



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

March 24, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Hon. Mike Gabbard, Chair
Hon. Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hon. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Hon. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Re: SCR 222 SR 198 Widespread Soil Testing in Lahaina

Hearing: Monday, March 25, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Room 224 & videoconference

Position: Strong Support

Aloha, Chairs Gabbard and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Richards and Aquino, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment and the Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i comprises of over 7,500 politically active members of Hawai'i's majority political party. We strongly support requesting the Department of Health to carry out widespread soil testing in Lahaina and to develop a remediation plan.

Widespread soil testing in Lahaina and the development of a soil remediation plan by the Department of Health is crucial for several reasons.

1. **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.** On August 8, 2023, Lahaina experienced a devastating wildfire which resulted in the contamination of soil and toxic substances from burned or melted building materials, furniture, plastics, and consumer electronics. This contamination can pose threats to human health, groundwater quality, ocean ecosystems, and food production.
2. **HUMAN HEALTH.** Soil contamination can lead to exposure to harmful chemicals such as lead, arsenic and other toxins. This is particularly concerning for young children who are more susceptible to the harmful effects of these toxins.
3. **AGRICULTURAL IMPACT.** Lahaina, like many areas in Hawaii, has a rich agricultural history. Soil testing can provide crucial information about the composition, fertility, and health of the soil. This helps farmers make informed



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- decisions regarding fertilization, crop selection, and soil management practices, ultimately optimizing crop yield and sustainability.
4. REMEDIATION PLANNING. A soil remediation plan can help address the contamination issue by outlining the steps needed to restore the soil to a healthy state. This could include the use of available technologies to separate clean soil from ash and toxins.
 5. COMMUNITY REBUILDING. The remediation plan can also play a crucial role in the rebuilding of the Lahaina community following the wildfire. Restoring the health of the soil is a critical step in the recovery process, allowing for the safe reconstruction of homes, and the resumption of agricultural activities.

It is crucial for the Department of Health to carry out widespread soil testing in Lahaina and to develop a comprehensive soil remediation plan to protect the health of the community and the environment.

On behalf of the Environmental Caucus, we thank you very much for your support of these resolutions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these important resolutions.

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Co-Chairs, Environmental Caucus

SR-198

Submitted on: 3/23/2024 9:49:32 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/25/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Bishop	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha HHS Chair San Buenaventura, AEN Chair Gabbard, and Joint HHS/AEN Committee members,

While of course supporting this common sense resolution, is DOH resourced to actually comply with the mandate?