

JAN 18 2024

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that wildfires are a  
2 serious threat in the State. Wildfires can harm native  
3 ecosystems that are not typically equipped or developed to  
4 handle frequently-occurring fires. When forests in the State  
5 are damaged by wildfires, the ecosystem does not regenerate the  
6 lost plant life; instead, invasive species and fire-prone  
7 grasses can take over native forests. The results of wildfire  
8 destruction can be far-reaching, as reductions in native forests  
9 can lead to decreased water quality, increased erosion, and  
10 damage to coral reefs from sedimentation and nutrient loading.  
11 Hawaii is also home to a unique array of native plants and  
12 animals, with some species found nowhere else in the world.  
13 Protecting the State's forests from wildfires will protect the  
14 habitats for these native species.

15           The legislature also finds that the wildfire management  
16 branch of the department of land and natural resources division  
17 of forestry and wildlife is severely underfunded. The wildfire



1 management branch provides grants for and works with the  
2 nonprofit, Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization. The  
3 wildfire management branch does not have the staffing capacity  
4 or resources to adequately provide programming for all the  
5 State's wildfire preparedness needs, and instead partners with  
6 nonprofit organizations such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management  
7 Organization to fill this gap.

8       The legislature further finds that wildfire prevention  
9 nonprofits cannot count on receiving grant funding annually from  
10 the wildfire management branch and are often outcompeted by  
11 larger, national nonprofits for federal grants. Therefore, it  
12 is necessary to secure permanent funding to support nonprofit  
13 partners that provide education, training, and support for large  
14 landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and  
15 projects.

16       Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to make an  
17 appropriation for the wildfire management branch of the  
18 department of land and natural resources division of forestry  
19 and wildlife to support nonprofit organizations that specialize  
20 in wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming through  
21 grant disbursements.



1           SECTION 2. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of  
2 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,  
3 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the  
4 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,  
5 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure  
6 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by  
7 \$           or           per cent. This current declaration takes  
8 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal  
9 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act  
10 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure  
11 ceiling are that:

- 12           (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to  
13           serve the public interest; and  
14           (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs  
15           addressed by this Act.

16           SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$500,000 or so much  
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the  
19 wildfire management branch of the department of land and natural  
20 resources division of forestry and wildlife to provide grants to



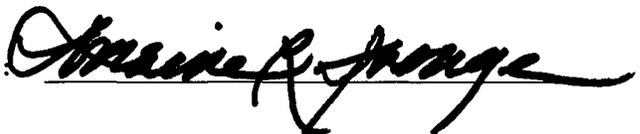
1 nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness  
2 and mitigation programming.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
4 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 4. Beginning with fiscal year 2024-2025 and each  
6 fiscal year thereafter, the department of land and natural  
7 resources shall include in its annual budget request line-item  
8 funding for the wildfire management branch. To ensure increased  
9 wildfire preparedness, the amount of funding requested shall  
10 scale proportionally with the number of organizations receiving  
11 grants through the wildfire management branch program.

12 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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INTRODUCED BY: 



# S.B. NO. 2143

**Report Title:**

DLNR; DOFAW; Wildfire Management Branch; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation

**Description:**

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.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

