



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAII
MĀLAMA I KA HONUA. *Cherish the Earth.*

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Tuesday, March 27, 2018 2:55M Conference Room 224

In **SUPPORT** of SCR183 Relating to Helicopters

LATE

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Ruderman, and members of the GVO Committee,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i, a member of the Common Good Coalition, **supports SCR 183**, urging the various government entities to develop, update, and introduce policies related to helicopter air tours at the state and national level.

The Sierra Club of Hawai'i, dedicated to exploring, enjoying, and protecting these unique and beautiful islands we call home, have engaged in decades-long efforts to keep valuable public areas free of pollution, including noise pollution. We support measures that seek to ensure public health and safety, concurrent with protecting our wild areas from unnecessary urban intrusions.

Helicopter traffic is a significant problem for our rural communities and wild natural areas. At Hawaii Volcano National Park, air traffic has increased since 2011 to more than 200 over flights per day. In addition to this route, several tour companies add "waterfall viewing" over the Wailuku river to their tours. This portion of the route results in tours circling over the vicinity of the Hawaii Medical Center, the Veterans Center and residential areas. Air tour companies also currently have a waiver that allows them to fly below altitudes established FAA rules under certain weather conditions. Above ground altitude of air tours is not tracked, except near the Hilo airport.

Residents are documenting their disturbing experiences with helicopters. One man testified that when helicopters go over his land his wife can't hear him from ten feet away. There are reports of children terrified by helicopters. One woman reported a friend fell out of a window she was repairing and was injured when startled by a helicopter. People have taken matters into their own hands by writing large signs on their roofs urging the helicopters to go stay away.

It's well known that intrusive noise stifles learning and interferes with social interactions. According to the World Health Organization, chronic excessive noise impairs early childhood development and education, which may have lifelong effects on academic achievement and health. "Studies and statistics on the effects of chronic exposure to aircraft noise on children have found consistent evidence that noise exposure harms cognitive performance; consistent association with impaired well-being and motivation to a slightly more limited extent; and moderate evidence of effects on blood pressure and catecholamine hormone secretion."

And if it's doing all this to humans, what's happening to wildlife? This why we strongly urge state and federal officials to better regulate helicopter air traffic.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.