

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF  
HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**Testimony of  
SUZANNE D. CASE  
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on  
WATER AND LAND**

**Wednesday, February 1, 2017  
2:45 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 709  
RELATING TO TRAILS**

Senate Bill 709 proposes to appropriate funds to support the State Na Ala Hele Trails and Access Program to improve access to and maintenance of state controlled recreational trails statewide and require the operational budget for Na Ala Hele to be increased. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

According to the 2015 Hawaii State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), there are two areas regarding public hiking identified for improvement, (a) *demand for more trails or access to mauka lands* and (b) *the need for trail facilities and maintenance*. Senate Bill 709 will directly address these pressing issues.

The State has a justifiable concern in being able to address and support the rising number of trail issues, many of which are associated with a significant increase in people wishing to access trails and the rise of social media. According to the review of rescue data from the Honolulu Fire Department, there has been an increase in mountain rescues from the year 2006 to 2016. Three hundred and fifty mountain rescues were recorded last year, which is almost three times the amount of documented rescues from 2000 to 2005. In addition, over the last 10 years, the amount of annual rescues has noticeably increased over previous years by 10% to 20% per year. If this trend continues, it is projected that the number of rescues will potentially double in the next eight years or less. That's the equivalent of two rescues a day. Currently, the Na Ala Hele Program is using rescue data to identify areas with high rates of rescues. Once identified, the program would like to direct on-the-ground management resources to these locations or "Hot Spots" in an attempt to mitigate future rescues. Further funding would support this effort.

**SUZANNE D. CASE**  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**KEKOA KALUHIWA**  
FIRST DEPUTY

**JEFFREY T. PEARSON, P.E.**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife has a current statewide inventory of 128 trail-and-road features spanning approximately 855 miles. Due to budget and staffing limitations, the level of maintenance on these features varies. Some high use areas, such as Manoa Falls Trail on Oahu, require new sustainable trail design standard to improve public safety and to lessen the frequency for maintenance. According to a recent site visit and report from the United States Forest Service, current improvements to the Manoa Falls Trail would cost over \$83,000.00. This amount is over half of what the total budget is for Oahu trails alone.

On Hawaii Island, the Muliwai Trail provides a difficult hike over eighteen miles of scenic coastal areas through numerous streams and waterfalls, yet the Hawaii Island Na Ala Hele Program is hard-pressed to keep up with regularly scheduled maintenance. Locating suitable Off-Highway-Vehicle (OHV) sites statewide that meet the needs of all OHV users—hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, hunters, and dirt bikers—is a challenge. Additionally, vandalism of signs and other infrastructure maintenance requires resources. Working to protect and expand legal access to trails and public rights-of-way is another important part of the Na Ala Hele Program that requires specific legal and land disposition expertise.

The Department has an obligation to address all of the needs listed above. However, it is clear that the capacity to manage the program needs to be expanded. More positions and funding for operations would greatly improve the program's ability to keep up with a growing demand.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

**MECA**  
**Maunawili Estates Community Association**

RE: Testimony for SB 709

Aloha Honorable Senators,

We write to you from Maunawili Estates Community Association, MECA, a residential community of 254 homes built mostly in the 1970's. Our community is made up of local families and Kupuna who have long been good contributing members to Hawaii.

In 1986 the City and the State's DLNR opened up a trail to Maunawili Falls in our residential community on private land. In the beginning things were not too bad, a few hikers enjoying the tropical rain forest. With tourism booming and our population rising, today, over 1,000 hikers per week converge on our community. This is a trail that was built with no security, no parking lot, no bathrooms, no trash pickup, no maintenance budget and no major improvements for 18 years even as use escalated.

Today our community and the Aina is left with a big mess. Here are a few examples of this neglectful situation, much of this has been reported by the press:

1. Just in the last 4 weeks there have been 6 rescues on this trail, 3 of them by helicopter, 2 of them at night. HPD is constantly having to ticket cars blocking driveways and streets. All of this first responder activity is wasted taxpayer dollars due to a neglectful situation.
2. Gross overuse and years of no maintenance has left this trail destroyed. Hikers leave trash and human waste in the rain forest and all of this washes down to Kawai Nui Marsh. The Ahupua'a is being desecrated.
3. Several Japanese websites say "don't go to this trail it is filthy". How long will it be before Japanese tourist and others decide Hawaii is no longer a clean and safe place to visit?
4. Our children can't play in their own front yards as hikers race around looking for parking in front of homes often blocking driveways and streets.
5. Our kupuna struggle to maneuver past open car doors and hikers congregating in our residential streets destroying private property, using hoses and leaving trash, dirty diapers and muddy shoes for residents to cleanup every day.

MECA is supportive of SB 709 – "Relating to Trails" and SB 705 as we feel it is a step in the right direction to help address the State's sorely underfunded DLNR Na Ala Hele trail system.

Hawaii's "goose that lays the golden egg" is our precious Aina and our people. Malama Hawaii, please support SB 709 and SB 705.

Chris Nakamatsu  
Chair, MECA Falls Task Force

Cheryl Tom Parker  
President, MECA

**MECA**  
**Maunawili Estates Community Association**

The following pages are pictures that show how badly we need to better fund the State's Na Ala Hele Trail system:

Here's what this trail looks like today are years of neglect, our Aina is suffering:



Human waste flows to our marshes and trash washes into our storm drain systems:



**MECA**  
**Maunawili Estates Community Association**

First responders are constantly being called because the trail is so badly destroyed. Resources and money are wasted on being reactive and not proactive in caring for our Aina.



Our community is under siege as there is no parking lot or bathrooms or security.



**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 2:51 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** almurak@nhlchi.org  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Alan                | Individual          | Comments Only             | No                        |

Comments: Please support this important cultural resource protection program. It needs the enhanced funding with the mounting threats of trail loss from the steady pattern of large land parcel sales that erodes trail rights of the public and Hawaiian practitioners trying to gain access to the shoreline and mountain areas.

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 2:35 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** ttaira@hawaii.rr.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tracy Carnate       | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: I support Senate Bill 709 that appropriates funds to DLNR's Na Ala Hele program to improve access to and maintenance of state controlled trails. It will benefit local and visiting hikers to increase safety on Hawaii's trails.

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 10:53 AM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** christina.y.bauske@hawaii.gov  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Christina Zimmerman | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: I am in full support of this bill. As a lifelong resident of Maunawili, I understand the impacts of heavy trail usage on hikers and residents. When the trail was managed by Na Ala Hele, it still was not in the best condition, as their resources were not what it should be and we saw many injuries requiring HFD, HPD, and EMT response. Please help to make hiking on state managed trails a happy and safe experience for Hawaii's residents and visitors and reduce the strain on state and county resources.

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 10:25 AM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** ana@beachhousehawaii.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ana Mruray          | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: I ask that you support Senate Bill 709 to appropriate funds to DLNR's Na Ala Hele program to improve access to and maintenance of state controlled trails. Na Ala Hele needs more resources to do their job. And in the end, we'll all benefit.

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, January 27, 2017 9:32 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** jamesjtz@aol.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/27/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| James Gauer         | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: Quality family time is spent on these trails, please maintain their beauty, enforce environmentally friendly rules.

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**Sent:** Friday, January 27, 2017 5:24 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** prentissc001@hawaii.rr.com  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM\*

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/27/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Charles Prentiss    | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 4:35 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** svilliger@aol.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| steve villiger      | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: Greetings, I am an avid trail user. I hike, trail run, and mountain bike. I am strongly in favor of supporting Na Ala Hele with more funding. I have been a full time resident of Oahu since 1983. Thank you, Steve Villiger Haleiwa 808-277-3730

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# SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAII

## MĀLAMA I KA HONUA. *Cherish the Earth.*

### Senate Committee on Water and Land

Wednesday, February 1, 2017 2:45PM Room 224

**In OPPOSITION** **SB709** Relating to trails

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Aloha Chairman Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and members of the Water, Land Committee,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i offers this testimony **in support** for HB 709, seeking to appropriate much-needed funds to the operational budget of the na ala hele trail program of Hawai'i.

One of the founding principles of the Sierra Club is to "explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth." The organization's founder, John Muir, knew that when people get out into the wilderness, they learn to respect and value the importance of our environment. John Muir spent a majority of his life exploring many of the trails and paths in what would become state and national parks, and to this day the Sierra Club seeks to embody this spirit of enjoyment, protection, and conservation through our work.

The Hawai'i chapter of the Sierra Club has utilized the copious trail, state, and national park system throughout the state to educate students, visitors, and concerned residents on the importance of environmentalism, as well as demonstrate the beauty of Hawai'i's unique natural spaces. Last year, our organization lead or participated in 205 hikes statewide and worked to maintain dozens of public and private trails.

We know firsthand that our state's trail systems are in dire need of maintenance and protection. Millions of tourists who visit our islands use these trails everyday, but the funds to protect them have declined significantly every year. HB 709 seeks to correct this oversight by allocating an inflation-corrected amount funds to the operation of the na ala hele trail program. In order to continue enjoying the natural spaces of our marvelous state, we must be able to put our money where our mouth is.

The Sierra Club of Hawai'i strongly urges the committee to pass HB 709. Thank you very much for this opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Mahalo,

Martha Townsend  
Director

**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2017 8:48 AM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** chillaxinwear@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 2/1/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kyle Paredes        | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: I fully support this bill because it will allow for better management and care of our hiking, biking, and recreational trail network.

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## TESTIMONY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Committee on Water and Land

Re: S.B. 709

**Hearing date: February 1, 2017, 2:45 p.m.**

I am writing **in strong support of S.B. 709**. I am a volunteer outings leader for Sierra Club, O'ahu Group submitting testimony as a private individual. Many visitors hike with Sierra Club or Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Club because they are interested in hiking. Visitors express astonishment that Hawai'i's trails are so poorly maintained and barely signposted, as if we were trying to discourage people from hiking. It is embarrassing for me to explain that Na Ala Hele relies upon volunteers, prisoners, and Boy Scouts to do much of the trail maintenance on state trails.

Sierra Club has partnered with Na Ala Hele on many trail improvement projects over the past several decades. Obviously, volunteers cannot do everything using hand tools and muscle. Professional engineering and power equipment is required for many trail improvement projects and for tree removal. There must be dedicated funding for hiking trails, just as we fund other infrastructure that supports the visitor industry such as beach replenishment.

The problems encountered with access to the Maunawili Falls Trail, Ha'iku Stairs, and Lanikai Pillboxes trails, among others, are a result of the enormous demand for hiking trails on the part of both visitors and locals, coupled with the dismal financial support for Na Ala Hele. A properly funded state trails program would be able to improve trails to better handle the crowds and disperse traffic throughout hiking trails around the islands.

Please support S.B. 709.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Gwen Sinclair

1930 'Ālewa Dr.

Honolulu HI 96817-1214

gsinclair@gmail.com

**Community Supporter—General**

Personal Testimony Presented Before  
the Senate Committee on Water and Land  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
and  
House Committee on Water and Land  
Rep. Ryan I. Yamane , Chair  
Rep. Sam Satoru Kong , Vice Chair  
Wednesday, March 21, 2012  
by  
Edwin Mersino

Support for SB 709, Relating to the Trails

Chairmen Rhoads and Yamane, and members of the Senate Committee on Water and Land:  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 709, which makes an appropriation for Na Ala Hele to improve access to and maintenance of state controlled recreational trails statewide. My name is Edwin Mersino. I am an interested member of the community.

For over forty years I have hiked Hawaii's trails leading various groups in valleys, on ridges and along the shorelines. Many of the hikes have been for the purpose of clearing and rebuilding trails, planting native species and removing invasive ones. Often the hikes been for educational or recreational purposes.

Over the years I have seen how the trails have been left to deteriorate from the natural processes and overuse. Long ago few ventured onto the trails and they suffered from neglect and were kept from disappearing entirely by the efforts of volunteers and the small Na Ala Hele staff. In the last ten years trail use has sky rocketed. This is due in large part because of the increase in visitors who like to hike and enjoy our wonderful natural environment.

Many trails have become very eroded to the point where they are hazardous to those using them and the environment. It has almost become impossible for the volunteers and the minimal Na Ala Hele staff to keep up.

I strongly encourage our legislators to support SB 709 and give Na Ala Hele the ability it needs to maintain Hawaii's trails.



**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 7:59 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** bigredvt@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Travis Counsell     | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: Supporting Na Ala Hele is very important. With more and more people visiting and living in Hawaii, proper access to nature is vital. Increasing funding to Na Ala Hele will allow for maintaining and expanding trails that are used by thousands of people each year. Don't let expanding urbanism overshadow the importance of access to nature! Please support this bill.

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 6:18 PM  
**To:** WTL Testimony  
**Cc:** jamonless@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB709 on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM

**SB709**

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WTL on Feb 1, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Andres Gonzalo Alvo | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments: Please support this, the group is doing a great service for our outdoors community

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