



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Tuesday, March 13, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

By

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And

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University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1949 HD1 – RELATING TO THE GENERATION OF WILDFIRE SUSCEPTIBILITY MAPS FOR HAWAII

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1949 HD1 provided its adoption does not impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget. This measure establishes and appropriates funds for the University of Hawai'i to develop wildfire susceptibility and vulnerability maps for the State of Hawai'i.

These maps 1) help identify areas that are more susceptible to wildfire hazard, 2) allow decision-makers to prioritize high-risk areas for targeted risk reduction strategies, and 3) assist in the development of adaptation policies that lessen the disastrous impacts of future wildfires. Decision-makers can use wildfire vulnerability maps to guide zoning regulations to reduce the impact of wildfires on communities. Moreover, authorities will be more informed about policies allowing construction in vulnerable areas and locating essential facilities (e.g., hospitals, schools, and firefighting stations) in areas that are less vulnerable to wildfires.

In collaboration with the National Weather Service, the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources-Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, and county fire departments, the results of this project will be used to develop the best mitigation strategies such as ecological forest management (fuel reduction to restore to natural conditions), creation of defensible space (using native and/or fire-resistant vegetation), and development of greenbelts (diverse vegetation including trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, that act as natural buffers to create separation from wildlands) in each county to reduce the impacts of wildfires.

The UH Mānoa (UHM) College of Engineering and UHM Water Resources Research Center's research capabilities, combined with the extensive outreach activities and technical solutions from the UHM College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, will provide the full range of skillsets and research, as well as the climate data necessary to develop this important tool for Hawaii's decision-makers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 229
Tuesday, March 19, 2024 AT 3:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Higher Education

**COMMENTS on HB1949 HD1 RELATING TO THE GENERATION OF
WILDFIRE SUSCEPTIBILITY MAPS FOR HAWAII**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce would like to **COMMENT on HB1949 HD1** which requires the University of Hawaii to establish and implement a 2-year program to develop web-GIS wildfire susceptibility and vulnerability maps for the State of Hawaii to determine which communities, landscapes, buildings, and infrastructure are most vulnerable to future wildfires, appropriates moneys, and declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2025.

The Chamber supports and appreciates the University of Hawaii doing this project as it builds capacity and workforce in our state. However, we feel that the state should also explore private partners, who may be best skilled with previous experience and/or create university/private partnerships to accomplish this goal.

We would like to suggest that this effort and the effort in HB1924 (relating to a wildfire forecast system for Hawaii) be combined.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer **COMMENTS on HB1949 HD1**.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.