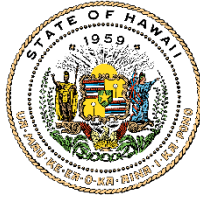


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
PUBLIC SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
and
WATER AND LAND

Wednesday, February 7, 2024
3:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2143
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Senate Bill 2143 proposes to appropriate funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this measure.**

The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 acres of the State of Hawai'i's forested watersheds (or 26% of the land area in Hawai'i) and supports federal and county responders on remaining areas in the state. DOFAW is also tasked with coordinating prevention outreach and planning efforts, which includes assisting communities in developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, encouraging communities to join the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Community Program, as well as apply for federal grant programs like the United States Forest Service's (USFS) Wildland Urban Interface Grant Program and Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program. DOFAW does not have the staffing capacity or resources to adequately provide programming for all the State's wildfire preparedness needs, and instead partners with nonprofit organizations such as the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization to fill this gap. Wildfire prevention nonprofits cannot count on receiving federal grant funding annually through DOFAW and are often outcompeted by larger, national nonprofits for federal grants. Therefore, it is necessary to secure permanent State funding to support nonprofit partners that provide education, training, and support for communities and large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects. Providing permanent annual funding for wildfire prevention nonprofits through DOFAW will increase

DAWN N.S. CHANG
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LAND
STATE PARKS

the Department's capacity to assist communities to plan, prepare, and mitigate the potential impacts from future wildfires that are increasing in frequency, size, and duration due to increased periods of drought coupled with heavy loading of wildfire fuels on unmanaged lands. There is an urgent need for additional funding and resources for the State's fire service to do pre-suppression work such as fuel reduction and improved forest management, maintain readiness and capacity for fire suppression, and restore and recover landscapes in the aftermath of wildland fires. By funding pre-suppression and recovery, including wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming, public exposure to catastrophic wildland fire will be decreased.

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

**HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA KINAI AHI O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

636 SOUTH STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 723-7139 • FAX: (808) 723-7111 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



SHELDON K. HAO
FIRE CHIEF
LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

JASON SAMALA
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF
HOPE LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

February 5, 2024

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair
Committee on Water and Land
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 210
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Chair
Committee on Public Safety and
Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
The State Senate
State Capitol, Room 407
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chairs Inouye and Wakai:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 2143 Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The HFD supports SB 2143, which appropriates funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

Wildland fires are a serious threat to Hawaii's native ecosystems and wildland urban interface areas. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual land area burned in Hawaii has increased in past decades. In fact, the percentage of land area burned annually in Hawaii exceeds the national average and, in some years, surpasses the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The HFD agrees that the DOFAW has been underfunded for providing grants to and working with nonprofit organizations, such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Chair
Page 2
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Organization (HWMO). This measure would support those nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildland fire preparedness and mitigation through grant disbursements.

As an example, the HWMO could use additional funding for the statewide Firewise Communities program, which supports communities to reduce wildland fire risk, and the Wildfire Resilient Landscapes program, which provides education and training for large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects.

Funding and support for the DOFAW, the HWMO, and other nonprofits will be invaluable in protecting the environment, residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the threat of wildland fires throughout Hawaii.

The HFD urges your committees' support on the passage of SB 2143.

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

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Fire Chief

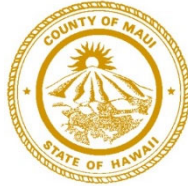
SKH/GL:cn

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA
Deputy Fire Chief



DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 DAIRY ROAD
KAHULUI, MAUI, HAWAII 96732
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February 5, 2024

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair
Committee on Water and Land
State Senate
State Capitol, Room 210
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Chair
Committee on Public Safety and
Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
State Senate
State Capitol, Room 407
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairs Inouye and Wakai,

**SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 2143 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DLNR)**

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. The SFC supports SB 2143, which appropriates funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildfire (DOFAW) to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

Wildfires are a serious threat to Hawaii's native ecosystem and wildland urban interfaces areas. 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 SFC agrees that DOFAW has been underfunded for providing grants to and working with nonprofit organizations, such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization. This measure would support those nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness and mitigation through grant disbursements.

As an example, the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) could use additional funding for the statewide Firewise Communities Program, that supports communities to reduce wildfire risk and the Wildfire Resilient Landscapes Program, which provides education and training for large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects.

Funding and support for DOFAW, HWMO, and other nonprofits will be invaluable in protecting the environment, residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure for the threat of wildland fires throughout Hawaii. The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 2143.

If you have 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 fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Support for SB 2143, Relating to the Department of Land & Natural Resources
Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs and
Committee on Water and Land
February 7, 2024, 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference**

Aloha Chair Wakai, Chair Inouye, and Vice Chair Elefante and Members of the Committees:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) **supports** SB 2143, relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources, which appropriates funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

Hawai'i's wildfire risk is growing, and new programs, policies, state positions, and partnerships are needed to respond to this threat. Extreme weather is becoming increasingly common, bringing massive rainfall and flooding in some regions and widespread heat and drought in others, with disastrous impacts on both humans and nature. The Department of Land and Natural Resources alone will not be able to adequately address the challenges to come. Hawai'i has a strong and successful history of partnership between public agencies and non-profit organizations to meet the needs of our environment and community. Hawai'i needs the combined expertise and personnel found in its nonprofit organizations with the knowledge and experience of wildfire preparedness, mitigation, prevention and recovery to assist the department in deploying solutions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2143.

LATE

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Testimony by Dr. Clay Trauernicht IN SUPPORT of SB 2143, RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

For the hearing on February 7th, 2024, Conference Room 225

To Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs and Senator Lorraine Inouye, Chair of the Committee on Water and Land:

I am submitting testimony in support of SB 2143 Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). I have been working at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the field of wildfire science and management since 2013, however, I am submitting this testimony as an individual and not as an official University of Hawai'i (UH) spokesperson.

The proposed bill correctly recognizes the threat that wildfire poses to the state and defines a key need to support wildfire prevention statewide, namely funding for non-profit efforts that support all of our fire agencies, especially via critical pre-fire prevention, education, and risk mitigation.

As an active participant in Hawaii's 'wildfire community' since 2013, I can personally attest to the value and increased capacity that non-profit programs like Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization and the Watershed Partnerships bring to the DLNR in terms of supporting fire mitigation efforts and community health and safety. This has ranged from direct educational programs, to Community Wildfire Protection Plan development, to hazardous fuels removal and conversion, to the facilitation of federal grant programs and project funding, to facilitating relationships and lessons learned from national and international wildfire programs. This role has become critical to the success of wildfire mitigation and prevention programs by both DLNR and County Fire Departments and by providing a more reliable source of operational funds would dramatically increase the impact these kinds of programs are already having in the state.

Sincerely,



Clay Trauernicht, PhD
Extension Specialist in Ecosystems and Fire
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa