

**Testimony of
DAWN CHANG
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND**

**Friday, February 9, 2024
1:10 PM**

State Capitol, Conference Room 229, Via Videoconference

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2810
RELATING TO THE POLOLU VALLEY MANAGEMENT EFFORTS
ON HAWAI'I ISLAND**

Senate Bill 2810 proposes to appropriate moneys to the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (Department) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) for the management of Pololū Valley on Hawai'i Island, including various improvements necessary for conservation and protection. **The Department strongly supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

DOFAW received CIP funding to engage a community planning consultant to develop a Pololū Lookout Management Plan to address the increased visitor use and traffic issues that have increased substantially in recent years, as described in Section 1 of the measure. This planning effort engaged a broad array of community members in the North Kohala community and culminated in a draft plan that was presented to the broader community via in-person and virtual public meetings in late January and early February. A final draft plan is scheduled to be available in mid-2024, which will then drive the development and completion of an Environmental Assessment. We hope to present a Final Environmental Assessment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources for review and approval by the end of 2024.

The purpose of this measure and associated funding will be crucial in enabling the Department and DOFAW to implement specific actions called for in this community-driven management plan.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



TESTIMONY OF DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
Friday, February 9, 2024 1:10 p.m.

In consideration of

SB 2810

RELATING TO THE POLOLŪ VALLEY MANAGEMENT EFFORTS ON HAWAII ISLAND

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is in **support** of SB2810, appropriating funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to improve management of Pololū Valley in Kohala.

Pololū Valley is one of the hotspots community members and stakeholders identified as part of HTA's Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP). Issues include access, impacts to community and environment, safety, and cultural sensitivity. Action A in the Hawai'i Island DMAP calls to protect and preserve culturally significant places and hotspots.

HTA funded the Pololū Trail Steward Program in 2021 and 2022, a pilot project in collaboration with KUPU, DLNR, and the lineal descendent community of Pololū, Makanikahio and neighboring ahupua'a. The goal was to utilize local stewards to assist with interpreting the natural and cultural history of the area, as well as mitigate unwanted behaviors and ensure safety.

During the pilot project, four part-time stewards who were from the area assisted with visitor management, safety, and trail maintenance as well as sharing their knowledge of the Pololū area with visitors. During the months of August 2021-April 2022, data was collected daily from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m, including:

- 92,055 hikers present with an average of 219 hikers per day
- 14,378 vehicles
- Peak visits between 8:00 through 11:00 am.

To continue to provide safe and exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities for both our residents and visitors, it is important to fund management efforts at Pololū Valley.

We respectfully defer to our colleagues at the Department of Land and Natural Resources on matters related to the implementation of this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer these comments.