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Bill Demolishes Environmental Law

Honolulu – Hawai'i State Representative Cynthia Thielen (R, 50th District: Kailua, Kaneohe Bay) was outraged by House Leadership's recent decision to force through a bill which would exempt certain State and County projects from the environmental review process. HB1893 was re-referred to the House Finance Committee (FIN), bypassing its original referral to the House Committees on Economic Revitalization & Business (ERB) and Energy & Environmental Protection (EEP).

"This leaves the public with only one opportunity to testify to House Members and completely removes decision making by those Representatives selected to oversee environmental issues," Thielen explained. "HB1893 is a horrible bill which would undercut three decades of environmental law in Hawai'i; it 'torpedos' our environmental protections."

The bill seeks to change the Hawaii Revised Statutes, Chapter 343, which established "a system of environmental review which will ensure that environmental concerns are given appropriate consideration in decision making along with economic and technical considerations", by exempting government projects from this public review.

"I am just astonished that Leadership would try to circumvent the legislative process in this way and diminish the review of a bill which seeks to reverse thirty years of steadfast law. HB1893 could devastate our environmental and cultural resources and potentially lead to severe economic damage through uninformed planning decisions," declared Thielen.

While HB1893's purpose is stated to "promote economic revitalization" and "benefit the general public", this recent action will instead undermine the public's trust in government and have a negative effect on both our environment and economy.

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