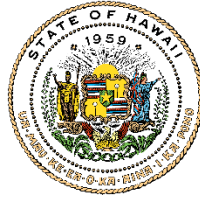


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU,

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

LAURA H.E. KAAKUA
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
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, February 22, 2023
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 409, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

Senate Bill 409, Senate Draft 1 proposes to appropriate funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities. **The Department strongly supports this measure.**

With changes in land use and climate in Hawai'i, wildfire is a significant and growing hazard in many places across the state. Research in wildfire science shows that vegetation is a key component for recurring wildfire. Vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazard, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases risk for fire. Funds are needed by the Department to reduce hazardous fuels on the landscape that threaten not only the watersheds the Department manages but also the adjacent communities and critical public infrastructure such as powerlines and communication facilities. The requested funds will be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing and forest restoration, and provide water infrastructure for tree planting, grazing, and fire suppression.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 321
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
www.labor.hawaii.gov

February 20, 2023

The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 208
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Dela Cruz:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 409, Senate Draft (SD) 1 Relating to Fire Prevention

I am Kazuo Todd, Chair of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC). The SFC supports SB 409, SD 1, which appropriates approximately \$1,500,000 for fiscal year (FY) 2024 and the same sum for FY 2025 for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) community fuels reduction project to support wildfire prevention and hazardous fuel reduction measures.

The DOFAW is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 acres of the State of Hawaii's forested watersheds (or 25% of the land area in Hawaii) and supports federal and county responders on remaining areas in the State. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual area burned in Hawaii has grown in past decades. In fact, the percentage of land area burned annually in Hawaii exceeds the national average and, in some years, it surpasses the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The DOFAW's fire and emergency response mandates require specialized equipment. The DOFAW collaborates with the county fire departments to extinguish fires on forested land managed by the DOFAW and residential areas (the wildland-urban interface) managed by the counties. The DOFAW provides specialty expertise, equipment, and other resources in these environments which the county fire departments do not possess due to training, funding, or mission requirement. The Department also assists counties during natural disasters, such as hurricanes and lava flows.

The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

Page 2

February 20, 2023

The DOFAW's expertise and collaboration with the county fire departments has been invaluable in protecting residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the encroachment of wildland-urban interface fires throughout Hawaii.

The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 409, SD 1.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 808-723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

KAZUO TODD
Chair

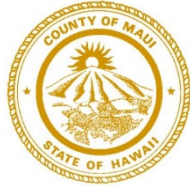
KT:GL

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA
Acting Managing Director

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA
Deputy Fire Chief



LATE

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 DAIRY ROAD
KAHULUI, MAUI, HAWAI'I 96732
www.maui-county.gov

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 208
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Dela Cruz,

SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 409, SENATE DRAFT (SD) 1, RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department (MFD). The SFC supports SB 409, SD 1, which appropriates approximately \$1,500,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2024 and the same sum for FY 2025 for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) Community Fuels Reduction Project to support wildfire prevention and hazardous fuel reduction measures.

The DOFAW is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 acres of the State of Hawaii's forested watershed's (or 25% of the land area in Hawaii) and supports federal and county responders on remaining areas in the State. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual area burned in Hawaii has grown in past decades. In fact, the percentage of land area burned annually in Hawaii exceeds the national average and, in some years, it surpasses the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The DOFAW's fire and emergency response mandates require specialized equipment. The DOFAW collaborates with the county fire departments to extinguish fires on forested land managed by the DOFAW and residential areas (the wildland-urban interface) managed by the counties. The DOFAW provides specialty expertise, equipment, and other resources in these environments which the county fire departments do not possess due to training, funding, or mission requirement. The Department also assists counties during natural disasters, such as hurricanes and lava flows.

The DOFAW's expertise and collaboration with the county fire departments has been invaluable in protecting residences, buildings, and critical infrastructures from the encroachment of wildland-urban interface fires throughout Hawaii.

The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 409, SD 1.

If you have any questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at (808) 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Ventura". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

Big Island Invasive Species
Committee
23 E. Kawili St
Hilo Hi 96771
(808) 933-3340



February 20, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Ways & Means
RE: SB409

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee on Ways & Means,

The Big Island Invasive Species Committee strongly supports SB409 which would appropriate funds to DLNR to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

As an organization on the front lines of fighting invasive plants, we are all too familiar with the difficult job of controlling invasive weeds like fountain grass, a dangerous fire fuel which contributes each year to bigger, hotter, and more dangerous fires on our island. With each fire, we lose more native vegetation and create more space for the incursion of invasive grasses which in turn lead to more fuel for fire – a vicious cycle that can only be broken with intensive, boots-on-the-ground effort.

We support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks. The requested funds will be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression. On February 15th, a webinar on wildfire in Hawaii was held as part of Hawaii Invasive Species Awareness month. We encourage all members of the committee to become more familiar with the growing wildfire threat and its relationship to invasive species by watching the recording (it will be posted on the HISC YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFT6SAASZIUxd_XgZMCjGsQ).

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can **save five times more** in damages, along with saving homes, livelihoods, and lives.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information.

Mahalo,

Franny Kinslow Brewer
Communications Director
fbrewer@hawaii.edu

SB-409-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2023 6:02:13 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/22/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Gordon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please Support SB 409. Additional funding is required to help mitigate against wildfires. As a member of the Waikoloa Firewise Committee, I am keenly aware that the Waikoloa area is just one of many in the top list of areas most prone to wildfires in the entire State. In addition, large areas of the entire State are in drought conditions, which appear to worsen every year.

SB-409-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 8:42:14 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/22/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Chimera	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As you may know, nearly a quarter of our state's lands are covered in non-native, flammable grasslands, and this footprint is ever expanding with each subsequent fire. I support this wildfire fuels reduction funding for reducing wildfire hazards, increasing protection of our watersheds and the communities and public infrastructure that are adjacent to them.