

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

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
FIRST DEPUTY

DEAN D. UYENO  
ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES  
ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on  
WAYS AND MEANS

Thursday, February 22, 2024  
10:05 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 2842 SENATE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

Senate Bill 2842 Senate Draft 1 establishes the Wildfire Safety Advisory Board within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to advise and make recommendations to state agencies concerning the State's wildfire safety and prevention efforts. **The Department provides comments on the bill, recommending the bill be merged with Senate Bill 2142 as written in the attached draft.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

# S.B. NO.2X42

---

---

## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State recognizes  
2 the increasing threat of wildfires to our communities, natural  
3 resources, and economy, and that the State is committed to  
4 proactively addressing this growing challenge through a  
5 comprehensive and collaborative approach. Understanding the need  
6 for a multifaceted strategy, the legislature further finds that  
7 a working group comprised of government agencies, fire experts,  
8 landowners, and stakeholders is required to find solutions that  
9 address the State's wildfire preparedness and mitigation  
10 challenges and increase the State's wildfire preparedness and  
11 mitigation practices.

12           Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a  
13 wildfire mitigation working group.

14           SECTION 2. (a) There is established a wildfire mitigation  
15 working group to develop a state wildfire mitigation plan and to  
16 advise and make recommendations to state agencies concerning the  
17 state's wildfire safety and prevention efforts.

18           (b) The working group shall consist of the following

# S.B. NO.2X42

1 members:

2 (1) The chairperson of the board of land and natural  
3 resources, or the chairperson's designee, who shall  
4 serve as co-chair of the working group.

5 (2) The chairperson of the state fire council, or the  
6 chairperson's designee, who shall serve as co-chair of  
7 the working group.

8 (3) The director of the Hawaii emergency management  
9 agency or the director's designee;

10 (4) The director of the office of planning and  
11 sustainable development or the director's designee;

12 (5) The director of transportation or their designee;

13 (6) The director of taxation or their designee;

14 (7) A representative of the ranching industry, to be  
15 invited by the chairperson of the state fire council;

16 (8) One member who shall be appointed by the president of  
17 the senate;

18 (9) One member who shall be appointed by the speaker of  
19 the house of representatives; and

20 (10) A representative of a Hawaii wildfire management  
21 organization, to be invited by the chairperson of the  
22 State fire council.

# S.B. NO.2X42

- 1 (c) The state wildfire mitigation plan shall:
- 2 (1) Identify and map wildfire susceptibility and
- 3 vulnerability to determine which communities,
- 4 landscapes, buildings, and infrastructure are most
- 5 vulnerable to future wildfires
- 6 (2) Identify tax incentives and develop recommendations for
- 7 a competitive grant funding opportunity to reduce fire
- 8 risk and support fuels management on private lands.
- 9 (3) Develop and make recommendation for a system of
- 10 monetary support for managing public land to reduce fire
- 11 risk;
- 12 (4) Review the emergency resources that are available in
- 13 the State to be deployed to address fires; and
- 14 (5) Advise and make recommendations to state agencies
- 15 concerning the state's wildfire safety, prevention, and
- 16 mitigation efforts.
- 17 (c) No member of the working group shall be subject to
- 18 chapter 84, Hawaii Revised Statutes, solely because of
- 19 that member's participation on the working group.
- 20 (d) The working group shall be dissolved on December 31,
- 21 2026.

# S.B. NO.2X42

1 SECTION 3. 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 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues  
17 of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much  
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for  
19 the administrative expenses of the wildfire mitigation working  
20 group established by section 2 of this Act including the  
21 establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)  
22 administrative staff position.

# S.B. NO.2X42

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

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

4

5

INTRODUCED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

6

# S.B. NO. 2X42

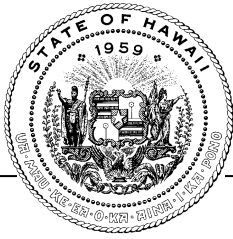
**Report Title:**

Wildfire Mitigation Working Group; Report; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation (\$)

**Description:**

Establishes the Wildfire Mitigation Working Group to advise and make recommendations to state agencies concerning the State's wildfire safety and prevention efforts.

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



**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF PLANNING  
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**MARY ALICE EVANS**  
INTERIM DIRECTOR

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii'i 96813  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii'i 96804

Telephone: (808) 587-2846  
Fax: (808) 587-2824  
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov/>

Statement of  
**MARY ALICE EVANS, Interim Director**

before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

Thursday, February 22, 2024

10:05 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211

in consideration of  
**BILL NO SB 2842, SD1**  
**RELATING TO WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports** Senate Bill 2842, S.D. 1 which establishes a Wildfire Safety Advisory Board within the Department of Land and Natural Resources to make recommendations concerning wildfire safety as well as to develop and update a wildfire mitigation plan.

OPSD considers efforts to prevent and mitigate the effects of future wildfires as imperative for the state of Hawaii. OPSD is appreciative of the changes made in the new SB2842 S.D. 1 draft of this bill, which consolidates potentially overlapping pieces of legislation. The revised S.D. 1 improves coordination and alignment to prevent duplication of effort and overlapping responsibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



TESTIMONY OF  
LEODOLOFF R. ASUNCION, JR.  
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
STATE OF HAWAII

TO THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
WAYS AND MEANS

February 22, 2024  
10:05 a.m.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

**MEASURE:** S.B. No. 2842 SD1

**TITLE:** RELATING TO WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION.

**DESCRIPTION:** Establishes the Wildfire Mitigation Working Group to advise and make recommendations to state agencies concerning the State's wildfire safety and prevention efforts. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation. Takes effect 7/1/2050. (SD1)

**POSITION:**

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") offers the following comments for consideration.

**COMMENTS:**

The Commission appreciates the intent of this measure to establish a Wildfire Safety Mitigation Working Group ("Working Group") that would advise and make recommendations to state agencies on issues concerning the State's wildfire safety and prevention efforts. The Commission agrees with the amendments reflected in the SD1 of this measure and offers the following additional recommendations related to the scope and membership of the Working Group.

The Commission believes the critical role of electric utilities in wildfire safety and mitigation is within the scope of this Working Group. The Commission noted in its February 7 testimony on S.B. 2842 that the California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board advises the California Public Utilities Commission on utility wildfire mitigation plans, requirements for these plans, and other wildfire safety matters. The Commission stands

by its testimony on S.B. 2842 that such an entity, whether an Advisory Board or Working Group, would allow for a more robust and expeditious evaluation of electric utility wildfire mitigation/protection plans and performance, assuming legislation that would require the Commission to review and approve such plans is adopted (referenced below as §269- ). Thus, to further clarify the intent of this measure, the Commission recommends the following amendment after paragraph (c)(5):

- (5) Advise and make recommendations to state agencies concerning the state's wildfire safety, prevention, and mitigation efforts;
- (6) Develop and make recommendations to the public utilities commission related to utility wildfire safety and mitigation performance metrics;
- (7) Develop and make recommendations related to the contents of electric utility wildfire mitigation/protection plans and plan updates pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes §269- ;  
and
- (8) Provide other advice and recommendations related to wildfire safety as requested by the public utilities commission.

Regarding Working Group membership as contemplated in the SD1 of this measure, the Commission further recommends members also include industry experts, academics, and persons with labor and workforce safety experience or other relevant qualifications and who represent a cross-section of relevant expertise including, members experienced in the safe operation, design, and engineering of electrical infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



## **TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII**

### **SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**FEBRUARY 22, 2024**

**SB 2842, SD1, RELATING TO WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** SB 2842, SD1, relating to wildfire safety and prevention. Pursuant to the “Public Safety and Disaster and Emergency Preparedness” section of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party supports “policy that protects the people of Hawai'i and their property against natural and man-made disasters,” and “believes that climate change is real, affirms human activity as its primary cause and main driver, and supports emergency preparedness and planning efforts to mitigate its impacts.”

Last year, we witnessed the impact of the climate emergency on our shores. On August 8, 2023, wildfires swept across Maui and killed at least 100 people, making it one of the nation's deadliest natural disasters. The spread of the fires has been attributed to climate change conditions, such as unusually dry landscapes and the confluence of a strong high-pressure system to the north and Hurricane Dora to the south.

The wildfires destroyed over 2,200 structures, including numerous residential buildings, historic landmarks, and school facilities. In September 2023, a report from the United States Department of Commerce estimated the total economic damage of the wildfires to be roughly \$5.5 billion.

According to a report issued by the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization on September 22, 2023, the unemployment rate on Maui was expected to soar above 11 percent by the end of 2023 and remain above 4 percent through 2026. A total of 10,448 new claims for unemployment in Maui County were filed in the four weeks following the wildfires, about 9,900 more than the preceding four weeks. Displaced families and workers who lost their jobs are still attempting to recover from the disaster, with a full recovery expected to take many years to achieve.

Accordingly, we must do all we can to prevent tragedies like this from occurring again on our shores, including by investing in long-term planning and interagency coordination to mitigate future emergencies. The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency released an updated State Hazard Mitigation Plan last November, in which the state's wildfire risk level soared 74 percent to 6.6 from its previous level of 3.8 in the 2018 draft of the report.

The updated hazard mitigation plan contains statistics on how many people by county are at risk from wildfire hazards. For Honolulu, 427,293 people could potentially be affected by wildfires, which was listed as the highest risk with a risk factor of 5.7. Maui County also has wildfires as its highest emergency risk with a score of 5.8 and 81,424 people at risk. On Kaua'i, wildfires carry a 5.6 risk level and threaten 27,604 people. Hawai'i Island has a wildfire risk score of 4.6 and 32,080 people at risk.

Wildfires are now designated as the top hazard in the state according to the updated HIEMA report. It is incumbent upon policymakers to respond with urgency to keep our communities safe.

Mahalo nui loa,

**Kris Coffield**  
*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*  
(808) 679-7454  
kriscoffield@gmail.com

**Abby Simmons**  
*Co-Chair, Legislative Committee*  
(808) 352-6818  
abbyalana808@gmail.com



**Hawai'i Forest Industry Association**

7192 Kalaniana'ole Hwy  
Suite A-143A, #249  
Honolulu, HI 96825  
Phone: 808/933/9411  
Email: hfia@hawaiiforest.org

**Date:** 02/19/24

**TO:** WAM Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and WAM Committee Members Aquino DeCoite, Hashimoto, Inouye, Kanuha, Kidani, Mercado Kim, Lee, Shimabukuro, Wakai, Fevella

**FROM:** Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA)

**SUBJECT:** Testimony in Support of SB2842 Relating to Wildfire Safety and Prevention SB2502 Relating to the Generation of Wildfire Susceptibility Maps for Hawaii

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Directors and members of the Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA), please support SB2842 Relating to Wildfire Safety and Prevention.

While we certainly hope that a disaster such as the wildfires of 2023 in Lahaina do not strike again, we understand that with ever increasing global emissions, warming climate trends, windy and dry conditions, and vast expanses of pyrophytic weeds and grasses surrounding our communities and covering concerningly sizeable swaths of our islands, it is inevitable that we will face future fires. The HFIA believes that establishing a wildfire mitigation working group will be beneficial to the people, infrastructures, the economy and natural resources of Hawaii and help us to minimize the frequency and severity of future wildfires.

We hope that you will support SB2842.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Guy Cellier, President  
Hawai'i Forest Industry Association

*HFIA's mission is to promote healthy and productive forests and a sustainable forest industry through management, education, planning, information exchange, and advocacy. HFIA has over 130 members including woodworkers, landowners, sawyers, foundations, foresters, growers, educators, environmentalists, architects, millers, ranchers, and others interested in HFIA's mission and goals.*

**HFIA Board of Directors**

Officers: President Guy Cellier, Vice President Irene Sprecher, Secretary Taylor Coons, Treasurer Wade Lee  
Directors: Jeremy Campbell, Aaron Hammer, Nicholas Koch, Michael Sowards, Aileen Yeh



**MAUI**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
VOICE OF BUSINESS

**LATE**

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
WAYS AND MEANS  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 225  
Thursday, February 22, 2024, 10:05 A.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair  
Members of the committee on Ways and Means

**SUPPORT SB2842 RELATING TO THE WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS SB2842.**

The Chamber supports the intent of this bill and, coming from Maui, we truly appreciate all of the efforts to help our island and the rest of our state given the lessons learned from the August 8 wildfires. However, we see a lot of overlap in proposed bills (bills on funding equipment and creating numerous boards and workgroups (SB2808, SB2356, SB2842, SB2143, etc.). There are many ideas addressing the same/similar solutions. Some appear to overlap in personnel and equipment and other ideas may just need to be integrated into a comprehensive program. While we appreciate the intent of all wildfire-related bills, we are hoping they can be integrated into a more cohesive and comprehensive plan to avoid duplication and overspending and get the best return on our investment, given that taxpayers will be expected to pay more for these new investments.

Senate Bill 2356 (Establishes within the Department of Defense the position and duties of State Wildfire Marshal, the position and duties of State Wildfire Chief, the State Wildfire Corps, and the State Wildfire Fuel Reduction Task Force) is a bill that could encompass the cohesive and comprehensive plan. We believe elements of SB2842 could be included in the State Wildfire Fuel Reduction Task Force, like having 3 economists in the group. Additionally, we would like to see each islands' major Chamber of Commerce included in the group as well as 2 members from the business sector.

For these reasons we **support SB2842**, but request that the Senate consider our comments on consolidation of bills into a comprehensive and coordinated plan.

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.