



Legislative Testimony

**SB1459**

**RELATING TO THE STATE SURFING COMMISSION**

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development and Tourism

February 4, 2019

3:00 p.m.

Room 414

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Committee on Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment will recommend that the Board of Trustees **SUPPORT** SB1459, which would establish a State Surfing Commission to promote surfing locally and globally while also recognizing the distinct Native Hawaiian cultural heritage of the sport and its connection to Hawai‘i.

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, including Prince Kūhiō and Princess Kai‘ulani.

A century ago, surfing saw a resurgence and subsequent explosion in popularity, particularly after Duke Kahanamoku began sharing surfing with the world. 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.

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. The other 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 sees and supports this bill’s proposed State Surfing Commission as another avenue to promote the unique Hawai‘i and Hawaiian connections of surfing.

To provide clarity on the selection process for the Hawaiian community members of the Commission, and to further advance the goal of restoring recognition to surfing's historic and cultural heritage, OHA respectfully recommends replacing lines 16 through 20 on page three of the bill with the following language:

“(B) Two members shall be appointed by the governor from the community-at-large;

(C) Two members from the Hawaiian community demonstrating an understanding of the culture and history of surfing shall be appointed by the governor from a list of nominees submitted by the office of Hawaiian affairs.”

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



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LT. GOVERNOR

**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310  
P.O. BOX 541  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
Phone Number: 586-2850  
Fax Number: 586-2856  
cca.hawaii.gov

CATHERINE P. AWAKUNI COLÓN  
DIRECTOR

JO ANN M. UCHIDA TAKEUCHI  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
Monday, February 4, 2019  
3:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 414**

**On the following measure:  
S.B. 1459, RELATING TO THE STATE SURFING COMMISSION**

Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

My name is Catherine Awakuni Colón, and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA or Department). The Department opposes this bill, which proposes to establish a state commission on surfing within the DCCA to promote surfing and education regarding surfing's unique connection to Hawaii.

While the Department recognizes the importance of surfing to this state, it has concerns about how those goals would be achieved and therefore does not support the bill as drafted. First, this measure provides that the commission "shall serve in an advisory capacity to state agencies to promote the surfing industry and educate people about the cultural and historical significance of surfing." As such, the commission would require oversight by a department or an agency well-versed in the sport of surfing and sports tourism generally. These activities are well outside the jurisdiction of the DCCA, which serves the public through business registration and professional licensure, monitoring the financial solvency of local financial institutions and insurance companies,

and investing complaints of unfair business practices and license violations. Given the tailored mission of the DCCA, it would be difficult to use existing staff expertise to oversee the proposed state commission on surfing for administrative purposes.

Second, as the DCCA is a special-funded department, the costs to implement this bill could not be borne by its existing licensee population or absorbed by the Department's existing special fund budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

**SB-1459**

Submitted on: 2/2/2019 9:57:24 PM

Testimony for EET on 2/4/2019 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Lane Davey	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I support the development of a State Surfing Commission as proposed by SB1459.

It has the potential to provide the leadership, organization, and monetary support to generate community-based surf organizations and spaces which would help to promote and preserve ocean-related activities, epistemologies, and pedagogies that are essential to the well being and prosperity of the Hawaiian islands.

As surfing makes its debut in the 2020 Olympics, Hawai'i has the potential to reclaim its origins in the islands and reap the cultural, economic and educational benefits of the increased exposure so I think such a commission is the first step towards this goal.

Mahalo,

Lane Davey

**SB-1459**

Submitted on: 2/3/2019 2:18:48 PM

Testimony for EET on 2/4/2019 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Olu Campbell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Taniguchi, and esteemed members of this Committee,

I write in strong SUPPORT of SB1459, which would establish a state commission on surfing. Surfing is a unique sport created and developed by Native Hawaiians and continues to be a favorite pastime in Hawai'i today. Despite this history, for the past half-century, surfing has been almost entirely dominated by foreign interests that have exploited our cultural practice in a multibillion dollar industry that provides comparatively little benefit to Native Hawaiians or Hawai'i. This is certainly the largest foreign appropriation of Hawaiian intellectual property to date.

To make matters worse, these corporations almost entirely exclude surfing's Hawaiian genesis and instead, global marketing commonly includes ties to Australia or California. Intentional or not, if these communications continue unchecked, they will rewrite the history of surfing for future generations and Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i will be left behind.

It is not too late, however. I believe a concerted effort from Hawai'i to reclaim our rightful place in surfing can ensure our histories, cultural practices, and people are globally recognized, which will provide social and economic benefits to our community. A multifaceted approach coordinated by the state commission on surfing can help to achieve this outcome.

This effort is long overdue. With the 2018 reclamation of The Eddie Aikau Big Wave International by the Native Hawaiian community and organizations, led by the Aikau family, and surfing's upcoming debut in the 2020 Olympics, now is the time to launch a global campaign to ensure Hawai'i's future in surfing.

With this mana'o, I strongly urge the committee to PASS SB1459. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Ke aloha,

'Olu Campbell