climate change.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our views.

**BIA-HAWAII**  
**BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

**Testimony to House Committee on Finance**

Tuesday, February 28, 2012

2:00 p.m.

Capitol Room 308

**RE: H.B. 2483 HD1, Relating to Environment**

Good morning Chair Oshiro, Vice-Chair Lee, and members of the Committee:

My name is Gladys Quinto Marrone, Government Relations Director for the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA-Hawaii). Chartered in 1955, BIA-Hawaii is a professional trade organization affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders, representing the building industry and its associates. BIA-Hawaii takes a leadership role in unifying and promoting the interests of the industry to enhance the quality of life for the people of Hawaii.

BIA-Hawaii **supports the intent** of H.B. 2483 HD1, which proposes to create a climate change adaptation policy for the State of Hawaii by amending the Hawaii State Planning Act to include climate change adaptation priority guidelines.

As drafted, the bill proposes to amend Chapter 226, HRS to require the office of planning to focus on preparing for and adapting to the expected impacts of climate change. The purpose of this bill is to encourage collaboration and cooperation between county, state, and federal agencies, policy makers, businesses, and other community partners to plan for the impacts of climate change and avoid, minimize, or mitigate loss of life, land, and property of future generations.

BIA-Hawaii believes that guidance through effective public policy legislation is the first step the State needs to develop plans for the anticipated impacts of climate change.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our views.