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GOVERNOR OF  
HAWAII



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

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**Testimony of  
SUZANNE D. CASE  
Chairperson**

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

**Wednesday, February 13, 2019  
1:20 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 835  
RELATING TO THE STATE BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES**

Senate Bill 835 proposes to add a community liaison to the membership of the state board on geographic names. Requires the department of land and natural resources to publish and send a listing of its decisions, along with other information, to state and other agencies, and provide the same publication, along with pertinent information, to the United States Board on Geographic Names. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) provides comments and an amendment to this measure.**

The Chairperson of the Department represents, generally through delegation to staff, one of seven state agencies and institutions serving on the Board. The Department is given two other responsibilities under this statute. First, the Department is designated custodian of the Board's official records and its representative serves as the Board secretary (Section 4E-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS)). Second, it is responsible for the publishing of an annual list of the Board's decisions and related information (Section 4E-3, HRS). These responsibilities have largely been fulfilled by the Office of Planning since the Board was transferred from the Department to the Office of Planning in 1988 (Act 347, Session Laws of Hawaii 1988).

Community Liaison: The Department appreciates the intent of having a community liaison on the Board but believes it would be very difficult for a single person serving in a volunteer capacity, to fulfill this position's apparent intent. Effective community outreach and consultation can be very time consuming as it requires learning who should be contacted and coordinating the conversations needed to understand why particular place names or their spellings are significant or the history behind a name's common usage. This is particularly true if the liaison is not familiar with the communities involved. Creating a full time position

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

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**M. KALEO MANUEL**  
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

in the Office of Planning to assist the Board would better meet the intent of integrating community input in the Board's deliberations.

Note that the Board has various ways of gathering community input routinely and when specific circumstances call for it. A Permitted Interaction Group allowed under Section 92-2.5, HRS, can be formed to gather information on specific issues being considered by the Board. This primarily includes reaching out to communities. The Board can also convene public meetings in communities to hear concerns directly. All Board decisions, agendas, and minutes are available on the Office of Planning website and any individual can ask to be sent Board meeting information on a routine basis. Any questions can be submitted by email or by calling.

Distribution of Annual List: The amendment requires the list of the board's decisions and related information be sent to all appropriate state and other agencies annually. All Board decisions are available on the Office of Planning website and in electronically searchable files. Agencies should consider this the primary source for approved place names in Hawai'i. An annual distribution of the Board's decision might help remind agencies that Section 4E-3(c), HRS, mandates all departments of the State use or cause to be used place names and spellings approved by the Board.

Changing "Alternate" to "Variant": This amendment was probably proposed to make the Hawai'i statute consistent with terminology used by the United States (U.S.) Board of Geographic Names. The national board relies on the Hawai'i Board's recommendations to maintain and update its national database of place names. For the U.S. Board, a specific geographic feature can only have one official place name. Any other names known to be associated with that place are recognized as "variant" names. Only official names, not variants, can be used in federal publications, including maps. Retaining the term "alternate" gives the Hawai'i Board the latitude to give two names or spellings for a single place the same status. This allows the Board to respect strong, but differing, beliefs in which a name is appropriate or respect both a traditional name and one that is most commonly used in the region. The Board has developed guidelines for recognizing alternate names.

Proposed Additional Amendment: The Department suggests amending the statute to make the Office of Planning, not the Department, the custodian of the Board's official records (Section 4E-2, HRS) and responsible for publishing or distributing annual lists of Board decisions (Section 4E-3, HRS). The Office of Planning already maintains the most current place name lists electronically and can readily generate any required annual lists. These functions are well suited to the Office of Planning's role in administering the state Geographic Information System. These amendments would bring the statute into conformance with current practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**SB835**  
**RELATING TO THE STATE BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES**  
Ke Kōmike Wai a me ka 'Āina

Pepeluali 13, 2019

1:20 p.m.

Lumi 229

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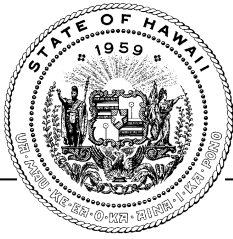
The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers the following **COMMENTS** on SB835, which would add a community liaison to the membership of the State Board on Geographic Names (Board) and require the Department of Land and Natural Resources to publish and send a list of the Boards' decisions, along with pertinent information, to State and other agencies, including the United States Board on Geographic Names.

Public input and community participation have always been an integral part of the Board's process for the significant kuleana of ensuring appropriate and accurate names are recorded for geographic places and features. In the past, this Board has focused on reviewing existing names and adding Hawaiian diacritical marks ('okina and kahakō), as appropriate. In these past instances, community input—especially when offered by the affected communities and those with a background in 'ōlelo Hawai'i—has been highly valued in discussions and incorporated into the decisions of the Board. More recently, the 2018 Kīlauea eruption has created new geological features and for the first time ever, the Board will have an opportunity to oversee the development of new place names. The Board is currently in the initial stages of establishing a Permitted Interaction Group to ensure community participation, particularly of members from the affected communities, in this naming process.

As it is currently written, this bill could eliminate or otherwise inadvertently affect the Board's recently created category of "alternate names". This category of name guidance is unique to Hawai'i and is beneficial when community knowledge identifies multiple appropriate place names, recognizing that all alternate names could be used interchangeably and have equal standing. Federal guidance does not include an option for alternate names. Instead, federal guidance utilizes "variant names", a lesser category secondary to primary names and more often associated with differences in spelling. This would likely increase conflict within communities over the naming of places, which can be a highly sensitive topic due to the significance of names in Hawaiian culture.

**Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to consider keeping the provision allowing for "alternate names" on page 2, line 4, in place, in addition to providing for "variant names" to allow the Board to use both categories, where appropriate, for their differing purposes.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



# OFFICE OF PLANNING STATE OF HAWAII

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Statement of  
**LEO R. ASUNCION**  
Planning Program Administrator, Office of Planning  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND**  
Wednesday, February 13, 2019  
1:15 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

in consideration of  
**SB 835**  
**RELATING TO THE STATE BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES.**

Chair Kahele, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Water and Land.

The Office of Planning (OP) offers the following comments on SB 835, which amends Chapter 4E to add a community liaison to the Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names (HBGN), requires distribution of an annual list of its naming decisions, and provides some minor language revisions.

The reason for adding a community liaison is not stated in the bill, but OP notes that several cultural advisors already regularly participate in HBGN meetings. These include Dr. Renee Pualani Louis, who has been an advisor for many years and often travels from Hilo to attend board meetings in Honolulu at her own expense; Bobby Camara, a retired park ranger at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, who is a frequent participant and regular contributor at HBGN meetings; Naomi Losch, a former board member and retired Chair of the University of Hawai'i Department of Hawaiian and Indo-Pacific Languages and Literature, who, until recently regularly attended meetings; Melia Lane-Kamahele, National Park Service regional manager; and Regina Hilo, an archaeologist with the State Historic Preservation Division.

OP requests that if a community liaison is added as a member of the board, section 4E-1 be amended to read as follows:

**"§4E-1 State board on geographic names.** There shall be in the office of planning a state board on geographic names,

consisting of the following persons or their representatives: the chairperson of the board of land and natural resources, the chairperson of the office of Hawaiian affairs, the chairperson of the Hawaiian homes commission, the director of the office of planning, the president of the University of Hawaii, the state land surveyor, [~~and~~] the director of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum[~~-~~], and a community liaison appointed by the chairperson of the state board on geographic names. [~~The members of the board shall serve without compensation.~~] The nongovernmental members shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses, including travel expenses, necessary for the performance of their duties."

SB 835 also revises language in Section 4E-3, subsection (b), replacing the word "alternate" with the word "variant,"

"(b) The department of land and natural resources shall publish and send an annual list of its decisions, together with information regarding location, the origin and meaning of names, and [~~alternate~~] variant names and spellings for the features named..."

OP notes that the term "alternate" is the basis for an HBGN decision category, "Alternate Name," which is an official designation recognizing a name that is equal or near equal in usage and importance to the community as a primary feature name. OP requests that "alternate" be retained in Section 4E-3, subsection (b) and not be replaced by "variant."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.