



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Legislative Testimony

**SB1459 SD2 HD1**  
**RELATING TO THE STATE SURFING COMMISSION**  
House Committee on Finance

March 29, 2019

2:00 p.m.

Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1459 SD2 HD1, which would establish a State Surfing Commission to promote surfing locally and globally, while recognizing the distinct Native Hawaiian cultural heritage of the sport and its connection to Hawai‘i.

Surfing has deep cultural roots and its identity as a Hawaiian sport persisted throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first westerners to arrive in Hawai‘i documented the Native Hawaiian people’s love of surfing, and historians referred to surfing as the “national sport” of our kūpuna. However, like many other cultural practices, surfing underwent a period of marked decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Hawaiian population collapsed from foreign diseases and as missionaries discouraged native traditions. Nevertheless, many Native Hawaiians continued to enjoy the sport, including some of our highest royalty such as Prince Kūhiō and Princess Kai‘ulani.

Surfing saw a resurgence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although its cultural roots and Hawaiian identity has been lost in its globalization. Roughly one hundred years ago when Duke Kahanamoku began sharing surfing with the world, it gained international interest and has since exploded in popularity. Surfing is now a global sport and multi-billion dollar commercial industry, with people surfing almost anywhere there are waves, including remote tropical islands, frigid lakes, tidal bores in rivers, and even man-made pools. Unfortunately, as surfing spread and evolved, its Native Hawaiian roots became less associated with the sport.

OHA believes that recent efforts such as the Eddie and the instant Commission provide an opportunity to revive Hawaiian pride in surfing. In November 2018, a coalition of Native Hawaiian organizations, including OHA, joined the Eddie Aikau family to help bring back The Eddie Big Wave Invitational, the world’s preeminent and most-watched surf contest. One of the goals in supporting “The Eddie” was to celebrate the life and legacy of legendary Hawaiian waterman Eddie Aikau. An additional goal was to use the event to reclaim surfing as a Hawaiian cultural practice. OHA believes that The Eddie presents a great opportunity to encourage more Native Hawaiians to participate in their national sport, and to remind the world of the history and cultural heritage of surfing.

OHA supports this bill’s proposed State Surfing Commission as an additional avenue to promote the unique connections Hawai‘i and the Hawaiian people maintain with surfing.

Accordingly, we respectfully urge your Committee to **PASS** this measure. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-1459-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/28/2019 1:33:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/29/2019 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jodi Wilmott	World Surf League	Support	No

Comments:

*Aloha Honorable Chair Sylvia Luke and Finance Committee;*

*On behalf of the World Surf League, I support Bill 1459 and would like to express our appreciation for the LAB Committee recognizing the value of having a World Surf League representative on the board.*

*Hawaii holds a very unique opportunity to further actualize its position as the global home of all things surfing.*

*We support the purpose of SB1459 and a state commission on surfing: to globally promote surfing and education regarding the sport's unique connection to Hawaii as a native Hawaiian cultural practice, and the World Surf League can play a vital and unique supporting role on the committee since we bring the following opportunities and experience to the table:*

- The highest profile globally broadcast international events that feature Hawaiian destinations and Hawaiian surfers;*
- The annual world title deciding championship events and high profile big wave events;*
- Established global media and distribution platforms and channels;*
- The largest global audience in surfing that aligns with Hawaii's key tourism markets;*
- An established career path for Hawaii surfers and event service providers;*

*- A 40-year track record with local community partnerships as well as significant investment in the local environment and local surfing events and groups.*

*In light of the above, the World Surf League encourages you to pass this bill and looks forward to continuing to contribute to the goals of Hawaii and the Surfing Committee by way of a representative on the board.*

*Thank you,*

*Jodi Wilmott*

**SB-1459-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/28/2019 8:54:57 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/29/2019 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Carol Philips	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair Sylvia Luke and Finance Committee;

Please pass this bill out of committee. Surfing is Hawaii's gift to the world and is practiced in over 162 countries world wide by over 35 million people. The sport of surfing is also going to be in the 2020 Olympics in Japan. There are so many opportunities for Hawaii in surfing that formal governmental support will help. Please vote yes on this bill.

Warmest Aloha,

Carol

**LATE**

**SB-1459-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/28/2019 8:35:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/29/2019 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Dylan P. Armstrong	Oahu County Democrats	Support	No

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and Members of the Committee on Finance,**

**RE: SB1459 SD2 HD1, Relating to a Surfing Commission.**

The O'ahu County Democrats are in support of the promotion and preservation of our unique and honored culture.

As surfing is of historical, cultural and economic significance to Hawai'i, setting up a surfing commission is a reasonable and wise idea. Hawai'i perfected and exported surfing, by way of the writings of Mark Twain, the motion picture industry, and over a century of worldwide tourism to our islands. We lose out on tourism revenue any time surfing-linked businesses and events choose to go elsewhere. As our brand as a destination is inevitably linked to this sport, developing an intentioned authority on surfing lends itself to better planning.

Again, I write in support of SB1459 SD2 HD1. We thank the Committee for its consideration.

Respectfully,

DYLAN P. ARMSTRONG, VICE CHAIR

O'AHU COUNTY COMMITTEE, O'AHU COUNTY DEMOCRATS

**SB-1459-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/29/2019 7:50:18 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/29/2019 2:00:00 PM

**LATE**

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Stuart Coleman	Surfrider Foundation	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen and Members of the Committee,

The Surfrider Foundation's Hawaii Chapters support this bill to create a statewide Surfing Commission to help promote this unique sport that is Hawaii's gift to the world. With surfing becoming an official sport in the Olympics, now is a good time to find ways to promote the sport and Hawaii as the birthplace of the sport. Though we would like more clarity about what exactly this Commission will do, how often they will meet and if there will be any funds allocated to it, we support the concept and believe it's important for both locals and tourists alike to understand the historical and cultural aspects of surfing. This kind of education and promotion will help Hawaii reclaim its rightful title as the birthplace of modern surfing. Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha, Stuart Coleman, Hawaii Manager, Surfrider Foundation, 2927 Hibiscus Pl., Hon., HI 96815