

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND

Tuesday, February 7, 2023
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1394
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill 1394 proposes to appropriate funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) for the operations and personnel of the Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife to manage hotspots at trailheads as part of the Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program (Program). **The Department strongly supports this measure as a means of enhancing Nā Ala Hele program staff and providing necessary funding for costs associated with enhanced staffing, and funding for engaging planning consultant contractors.**

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority's COVID-driven Destination Management Action Plan initiative identified a series of "hotspots" across the state, defined as "*an area/site that attracts visitors due to its popularity, and may result in overcrowding, congestion, degradation of resources, safety hazards, and a negative experience for both residents and visitors.*" It further notes that the HTA ". . . reviewed community input from . . . surveys and community meetings, in addition to receiving feedback from the counties..." and island-based visitors bureau staff. Hotspots identified on each island include recreation areas, cultural features, county and state parks, as well as specific Program features. Program staff are currently actively engaged with the HTA and other visitor industry entities on a long-range planning steering committee and have initiated a series of field visits on several islands to foster closer relationships between natural resource managers and visitor industry professionals.

The positions and funding proposed by this Act will allow the Department to put personnel and planning efforts in motion, or enhance ongoing planning and activities, to address a number of these hotspots, including trailheads in the Koke'e region of Kaua'i, the Maunawili Falls and

Ka'iwa Ridge trails on O'ahu, several features on Maui, Naha Trail on Lāna'i, and Pololū Valley, Waipi'o Valley, and Maunakea on Hawai'i island. Further, the positions and funding will increase the Program staff by over 50% statewide, enabling enhanced, active, ongoing management of these sites and many others in the Program inventory, and the broader Division of Forestry and Wildlife recreational feature inventory.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure.



SIERRA CLUB

HAWAI'I ISLAND GROUP

February 5, 2023

House Committee on Water and Land
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813 February 5, 2023

Re: Strong Support of HB1394

Aloha Madame Chair and Members of the Committee on Land and Water

The Hawai'i Island Group of the Sierra Club of Hawai'i is in strong support of House Bill 1394, relating to funding for the Nā Ala Hele program of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Nā Ala Hele is the State of Hawai'i Trail and Access Program, created to manage public resources related to hiking. The program manages trail access and conducts trail maintenance in order to provide important public services including recreational opportunities, experiences related to cultural history and historic trails, and economic opportunities where possible for commercial trail vendors. Nā Ala Hele trails are also important for access into natural areas for management, research, hunting, and wildfire response.

One of the primary missions of the Sierra Club is "To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth...". The Nā Ala Hele program and its staff share in this mission.

We know that nature improves our mental, physical, and social health. With more than 100 hikes and service projects to care for Hawai'i's special places each year, our trained leaders create opportunities for everyone to experience the transformative power of the outdoors—from trekking and restoring trails, such as the Ala Loa Trails of each island, to reforestation in Hakalau and the Waikōloa Dry Forest on the island of Hawai'i.

The resources, information, and support provided by the program and staff to residents and visitors alike have been and are essential to their health and well-being.

Please support HB1394.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Flaherty, Jr." in a cursive style.

Charles Flaherty, Chair

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 10:50:25 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lea Hong	The Trust for Public Land	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members -

Ttust for Public Land strongly supports HB1394 appropriating funds for DLNR's Na Ala Hele trail program. Management and maintenance of the State's trail system and trailheads is sorely underfunded. Use of trails has exponentially increased -- and complaints from trail users and neighbors who live near trail heads are on the rise. Mahalo for appopriating funds for trail management. We also hope the Committee members will support some form of green fee or visitor impact fee in other legislation to raise funds that will allow Na Ala Hele and other state agencies to manage Hawai'i's preciousl natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

Mahalo -

Lea Hong, State Director, The Trust for Public Land

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 10:45:59 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
LIBRADO COBIAN	AAC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this Bill , The Na'AlaHele program is vital to the protection of our lands and trails . The people in the program are the greatest stewards of our Natural Resources. Li Cobian

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 7:20:28 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Troy Snell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Greenspace and nature are becoming more and more important escapes for locals and tourists here in Hawaii. Hawaii's trail system will require more management and upkeep. I support this bill to preserve this critical natural resource.

Mahalo for your time

Troy Snell

Honolulu

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 7:27:21 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 8:03:27 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine West Dale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Protect our natural resources with funding for these important positions!

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 10:25:57 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith Wells	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1394. I am a senior citizen living on Oahu and enjoy hiking with friends every week. Whenever I can, I travel to other islands to hike as well. This Bill will go a long way toward improving and maintaining the Na Ala Hele trail system.

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 8:50:20 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tom Mendes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony for HB 1394

As a former president of the Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Club and a current hike leader, I've been hiking on our Na Ala Hele trails for over 20 years. As such, I am completely aware of the issues the bill calls hotspots at our trailheads. A classic example is the Kuliouou Trail where on weekends one has to park up to a half mile away and walk to the trailhead. The trailhead is at the end of a narrow residential street where available parking is quickly filled or used by residents. There is government property nearby that could easily be converted to parking away from the residential area.

I support HB 1394 which will provide funding for DLNR professional personnel who could plan for these improvements as well as funds for equipment and maintenance to improve conditions as these trailhead hotspots in our communities.

Respectfully,

Tom Mendes

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 8:55:45 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James B Friday	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Ichiyama and Vice Chair Poepoe,

I am writing to support HB 1394 for the DLNR Na Ala Hele Trails and Access program. I hike on the state trails several times a month. Our trails are true gems, providing access to our state forests, hunting areas, and scenic points. They are treasured by locals and tourists alike. The crews who maintain the trails are stretched thin. Please give them the support they deserve!

Sincerely,

J. B. Friday, Hilo

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 9:16:02 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edwin Petteys	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. For many years, the Na Ala Hele program has attempted to manage its growing trail and access system with minimal staffing and resources. This has led to inconsistent and reactive attempts to fulfill its responsibilities, and an inability to manage at a truly programmatic level. HB1394 is an opportunity to help this vitally important program to gain the staff and resources it needs to move into proactive and more comprehensive program management. I ask your support of HB1394 to help this program. Mahalo for your consideration.

Edwin Petteys, resident of Hawaii Island.

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 9:45:33 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I ask your support of HB1394. It seeks to better equip our Statewide Trail and Access System known as Nā Ala Hele, with sorely needed funds to properly fix and maintain the “hot spots” that are being “loved to death.” Too many of Hawai`i’s most cherished outdoor spaces have become unpleasant for our own residents to enjoy, due to overcrowding and overuse.

Hawai`i’s trails and outdoor spaces have never been more accessed than they are today. Never has it been more important to protect them and manage them for future generations in light of the heavy usage occurring. The Nā Ala Hele Program was established in 1988 to develop a statewide trail and access system capable of meeting the challenges that are faced today. For decades, state government has expected the Nā Ala Hele Program to do the job without long-term, stable, and adequate staffing and resources. These are complex challenges but well-worth the effort to ensure that our state’s trails are trails we can be proud of.

The spirit of aloha on the trails and in Hawai`i’s beautiful outdoors will be nurtured when we residents feel that we can afford to share our special places with outsiders, without damage and loss to the very resources we hold dear.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Deborah Chang

Resident of Hawai`i Island

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 6:29:31 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JANE CARLILE	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Better funding for the work that this bill would provide is long overdue and completely essential to maintaining the land in safe usable condition by Hawaii residents and visitors. Please support this measure. Na Ala Hele was once a vibrant part of the land and water maintenance landscape in the state but inadequate funding has reduced it to much less than adequate ability to provide needed services. Thank you for attention to this urgent need.

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 7:58:11 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Roney deYoung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Na Ala Hele program is a key tool in the healthy transition to destination management for tourists as well as maintaining access to public land for our residents. The program includes a range of types of access from hiking, ATV's, bikes etc that have been very popular with residents and provided safe access to visitors.

Three Weeks ago I participated on a Na Ala Hele hike from Keauhou to Kainaliu, led by the Hawaii Island Na Ala Hele Island representative. The trail, a government road in 1893, with protected access, crosses the critical battlefield of the Kamehameha III vs. the Kapu supporters. Very historic and critical to the formative history of Hawaii, access or interpretation would not be possible without the Na Ala Hele program. All participants were local on this hike and many came away with greater appreciation for the key break in the Kapu system and the many lives lost in that conflict. None of this would be possible without defense and maintenance of this trail along the coast past some new comer development, which would prefer not have have locals pass, but the historic importance is significant, besides the right of access on government roads of 1893.

Please ensure that this program is funded for planning, maintenance, historical records abstracting to ensure continued access for the people of Hawaii, the educational value of the interpretation of these parts of our history, and protection of our aina in a respectful and supportive way.

As development continues at a rapid pace, this state program ensures that we have the resources to work with development to ensure access and shift the tourist focus to approved trails such as the wonderful new trail in this program on Hawaii Island "Kaulana Manu"

This trail is a wonderful introduction to native forests and birds on the Saddle Road (Daniel K Inoye Highway) and recently opened in 2021, funded primarily on mitigation funds. Locals and tourists enjoy the short walk, the rest facilities, the interpretive signs of our native plants and birds at this unique stopping point.

Your support is critical to our future on all the islands to have safe, approved, and culturally and botanically accurate educational opportunities for all.

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 3:08:59 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stormont, William - LNR	Department of Land and Natural Resources	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha. I am a DLNR employee and am available to answer questions regarding HB1394. Mahalo.

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 9:26:01 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Bruno	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Currently, Nā Ala Hele is woefully underfunded, which limits their ability to maintain Hawai'i's hiking trails. House Bill 1394, and companion Senate Bill 1549, call for staffing and funding to be provided to enhance the Nā Ala Hele program across the state, including 6 new positions, vehicles and equipment, and contract planning services. The added staffing and funding will improve the conditions of Hawai'i's hiking trails. Well maintained trails are essential for a safe, pleasant hiking experience for locals and tourists alike. Therefore, I urge you to support HB 1394 and SB 1549. Mahalo for supporting this important cause.

HB-1394

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 12:01:39 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/7/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JOHN BRAUM	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Currently, Nā Ala Hele is woefully underfunded, which limits their ability to maintain Hawai'i's hiking trails. House Bill 1394, and companion Senate Bill 1549, call for staffing and funding to be provided to enhance the Nā Ala Hele program across the state, including 6 new positions, vehicles and equipment, and contract planning services. The added staffing and funding will improve the conditions of Hawai'i's hiking trails. Well maintained trails are essential for a safe, pleasant hiking experience for locals and tourists alike. Therefore, I urge you to support HB 1394 and SB 1549. Mahalo for supporting this important cause.