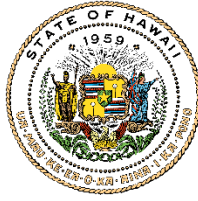


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson**

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

**Friday, March 14, 2025
1:00 PM**

State Capitol, Conference Room 229 and Via Videoconference

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1278, HOUSE DRAFT 2
RELATING TO HAZARDOUS TREE REMOVAL**

House Bill 1278, House Draft 2 proposes appropriating funding for the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (Division) to assess and remove hazardous trees on state lands across Hawai'i. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

Each year, the Division prunes or removes trees on the boundaries of Division-managed lands that pose safety risks to abutting or adjacent properties and roads. As a good neighbor, the Division seeks to remove these trees promptly, sometimes using staff or hiring trained arborists to address the situation promptly. The costs associated with hazardous tree removal are considerable. The work is ongoing and costly, with large boundary trees requiring case-by-case assessment and management.

The Department fully supports establishing an appropriation to sustain hazardous tree management. The appropriation would remove uncertainty from the budgeting process and alleviate the need to prioritize scarce resources in emergencies. Given the increase in unpredictable weather events, establishing this allocation will allow prompt attention to hazardous trees and protect human life and property.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

HB-1278-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 11:40:24 AM

Testimony for WTL on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Thibaut	Testifying for Maui Brewing Co. Restaurants	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 9, 2025

Greggor Ilagan Chair
Ikaika Hussey Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christopher Thibaut, and I live in Kailua, Hawai‘i. I am the CEO / Owner of Maui Brewing Co. Restaurants, with restaurant locations in Kailua, Waikiki, Ka'anapali, and Kihei.

We are testifying in strong support of Senate Bill 1278-SD1.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, we faced severe financial pressures due to island-wide lockdowns and government mandates affecting us even when we were allowed to open.

Fortunately, the federal government enacted programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that gave our business a lifeline. The Tax Department ruled in 2020 that income that we realized through the PPP, which we realized when the Government forgave the loan that it made to us when we applied to the PPP, was not subject to Hawai‘i general excise tax.

In 2021, the new administration enacted the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), a program specifically for the restaurant industry but that worked similarly to the PPP program. We applied for funds from the RRF, and the Government told us that the loan of those funds would be forgiven if, and only if, those funds were spent on expenses approved by the Government. If the money was not spent, or was spent on unapproved expenses, the money had to be returned.

That funding turned out to be essential to keep our restaurant going and to keep our workers employed. We spent all of the funding on Government-approved expenses. We thought that the 2020 general excise tax ruling would also apply to

the RRF grants, and we certainly didn't see in the RRF program guide that payment of state excise taxes was an approved expense for the RRF program.

Then, in 2023, we were surprised to learn that the Tax Department was demanding payment of back general excise taxes on the RRF grants.

We do not think that is right, and that is why we are in support of this bill.

Mahalo,

Christopher Thibaut

BIISC
23 E. Kawili St.
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 933-3340
www.biisc.org



March 11, 2025

Hearing: Senate Committee on Water and Land

RE: HB1278 HD2

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

I am writing to express support for HB1278, which appropriates funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the removal of albizia and other dangerous trees on state parcels that threaten residential areas. This bill is crucial in addressing the significant threat posed by albizia trees to our island's infrastructure and to public safety. Since 2013, the Big Island Invasive Species Committee (BIISC) has been actively involved in efforts to mitigate the impacts of albizia. These invasive trees have proven to be a serious problem, capable of causing widespread damage to property, infrastructure, and natural ecosystems.

The aftermath of Tropical Storm Iselle in 2014 highlighted the urgent need for action to address the albizia threat. The storm's impact was catastrophic, with fallen trees blocking roads making them impassable for emergency response personnel, motorists, and residents. Iselle underscored the critical importance of proactive measures to mitigate the risk posed by albizia trees, but even minor wind events and small storms have caused our residents to suffer from the impacts of fallen limbs and toppled trees. In Puna, where 77% of our households depend on catchment water, a single limb falling onto a catchment tank can mean a total loss of water to the home for days or even weeks, workdays lost to dealing with the problem, and thousands of dollars likely not covered by homeowner's insurance.

HB1278 represents a significant step forward to safeguard our communities, infrastructure, and natural environment.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.



Franny Kinslow Brewer
Program Manager
Big Island Invasive Species Committee

HB-1278-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 10:27:07 AM

Testimony for WTL on 3/14/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support.