

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF  
HAWAII



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

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**Testimony of  
SUZANNE D. CASE  
Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on  
PUBLIC SAFETY, VETERANS, & MILITARY AFFAIRS**

**Friday, March 13, 2020**

**10:00 A.M.**

**State Capitol, Conference Room 430**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 2788, SENATE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO DISASTER RELIEF**

Senate Bill 2788, Senate Draft 1 proposes to extend the lapse date of the appropriations for flooding disaster relief made by Act 12, Session Laws of Hawaii 2018, to June 30, 2021. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

The Department sustained substantial damage to its facilities on Kauai and Oahu due to the heavy rains and flooding events in April 2018. The Department received Act 12 funds for recovery response for several locations and facilities and is currently implementing these projects. The additional time to perform the flood response work will be appreciated.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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

**ROBERT K. MASUDA**  
FIRST DEPUTY

**M. KALEO MANUEL**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

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



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**  
**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**  
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STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2788 SD1,  
RELATING TO DISASTER RELIEF**

Before the House Committee on  
**PUBLIC SAFETY, VETERANS, & MILITARY AFFAIRS**

By

Thomas L. Travis  
Administrator, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA)

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Gates and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) **supports** Senate Bill 2788 SD1.

Senate Bill 2788 SD1 extends the lapse date of the appropriation for Kauai flooding disaster relief made by Act 12, Session Laws of Hawaii 2018, to June 30, 2021.

The County of Kauai has identified projects in collaboration with HI-EMA, taking advantage of these funds. Extending the lapse date will ensure these projects are executed in a deliberate fashion, taking advantage of opportunities for possible federal funding on the larger projects.

Note: My comments represent HI-EMA concerns at the state emergency management level only. I would defer to the separate comment/testimonies of the county emergency management agencies, as they would be the jurisdictions impacted by this legislation at the local level.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2788 SD1.

Thomas L. Travis: Thomas.L.Travis@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300

**SB-2788-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/10/2020 5:27:37 PM

Testimony for PVM on 3/13/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Don Aweau	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, VETERANS, & MILITARY AFFAIRS**  
**ATTN: CHAIR GREGG TAKAYAMA & VICE-CHAIR CEDRIC GATES**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 2788, SD 1**  
**Relating to Disaster Relief**

**March 13, 2020 10:00 am**  
**Conference Room 430**

Dear Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Gates, and Members of this Honorable Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Wai‘oli Valley Taro Hui on the important issue of disaster relief for our County of Kaua‘i. Since the devastating floods of 2018, our small Hui of about a dozen farmers has been working closely with staff at the Department of Land and Natural Resources (“DLNR”), the County of Kaua‘i, and our senator and representative (in addition to rehabilitating our own farms) in order to resume the important work of kalo cultivation. Our mānowai, po‘owai, and entire ‘auwai systems were completely devastated. Our river changed course in what some have described as a thousand-year flood event. Many of us are Native Hawaiian and small family farmers who were born and raised on Kaua‘i. We continue to care for the same ‘āina that our families have stewarded for more than a century; for some, it’s been many centuries. Unless this bill passes, the necessary repair work to our water system will not likely be completed before the funding lapses. **On behalf of the Wai‘oli Valley Taro Hui, we urge you to restore the appropriation amounts and pass Senate Bill 2788 HD1 to enable the restoration envisioned by the passage of Act 12 in 2018.**

As a Hui, it is our mission to support and enhance the mauka to makai biocultural resources in the Wai‘oli Stream and Hanalei Valley watersheds, protect the natural and cultural resources that enable traditional and customary Native Hawaiian practices, maintain habitat for endangered Hawaiian water birds, and engage the greater Kaua‘i community through educational outreach programs and initiatives relating to the farming of taro and community-based stewardship of water resources.

Immediately after the first flood in 2018, our water supply was totally cut off. With the help of numerous volunteers, we were able to restore minimal water flow that allowed us to continue farming, but in no way was the volume close to the pre-flood conditions. All of our equipment was damaged by the flood, and some of us have still not been able to replant our fields. Those of us who were able to repair our fields still faced a 3-4 month delay with far lower yields. I am currently down 40% compared to my pre-flood production and as a result, I had to return to my career as an engineer for a contractor on Kaua‘i. It was not my wish nor my plan to do so, but it was necessary to financially support my family. I still continue to work on the farm on a part-time basis with the hope that once our water system is repaired, I can complete the recovery and return to farming full-time. Other farmers in our Hui have similar stories.

Currently, we have boulders the size of trucks impeding our water supply, and we cannot remove those by hand. Over the last two years, we have continued to have our water supply cut off by additional weather events because of how severely our system was damaged. Despite the

work and cooperation of federal, state, and county agencies and multiple emergency proclamations, to our knowledge, the contract for vital repairs to our Native Hawaiian irrigation system is still in the process of being finalized. This means that even though we've secured the necessary permitting as a Hui, we have been unable to begin the critical work of restoration to the stream and our individual farms. If this extension with the requisite funding is not passed, it is unlikely that the necessary repair work to the stream and water system will be completed.

We write to express how important the passage of this bill is as it directly impacts our farms, families, and livelihoods. Last month, the Board of Land and Natural Resources voted to issue our Hui a revocable permit for water use from Wai'oli Stream for our kalo farms and a non-exclusive perpetual easement to access and maintain our irrigation system on State lands. Together with the proposal to extend the Act 12 lapse date in this bill, we will be able to move forward with the recovery process, two years later. In the long run, we hope to work with DLNR and use a portion of the disaster relief funds to repair the significant damage to Wai'oli Stream and help to protect everyone who is downstream from future flood events.

Because of our location, we are the first people to be affected by changes in the Wai'oli Stream. As a Hui, we recognize the importance of implementing mitigation measures to reduce any risks posed by future weather events. Aside from any additional negative impacts we may suffer as a Hui, further flooding, landslides, and river shifts pose a significant threat to the health, safety, and welfare of the larger town of Hanalei.

For these reasons, we urge you to restore the appropriation amounts and pass Senate Bill 2788 HD1, so that we may continue to work with the DLNR and our elected representatives, to clean Wai'oli Stream and continue farming as we have for generations.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Reid Yoshida  
President, Wai'oli Valley Taro Hui  
Kaua'i, Hawai'i  
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