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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawaii  
2 association of conservation districts, through coordination,  
3 facilitation, and partnerships, assists government agencies in  
4 identifying and implementing culturally-sensitive projects and  
5 practices to ensure the protection of Hawaii's environment.  
6 Chapter 180, Hawaii Revised Statutes, authorizes the soil and  
7 water conservation districts to operate as government  
8 subdivisions to educate the public and construct and maintain  
9 conservation projects and programs in Hawaii. The Hawaii  
10 association of conservation districts comprises sixteen  
11 districts representing every community on all major islands of  
12 Hawaii. Each of the sixteen districts is governed by five  
13 volunteer directors and is supported by staff. The department  
14 of land and natural resources provides administration and  
15 maintains oversight authority of the soil and water conservation  
16 districts.



1           Soil and water conservation districts have worked to  
2 improve Hawaii's environment and economy through major projects  
3 over the past sixty years; collaborative efforts with partners  
4 and government agencies have brought millions of dollars to  
5 Hawaii to improve farm practices, reduce erosion, improve ocean  
6 and drinking water quality, fight invasive species, improve  
7 public safety, protect property, conserve water, and strengthen  
8 the economy. The soil and water conservation districts also  
9 provide educational and community support for conservation  
10 awareness. The districts participate in resource conservation  
11 and development projects and statewide high school programs.  
12 The districts also introduce conservation principles in  
13 elementary schools.

14           Additionally, soil and water conservation districts assist  
15 with reviewing each county's grading permits and conservation  
16 plans. County grading permit reviews and conservation plans are  
17 critical to preserve the environment, stimulate the economy, and  
18 maintain individual livelihoods. The demand and accompanying  
19 workload of the conservation districts have increased  
20 dramatically with population growth and land use changes. The  
21 districts receive hundreds of requests for conservation plans



1 and county grading permit reviews each year. As a result,  
2 districts are currently struggling to keep pace with the demand,  
3 and adequate funding for the work of the Hawaii association of  
4 conservation districts is in serious jeopardy at a time of  
5 critical demand for its services. Soil and water conservation  
6 districts are authorized to accept contributions in money,  
7 services, materials or otherwise from any source, and use or  
8 expend them in carrying out its operation.

9 The legislature also finds that the lack of funding for the  
10 Hawaii association of conservation districts results in many  
11 negative impacts on agriculture, despite efforts to build the  
12 agricultural industry in Hawaii. Due to funding shortages,  
13 services provided by the Hawaii association of conservation  
14 districts are limited to entities within priority watershed  
15 areas that have approved watershed plans, although many of  
16 Hawaii's farming areas are not within priority watersheds.  
17 Additionally, many farmers in Maui county who require a grubbing  
18 and grading permit and are referred by the county to a soil and  
19 water conservation district will go unassisted due to funding  
20 shortages. The service of farm plan preparation will no longer  
21 be available to landowners who are requested by Maui county to



1 obtain a farm plan. Furthermore, new farmers, many of whom are  
2 immigrants and often unfamiliar with United States laws, will  
3 not be educated by soil and water conservation district staff on  
4 conservation measures or advised to pursue environmental  
5 stewardship as a core value while seeking economic viability.

6 The purpose of this Act is to make an appropriation for the  
7 operational expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii  
8 association of conservation districts.

9 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$450,000 or so much  
11 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2017-2018 and the  
12 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
13 2018-2019 for the operational expenses and staffing costs of the  
14 Hawaii association of conservation districts.

15 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
16 of land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

17 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2017.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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# H.B. NO. 785

**Report Title:**

Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts; Appropriation

**Description:**

Makes an appropriation to the department of land and natural resources for the operational expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii association of conservation districts.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

