



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 309 HD1  
RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Hawai'i State Capitol

April 4, 2025

10:46 AM

Conference Room 211

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

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits testimony in **SUPPORT of HB309 HD1**. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the UH Sea Grant College Program and appropriates funds to support creation of inventory and mapping of all fishponds on state land.

**Loko i'a (fishponds) are a valuable traditional and cultural resource that also hold the potential to help the State of Hawai'i meet its modern food security and sustainability goals.** The ancient Hawaiian ahupua'a system famously supported a population of over 1 million people; more people than currently live on present day O'ahu. Loko i'a were central to the system and, if re-implemented today, would help to restore native ecosystems, reduce food insecurity, and support local community based collaborative resource stewardship.

**A statewide inventory is a positive first step toward widespread loko i'a restoration.** Loko i'a restoration both protects Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices and promotes the use of resources in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of the selfsufficiency of the State.

OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** this measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter for Hawai'i's sustainable future.



# 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 Ways and Means  
Friday, April 4, 2025 at 10:46 a.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD

Director, University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program  
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Michael Bruno, Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### HB 309 HD1 – RELATING TO FISHPOND

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

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of this community initiative and provides the following comments on House Bill 309 HD1. This bill seeks to establish a fishpond inventory working group, led by Hawai'i Sea Grant, to create a comprehensive inventory of fishponds.

Hawai'i Sea Grant has long-standing collaborative working relationships with both the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and Hui Mālama Loko I'a, a network of practitioners, cultural leaders, educators, and communities dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and perpetuation of Hawaiian fishponds.

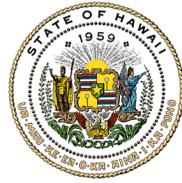
Hawai'i Sea Grant has supported the restoration of loko i'a and the perpetuation of loko i'a practice for decades as part of our mission to improve understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources. Loko i'a are invaluable cultural and ecological resources that support thriving coastal ecosystems, food security, and community resilience.

Hawai'i Sea Grant has partnered with Hui Mālama Loko I'a and DLNR on numerous projects. We look forward to continuing these partnerships and bringing the expertise of our program to support the important work of developing an inventory of fishponds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments of this measure.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DEAN M. MATSUKAWA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**APRIL 4, 2025  
10:46 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 211**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 309 HD1  
RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 309 HD1. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land, conduct a literature review, and appropriate funds. The Department supports this bill.

Documenting and mapping traditional Hawaiian fishponds will help preserve an important aspect of Hawaii's cultural food system heritage. The State's food security status would be positively impacted if viable fishponds were restored, and traditional aquaculture practices were revived.

As such, the Department supports this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





**STATE OF HAWAII  
HAWAII CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION  
COMMISSION  
POST OFFICE BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809**

**Testimony of  
LEAH LARAMEE  
Climate Change Coordinator on behalf of  
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission Co-Chair Mary Alice Evans and  
Co-Chair Dawn N.S. Chang**

**Before the Senate Committee on  
WAYS AND MEANS**

**Friday, April 4, 2025  
10:46 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

**In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 309, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

House Bill 309 House Draft 1 establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review and appropriates funds. The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) **supports** this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request. The Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 different departments, committees and counties with the purpose of promoting ambitious, climate-neutral, culturally responsive strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation in a manner that is clean, equitable and resilient.

It is important for there to be a centralized system of mapping and tracking loko i'a (Hawaiian fishponds) as they are both impacts by and play a role in mitigating climate change. Loko i'a provide important ecosystem services (e.g. sediment retention, flood mitigation, wave attenuation, stormwater filtering), and function as important nature-based solutions. Climate change driven sea level rise (SLR) will negatively affect some loko i'a due to SLR-driven salinization causing impacts to food security and cultural practices in Hawai'i.

Currently, 63% of seafood consumed in Hawai'i is imported. By increasing aquaculture in Hawai'i, we can reduce our reliance on imported foods, provide jobs, and minimize the strain on

our marine resources. By better understanding where fishponds historically and currently exist the state and partners can then better support the restoration of fishponds statewide, and result in valuable cultural and ecological services and climate resilience.

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

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
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**LATE**

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Morikawa, Vice Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: April 2, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB309 HD1, RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The act establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review. Appropriates funds.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Loko i'a are critical and vital public infrastructure that historically and traditionally are important to our culture, identity, and the overall well-being of our people here in Hawai'i.
2. In this modern day our Loko i'a addresses multiple situations and challenges that currently plague Hawai'i. Secure and functional Loko i'a enhances our environmental and ecological health, protects our cultural resources, and is one of the most sustainable and resilient agriculture systems in the World. The revitalization of our Loko i'a is foundational to our communities moving forward and adapting to the age of climate change.
3. This Loko i'a inventory is an important first step to increasing our situational awareness on the state of our fishponds. From there, we can begin to plan on and move towards the implementation of the restoration of our Loko i'a.

Mahalo for your consideration.



April 2, 2025

To: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki

Subject: **HB309 HD1, Relating to Fishponds**

Aloha,

I am submitting this testimony **in support of HB309 HD1** to establish a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program, to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review of sources such as Hawaiian language newspapers to compile this data.

Loko i'a (fishpond) systems play an important cultural and ecological role as part of larger ahupua'a restoration. In addition to serving as important sites of food production, reactivated loko i'a provide opportunities for building community connection through collaborative stewardship efforts and serve as a component of a broader movement for 'āina-based education. Practitioners are also observing a connection between loko i'a restoration and the health of nearshore fisheries.

Hawai'i Sea Grant's emphasis on collaboration across the university and with the people of Hawai'i coupled with its focus on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture make it the ideal host for this much needed working group on mapping loko i'a, a natural extension to the program's ongoing partnerships with fishpond practitioners and organizations.

"I ka wā ma mua, i ka wā ma hope" – we look to the past as a guide to the future. In the face of food supply and climate vulnerabilities, this 'ōlelo no'eau reminds us of the value of compiling much needed data on the locations and conditions of loko i'a in order to support a more resilient future. By creating an inventory of fishponds on state land, this measure provides an important first step towards revitalizing loko i'a across Hawai'i. I urge you to support HB309 HD1.

Mahalo,  
Janine Mariano & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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**The Food+ Policy internship** develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

**Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club**  
**99-045 Nalopaka Place**  
**`Aiea, Hawai'i 96701**  
[\*\*aliipauahi@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:aliipauahi@gmail.com)

*Testimony for HB309 HD1 Fishpond Inventory*  
*Hearing in WAM*  
*4/4/2025 at 10:46pm*

Aloha Kakahiaka e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Kehaulani Lum, and I am the Pelekikena of the Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club. a 50-year chartered member of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify on this most important measure. We express our heartfelt gratitude to the Committee for your commitment to hearing the voices of the stewards of loko i'a across the islands, as you deliberate HB 309 HD1, relating to Fishpond Inventory.

Ali'i Pauahi is based in the ahupua'a of 'Aiea and stewards the treasured historic royal fishpond, Loko I'a Pā'aiau, in Kalauao, which is listed on the State Historic Register as well as in the Pearl Harbor National Historic Memorial. Our effort to restore the fishpond to its original status is facilitated by cultural and archeological research that grounds its history in the time of Machu Picchu, under the leadership of Mō'i Wahine Kalanimanu'ia of O'ahu, over 400 years ago. This knowledge, as well as mo'olelo handed down through numerous sources from that time until today, guides our preservation plan. We have received two historic preservation awards for our efforts to date and will soon embark on a major restoration, thanks to the availability of vital site-specific information.

Ali'i Pauahi **strongly supports** HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i'a on State land. This bill will better enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawai'i; a legacy that deserves to be protected for future generations, especially, during today's changing times.

We humbly request your wholehearted support and passage of HB309 HD1.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Kehaulani Lum



**Senate Committee on Ways and Means**  
**Friday, April 4, 2025**  
**Testimony in Strong Support of H.B. 309, Relating to Fishponds**

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of **H.B. 309, Relating to Fishponds**. If enacted, this bill would establish a fishpond inventory working group, for the purpose of establishing a statewide inventory of all fishponds on state land.

Kupu is a statewide nonprofit founded in 2007 and headquartered in Hawai‘i, providing youths and young adults with opportunities to learn, serve, and work in ways that restore environments and communities. In the last 18 years, Kupu and its participants have done substantial mālama ‘āina (care and protection of land and waters) in Hawai‘i, including the removal of over 151,000 acres of invasive species, planting of over 1.6 million native plants, and providing training or employment to over 6,200 young adults. This has included providing support for organizations dedicated to the restoration and inventory of loko i‘a, and provision of education, training, and job opportunities for individuals regarding the inventory, management, or restoration of these brilliant examples of sustainable aquaculture and Indigenous cultural practice.

Accurate inventory of loko i‘a, as this bill may provide, would strengthen Hawai‘i’s capacity to prevent harm to these important aquacultural and cultural resources. In the longer term, it would improve Hawai‘i’s ability to utilize loko i‘a to increase our state’s self-sufficiency, and provide job opportunities for youths and young adults who want to make a career out of restoring these fishponds to their prior abundance, those who want to mālama them for their value as important cultural resources, or both. To support the desires and dreams of those whose jobs may one day be possible thanks to this bill, or whose minds, or stomachs may one day be filled with knowledge and food from restored loko i‘a, we urge its passage.

Mahalo hou, thank you again, for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of **H.B. 309, Relating to Fishponds.**

E Mālama Pono,

*Kāwika Riley*

Vice President, External Affairs

Kupu

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 11:01:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ted Bohlen	Testifying for Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**SUPPORT!**



Testimony Before The  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)  
**IN SUPPORT OF HB309 HD1**  
April 4, 2025, 10:46 a.m., Room 211 via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Brenda Asuncion Lima, Kua'āina Advocate and Hui Mālama Loko I'a Coordinator, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural resources continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) over 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

**KUA strongly supports HB309 HD1 as an incremental step toward 'āina momona.**

This measure would establish a working group in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant program, Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), and the Hui Mālama Loko I'a to develop an inventory of all fishponds on state land. HB309 HD1 would help kickstart a fishpond inventory and pave the way for DLNR to maintain the database going forward, in the process attracting more community group partners to be able to restore and manage their own fishponds. The benefits of healthy loko i'a are numerous – culturally, spiritually, environmentally, and economically, and with increasing threats to these wahi pana (special and sacred places), this bill comes at a critical time to dedicate more resources to fishpond protection and revitalization.

Prior to 1900, **Hawai'i had close to 500 flourishing loko i'a, sustaining communities in numerous ways including through sustainable local seafood, limu, shellfish, and fertilizer.** (See *Generally*, [Loko I'a Needs Assessment, 2021](#)). The U.S. Organic Act of 1900 (the Act) abandoned the support of most semblances of Native Hawaiian governance, especially in regard to biocultural resource management. The Act then transferred the aegis of governance – or lack thereof – to a U.S. laissez faire market system, ended Konohiki Fishery

Management, and condemned loko i'a – extinguishing most of the existing ownership and operations of these systems. For context, in 1901 the catch and sale data for commercial 'ama'ama (mullet) – believed to be mostly fishpond-raised – decreased from close to 800,000 pounds of fish to less than 3,000 pounds today, with an estimated 88% of all food consumed in Hawai'i now imported, and reports showing that about 60% of our seafood alone is imported. **Rebuilding our robust and sustainable local food systems is critical to community resilience in the face of more frequent natural disasters and political changes**, such as the devastating Lahaina fires and 2018 floods, climate change, pandemics, and recent widespread federal funding losses.

After the successful passage of [Act 124, HB2626 HD1 SD2](#) last year to ensure that any state-owned fishpond lease management plan utilizes time-tested practices through native Hawaiian scientific knowledge best-adapted to Hawai'i's environment, KUA found from both internal and public discussions that no current or active inventory of state-owned fishponds exists or is maintained by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). However, the [Hō'ala Loko I'a Program](#) was implemented in 2015 for state-owned fishpond permit streamlining, with to-date over 20 fishpond permits approved on six of the main Hawaiian Islands (an average processing time reduced from many years to under one month). We are also aware of at least three state-owned ponds currently leased by community members, with two specifically for community-based restoration activities. Indeed, as shown from the increase in permitted projects and recent lease finalization for state-owned Kalauha'ihai Pond on O'ahu, the momentum is growing for interest by communities to restore and steward their fishponds once again. **Community-based loko i'a restoration and stewardship serves as a resounding example of the endless benefits to be realized through collective sharing of responsibilities to care for our island home and resources.**

Establishing a working group to develop an inventory that could then be easily and actively maintained by DLNR would add to this momentum enabling more Native Hawaiian and local communities to restore and manage their fishponds, increasing more multi-sector partnerships where our "shared responsibility" to care for our island resources would benefit all of Hawai'i. As we build a better future for our keiki, we appreciate creative and collaborative approaches that build the capacity and skills of the next generation with intention, and in a way that benefits ongoing community efforts with loko i'a as a catalyst for ecosystem regeneration.

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe our environment, the foundation of our very existence and "that which feeds" us all, requires long-term investment through a shared vision of achieving 'āina momona (abundance) once again.** To get there requires dedicating more resources for mālama 'āina (caring for our environment), including through this measure to better understand and recognize the loko i'a of Hawai'i, as well as cultivate and highlight the importance of community involvement in caring for our shared biocultural resources like loko i'a. Our decisions today will continue to shape the future that our keiki's keiki's keiki will one day inherit – we hope for a future of shared and harmonious abundance, and hope you do, too.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to submit testimony. Please **PASS** HB309 HD1.

**Aloha 'Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.**



# HISTORIC HAWAI'I FOUNDATION

680 Iwilei Road Suite 690, Honolulu HI 96817 • (808) 523-2900 • [preservation@historichawaii.org](mailto:preservation@historichawaii.org) • [www.historichawaii.org](http://www.historichawaii.org)

**TO:** Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)

**FROM:** Kiersten Faulkner, Executive Director  
Historic Hawai'i Foundation

**Committee:** Friday, April 4, 2025  
10:46 a.m..  
Via Video Conference and Conference Room 221

**RE: HB 309 HD 1, Relating to Fishponds**

On behalf of Historic Hawai'i Foundation (HHF), I am writing in **support for HB 309 HD 1**. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review, and appropriates funds.

Hawaiian fishpond systems, loko i'a, are some of Hawai'i's most significant traditional cultural resources. They are tangible evidence of Hawaiian innovation in the areas of engineering, education, hydrology and aquaculture. Fishponds were a vital component of the agricultural, economic and natural resource management systems for native Hawaiian communities. Functioning fishponds are valuable cultural and ecological resources that can provide resilience for coastal ecosystems and their adjacent communities. They also contribute to sustainability, food sovereignty and natural resource management goals. Research shows that over 400 fishponds once functioned across the main Hawaiian Islands and provided a significant and sustainable food source to the Islands' pre-contact population, estimated at 1,000,000 people.

Over time, the traditional fishponds suffered from urbanization, changing socio-economic and agricultural systems, invasive species and damage from storms, flooding and tsunamis. However, there is renewed and growing interest in the repair, restoration, maintenance, and operation of traditional Hawaiian fishponds, for their cultural, economic and ecological value. An inventory of the remaining fishponds is a necessary element to stimulate traditional Hawaiian cultural activities and the restoration of fishpond systems. The community benefits will include supporting traditional Hawaiian cultural activities and the restoration of fishpond systems and their related food security and ecosystem services.

Therefore, Historic Hawai'i Foundation supports HB 309 HD 1.

# Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



April 4, 2025

Hawai'i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 309 HD1, Relating to Fishponds

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

The Ocean Legislative Task Force strongly supports HB309 HD1, relating to fishponds, which takes an important step toward restoring and sustaining Hawai'i's traditional fishponds. As a coalition of over 120 individuals from diverse organizations and communities, we recognize the critical role loko i'a play in strengthening food security, cultural heritage, and coastal resilience.

Establishing a working group to create and maintain a comprehensive fishpond inventory would provide a valuable foundation for streamlining restoration efforts. By ensuring that this inventory remains actively updated by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, there will be greater access to resources and support necessary to manage fishponds effectively. This initiative will also foster stronger partnerships, reinforcing the shared responsibility of caring for Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources.

Loko i'a are more than historical sites; they are living examples of sustainable aquaculture that can serve as a model for ecosystem regeneration. Investing in fishpond restoration not only revitalizes local food systems but also builds capacity for future generations to continue this stewardship. This measure represents an opportunity to merge traditional knowledge with modern restoration efforts, ensuring that communities have the tools and collaboration needed to sustain these efforts over time.

We deeply appreciate this committee's commitment to advancing solutions that empower communities while protecting Hawai'i's ocean resources. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the passage of this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

*The Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that promote funding for natural resource protection and restoration, ocean resources, coral reefs, subsistence fishing, and coastal resilience, and other priorities.*

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy  
Supporting HB309 HD1, Relating to Fishponds.  
Committee on Ways and Means  
April 4, 2025 at 10:46 am  
Conference Room 211 and via Videoconference**

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB309 HD1, which establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review.

TNC is a member of Hui Mālama Loko I'a, a community network dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and perpetuation of Hawaiian fishponds that has worked collaboratively with the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant Program and the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) on multiple projects. This bill would establish a working group that would develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land, which would enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships and participation in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawai'i. Additionally, TNC co-manages Loko I'a O Kīholo with partners Hui Aloha Kīholo and coordinates the Hawai'i Island network of fishpond and anchialine pond managers – Hui Loko.

Loko i'a hold countless benefits for our 'āina, community health and wellbeing, food sovereignty, and cultural integrity in Hawai'i. Loko i'a improve water quality by mitigating runoff and trapping sediment, enhance estuarine habitats by providing safe spaces for the cultivation of many native species of plants and wildlife, and protect shorelines from erosion by absorbing wave energy. Dedicating more resources for these sacred places is critical to their preservation for the benefit of future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB309 HD1.

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*Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.*

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Testimony Presented to  
Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair  
Friday, April 4, 2025, 10:46am  
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference  
by  
Ron Weidenbach, HAAA President

SUBJECT: Testimony in strong support for HB309 HD1 – Relating to Fishponds

Aloha Senator Dela Cruz, Chair, and Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair, Committee on Ways and Means

**The Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association (HAAA)**, established in 1975 and representing aquaculture industry members statewide, **testifies in strong support of HB 309 HD1** to establish a working group within the university of Hawaii sea grant program to develop an inventory of all fishponds on state land. Hawaii's remaining fishponds are both a cultural resource and potential seafood production resource. The proposed inventory of this resource will be valuable to their identification, preservation, and future use for community benefits and increased local seafood production.

The HAAA respectfully requests your approval of HB 309 HD1.

Mahalo,

Ronald P. Weidenbach,  
HAAA President



**LATE**

## Senate Committee on Ways and Means

### **Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: HB309 HD1**

April 4th, 2025 at 10:46am; Conference Room 211

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the committees,

HAPA is testifying in support of HB309 HD1 which establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review. Appropriates funds.

Loko i'a (fishpond) systems play an important cultural and ecological role as part of broader ahupua'a restoration. In addition to serving as important sites of food production, reactivated loko i'a provide opportunities for building community connection through collaborative stewardship efforts. Practitioners are also observing a connection between loko i'a restoration and the health and abundance of nearshore fisheries. The continued restoration of Hawai'i's loko i'a is a critical component of increasing local food security.

Key environmental benefits of loko i'a include :

#### **Sustainable food production:**

Loko i'a provide a consistent and reliable source of fish, reducing pressure on wild fish populations and promoting food security for local communities.

#### **Water quality improvement:**

By filtering water through vegetation and natural processes within the pond, loko i'a can help improve water quality in surrounding coastal areas.

#### **Fish population enhancement:**

Fishponds can act as nursery habitats for juvenile fish, supporting the replenishment of local fish stocks.

#### **Biodiversity conservation:**

The design of loko i'a can support a diverse range of aquatic life, promoting biodiversity within the fishpond ecosystem.

#### **Coastal erosion mitigation:**

Properly managed fishponds can help stabilize shorelines and reduce coastal erosion.



**Cultural preservation:**

Restoring and maintaining loko i'a helps preserve important cultural heritage and traditional knowledge practices of Kanaka 'ōiwi communities.

By creating an inventory of all state-owned loko i'a, this measure provides an important first step towards identifying their current status, identifying next steps and resources needed to revitalize more loko i'a across Hawai'i.

Please support HB 309 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick,  
Executive Director



# SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

**LATE**

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

April 4, 2025

10:46 AM

Conference Room 211

### In **SUPPORT** of **HB309 HD1**: RELATING TO FISHPONDS

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

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS HB309 HD1**, which represents a critical step towards the restoration and rejuvenation of our loko i'a, and by extension, our food security, cultural integrity, estuary health, and social fabric.

Hawai'i's loko i'a, or fishponds, are as remarkable as they are special. The various types of loko i'a found in our islands were constructed using highly sophisticated engineering and design techniques found nowhere else in the Pacific. They played a vital role in our islands' traditional food systems, which sustainably supported an estimated population of upwards of one million residents prior to the arrival of Western explorers. Their construction and stewardship also served important social functions, and they invariably held and continue to hold deep cultural significance in mo'olelo and cultural practices unique to each fishpond.

By making an investment in inventorying the remaining loko i'a owned by the state, this measure will provide a critical first step towards their restoration and rejuvenation. This in turn will help us to rebuild a foundation of our islands' food security – an especially critical need as our climate continues to destabilize, and as our dependency on imported food becomes ever more fragile. Restored and actively maintained loko i'a will further protect our ocean ecosystems, including through the mitigation of runoff and the enhancement and preservation of estuarine habitat. Finally, the community-driven restoration and stewardship of loko i'a that may be facilitated by this measure will also uplift a long-established foundation of our social and cultural fabric, providing opportunities for practitioners, students, community groups, and the broader public to connect over culturally grounded and place-based science, practices, and values.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i urges the Committee to **PASS** HB309 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

## **Testimony for HB309 HD1 Fishpond Inventory**

(Hearing in WAM 4/4/2025 at 10:46am)

E welina,

We, the Keepers of Kalāhuipua‘a Loko I‘a, **strongly support** HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i‘a on state land. The identification of Loko I‘a statewide will allow DLNR and other agencies to assist in the restoration and protection of Hawaiian fishpond systems. These ponds provide us with physical and spiritual nourishment. In the past 20 years, loko i‘a practitioners have gathered as individuals to form consortiums, HUI MĀLAMA LOKO I‘A and HUI LOKO, which is based on culture, community and education. But we still need help! The passing of HB309 HD1 would better enable State agencies to identify the needs and care of Loko I‘a.

### **Ke ola no ia o kia‘i loko**

*That is the livelihood of the keeper of the pond.*

Mahalo for your support,

Keepers of Kalāhuipua‘a (*Mauna Lani Loko*)

*Danny Akaka Jr*

*Anna Akaka*

*Francis Ruddle*

*Kāhōkū Hurley*

*Ethan Souza*

*Pi‘i La‘eha*



**Paepae o He'eia**

*He'eia Fishpond, He'eia O'ahu*

*P.O Box 6355, Kane'ohe HI 96744 – ph: (808) 236-6178 – admin@paepaeoheeia.org*

Testimony Before The  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)

**IN SUPPORT OF HB309 HD1**

April 4, 2025, 10:46 a.m., Room 211 via Videoconference

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Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

We are Paepae o He'eia from He'eia, Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu. Our organization is tasked with the restoration, maintenance, and care of the 800-year old He'eia Fishpond.

We **strongly support** HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land. This bill will better enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawai'i.

As kia'i (guardians/caretakers) of our fishpond for 20+ years, we have firsthand knowledge of the many benefits loko i'a bring to individuals, families, local communities and even visitors. Health and well-being for our local people, food security, perpetuation of Hawaiian cultural practices, environmental restoration and resilience – these are but a few of the many things that fishponds contribute to our island's social fabric today.

All loko i'a are treasures given to us by our kūpuna as places to feed people. Sometimes that sustenance comes in the form of physical calories and other times it is *'ike* (knowledge) to make a more informed decision that will positively impact our islands. No matter how it happens, fishponds are catalysts for educating, impacting, and galvanizing all of us to make more pono decisions for Hawai'i.

Please **PASS** HB309 HD1!

Me ke mahalo,

**Hi'ilei Kawelo**  
**Executive Director**

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Tiani Cook from Ka Honua Momona, Moloka'i. I am the Executive Director of our non-profit organization where we take care of Ali'i & Kaloko'eli- two ancient Hawaiian loko i'a (fishponds). I strongly support HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land. This bill will better enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawai'i.

Loko i'a holds countless benefits for our 'āina, community health and wellbeing, food sovereignty, and cultural integrity in Hawai'i, and dedicating more resources for these sacred places is critical in this time of increasing political uncertainties and environmental changes.

Please **PASS** HB309 HD1!

Me ke aloha nui,

**Tiani Pua'a-Kawa'auhau Cook**

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 7:27:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Bishop	Testifying for Friends of Hanauma Bay	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

Friends of Hanauma Bay strongly supports this common sense bill to retain a key element of living Hawaiian culture before more of that history is lost forever. All distinguished members are asked to work pro bono with reasonable compensation for travel expenses, so as long as UH does not add on a large pass through administrative fee, this much needed study should be able to be accomplished professionally for a minimal cost to the taxpayer but a huge benefit to the people of Hawai'i.

Please pass this bill.

With Aloha,

Lisa Bishop, MS

President

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 8:29:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Isaac "Paka" Harp	Testifying for Makani Hou O Kaloko-Honokohau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Kakou,*

*Please support HB309 HD1 to increase food security for Hawaii.*

*Mahalo nui, Isaac "Paka" Harp*

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 6:49:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is YOUR NAME, and I strongly support HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land.

This bill will better enable DLN to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawaii.

Loko i'a hold countless benefits for our 'āina, community health and wellbeing, food sovereignty, and cultural integrity in Hawaii, and dedicating more resources for these sacred places is critical in this time of increasing political uncertainties and environmental changes.

Please PASS HB309 HD1!

Mahalo nui loa, thank you so much,

Kristen Young  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 9:10:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Chair and Committee Members,

Loko i‘a (fishpond) systems play an important cultural and ecological role as part of larger ahupua‘a restoration. In addition to serving as important sites of food production, reactivated loko i‘a provide opportunities for building community connection through collaborative stewardship efforts. Practitioners are also observing a connection between loko i‘a restoration and the health of nearshore fisheries.

By creating an inventory of all state-owned loko i‘a, this measure provides an important first step towards identifying next steps to revitalize more loko i‘a across Hawai‘i. Please support HB309 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 8:22:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Damien Nakoa Kahahawai Farrant	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Dr. Nākoa Kahahawai Farrant and I'm from Paumalū, Ko'olauloa, O'ahu. Since childhood, I have been lucky to have opportunities to work extensively at loko i'a around Hawai'i. My experiences at Loko Ea fishpond in Hale'iwa played a key role in improving my understanding of 'āina restoration and my development as a kanaka, a community member, and as a researcher. Loko i'a continue to be sources of resilience on our 'āina as the climate continues to change. They take flows of water and nutrients from mauka to makai to create abundance of i'a, limu and other food and cultural resources. These on-going restoration projects continue to provide a critical space for kānaka and local communities to ground their lives in cultural practices and to develop young leaders in the next generation.

Loko Ea provided the first space for me to conduct culturally grounded research to identify ways that we can draw on 'ike kūpuna (Hawaiian knowledge) and contemporary scientific methods to advance our understanding of how to restore loko i'a. I have been fortunate to engage in research at He'eia Fishpond and Kalou in Waiale'e, O'ahu. I have also participated in restoration at Pāhonu in Waimānalo, Waikalua Loko, Huilua, and Pā'aiau all on O'ahu. I have also been lucky to visit loko i'a across Hawai'i from Alakoko on Kaua'i to Haleolono on Moku o Keawe. It has been amazing to see the progress that has come from the energy that community members have poured into loko i'a individually and through the network Hui Mālama Loko I'a that Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo plays a key role in facilitating.

Just as many of these organizations have raised the kuapā (walls) surrounding many of these fishponds to create a space for fish to thrive, they provided an environment where I could thrive as a culturally grounded researcher. There is no limit on the ways that loko i'a can uplift generations of kānaka and local community members. In order for these stories of success rising out of the loko i'a restoration movement to continue, we have to turn to the leaders who have the expertise and decades of experience conducting restoration before now. Please continue to support this movement by creating a working group drawing on experts from KUA and Hui Mālama Loko I'a.

Mahalo and please pass HB309 HD1!

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 4:56:25 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Walter Ritte	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Walter Ritte and I am a fishpond operator on the island of Molokai.

The Sate of Hawaii should turn the ownerwship of all their ponds to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs as part of their obligation of the 20% ceded lands trust.

Mahalo,

Walter Ritte

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 6:50:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for HB309 HD1 to a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 7:16:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Coe	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Opposition -

While I understand the intent of this bill, money and resources could be better utilized elsewhere. Perhaps a successful NGO could take this on and even expand the inventory to include all fishponds, not just State-owned ones.

Thanks for you time and consideration.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 8:59:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara Quimby	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Ways and Means April 3, 2025

In SUPPORT of HB309 HD1: RELATING TO FISHPONDS

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Barbara Quimby, and I am a resident of Kailua. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 309 HD1. **I strongly support this bill.**

The bill establishes a fishpond (loko i‘a) inventory working group in partnership with the University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program, DLNR, and Hui Mālama Loko I‘a to create an inventory and map of all loko i‘a on state lands. Gathering more information and knowledge about these loko i‘a will better enable DLNR to identify and care for these valuable places and provide greater cultural, social, and ecological benefit to our State. The restoration and protection of loko i‘a offers tremendous potential value for community health and well-being, food sovereignty and security, cultural integrity, and social-ecological resilience in Hawai‘i. They also provide exceptional educational opportunities for K-12 and higher education students, as spaces for exploration, experimentation, and connection to Hawaii’s distinctive history and natural environment.

I urge you to **PASS** HB309 HD1.

Me ke aloha ‘āina momona,

Barbara Quimby, PhD

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 9:05:41 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amber Datta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Amber Datta from Hōnaunau, Hawai'i Island, and I strongly support HB309. This bill will better enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawai'i. Creating an inventory is a critical first step towards strengthening the role of our loko i'a in providing for food security and perpetuating cultural practices.

Mahalo,

Amber

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 9:41:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
robin knox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Save the Wetlands Hui **STRONGLY** supports this bill to inventory and research the fishponds. Fishponds are a vital man-made wetlands recognized internationally by the RAMSAR International Convention on Wetlands. Fishponds are an important part of Hawaiian culture, demonstrating the level of indigenous ingenuity and ecological ike of traditional practices. Fishponds provided food security to pre-contact Hawaiians and have the potential to do so again. Knowing the location and mo'olelo of the fishponds will provide communities with a sense of place and history. Restoration of fishponds can provide communities with healthful, meaningful activity that immerses thme in Hawaiian culture and builds community connection. Fishponds contribute to climate resiience, those on the coast are kia'i protecting our shorelines.

Mahalo nui loa for considering this bill and allowing our input. Robin S. Knox, QEP; Chief Scientist Save the Wetlands Hui.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 11:10:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 8:05:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Roberta Ku'ulei Keakealani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

He ali'i ka 'āina, he kauwā ke kānaka, as a generational steward of Kīholo loko in the ahupua'a of Pu'uwa'awa'a, North Kona, this loko i'a has provided for my 'ohana for many generations, spanning hundreds of years. I strongly support the establishment of a collaborative working group to create a map as well as an inventory of all loko i'a on State lands. This collaboration between Sea Grant, DLNR and Hui Mālama Loko i'a is very necessary and is most sensible as collaboration of many communities who are kia'i loko are already established and thriving. In fact, next week, Hawai'i island will be hosting the annual Hui Mālama Loko i'a gathering and our site Ka Loko o Kīholo will be hosting Saturday's huaka'i for participants to huli ka lima i lalo. We, Hui Aloha Kīholo and TNC, will be one of several loko i'a sites to offer mālama 'āina time in our respective location. To further the good workings of our communities State-wide please pass HB309.

Me ka mahalo~ R. Ku'ulei Keakealani

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/4/2025 10:13:49 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2025 10:46:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ashley Galacgac	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senate Committee on Ways of Means,

My name is Ashley Ancheta Galacgac and I support HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land.

This is one step of getting back people to their connections to stewarding their resources. People are ready to feed their 'Ohana.

Mahalo,

Ashley Ancheta Galacgac

Aloha e chair Dela Cruz, vice chair Moriwaki & committee chair members,

My name is Fredo Dela Rosa III lineal descendant of Waipi'o Valley on Hawaii island. (Ililoa Lokowai) and I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all Loko i'a on state lands. This bill will better enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships in the restoration and protection of Loko i'a throughout Hawai'i. Loko i'a hold countless benefits for our 'āina community health and wellbeing, food sovereignty. More resources for these sacred places is critical in this time of increasing political uncertainties and environmental changes.

PLEASE PASS HB309 HD1

Me ke aloha 'āina momona,  
Fredo Dela Rosa III

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Kumiko Hasegawa Mattison, and I am with 'Āina Ho'ōla Initiative, which is restoring the Lokowaka Pond complex in Hilo, Hawai'i Island.

I strongly support HB309 HD1, which will establish a collaborative working group to inventory all loko i'a on state land. This bill is essential for enabling DLNR to better identify, restore, and protect these vital cultural and ecological sites through increased community partnerships.

Loko i'a provide immense benefits—supporting 'āina health, community well-being, food sovereignty, and cultural integrity. In this time of growing environmental and political uncertainty, dedicating resources to these sacred places is more critical than ever.

I urge you to PASS HB309 HD1 to uphold the stewardship of loko i'a for future generations.

Me ke aloha 'āina momona,

Kumiko Hasegawa Mattison

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

I am Amanda Millin from Mānoa representing myself as a loko iʻa practitioner and marine scientist. I have worked as a program manager at both Mālama Loko Ea (a loko iʻa in Haleiwa) and Mālama Puʻuloa (a loko iʻa in ʻEwa.) Currently, I help mālama Huilua loko iʻa in Kahana Bay and Pāhonu loko iʻa in Waimānalo, while being an active member in the Cross-Pacific Indigenous Aquaculture Collaborative.

**Along with many of my marine science colleagues and fellow loko iʻa practitioners, I support HB309 as an incremental step on a pathway towards ʻāina momona.**

This measure would establish a working group in collaboration with the University of Hawaiʻi Sea Grant program, Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), and the Hui Mālama Loko Iʻa to develop an inventory of all fishponds on state land. HB309 HD1 would help kickstart a fishpond inventory and pave the way for DLNR to maintain the database going forward, in the process attracting more community group partners to be able to restore and manage their own fishponds. The benefits of healthy loko iʻa are numerous – culturally, spiritually, environmentally, and economically, and with increasing threats to these wahi pana (special and sacred places), this bill comes at a critical time to dedicate more resources to fishpond protection and revitalization.

Prior to 1900, **Hawaiʻi had close to 500 flourishing loko iʻa, sustaining communities in numerous ways including through sustainable local seafood, limu, shellfish, and fertilizer.** (See *Generally, Loko Iʻa Needs Assessment, 2021*). The U.S. Organic Act of 1900 (the Act) abandoned the support of most semblances of Native Hawaiian governance, especially in regard to biocultural resource management. The Act then transferred the aegis of governance – or lack thereof – to a U.S. laissez faire market system, ended Konohiki Fishery Management, and condemned loko iʻa – extinguishing most of the existing ownership and operations of these systems. For context, in 1901 the catch and sale data for commercial ʻamaʻama (mullet) – believed to be mostly fishpond-raised – decreased from close to 800,000 pounds of fish to less than 3,000 pounds today, with an estimated 88% of all food consumed in Hawaiʻi now imported, and reports showing that about 60% of our seafood alone is imported. **Rebuilding our robust and sustainable local food systems is critical to community resilience in the face of more frequent natural disasters and political changes**, such as the devastating Lahaina fires and 2018 floods, climate change, pandemics, and recent widespread federal funding losses.

After the successful passage of [Act 124, HB2626 HD1 SD2](#) last year to ensure that any state-owned fishpond lease management plan utilizes time-tested practices through native Hawaiian scientific knowledge best-adapted to Hawaiʻi's environment, KUA found from both internal and public discussions that no current or active inventory of state-owned fishponds exists or is maintained by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). However, the [Hōʻala Loko Iʻa Program](#) was implemented in 2015 for state-owned fishpond permit streamlining, with to-date over 20 fishpond permits approved on six of the main Hawaiian Islands (an average processing time reduced from many years to under one month). We are also aware of at least three state-owned ponds currently leased by community members, with two specifically for community-based restoration activities. Indeed, as shown from the increase in permitted projects and recent lease finalization for state-owned Kalauhaʻihaʻi Pond on Oʻahu, the momentum is growing for interest by communities to restore and steward their fishponds once again. **Community-based loko iʻa restoration and stewardship serves as a resounding**

**example of the endless benefits to be realized through collective sharing of responsibilities to care for our island home and resources.**

Establishing a working group to develop an inventory that could then be easily and actively maintained by DLNR would add to this momentum enabling more Native Hawaiian and local communities to restore and manage their fishponds, increasing more multi-sector partnerships where our “shared responsibility” to care for our island resources would benefit all of Hawai‘i. As we build a better future for our keiki, we appreciate creative and collaborative approaches that build the capacity and skills of the next generation with intention, and in a way that benefits ongoing community efforts with loko i‘a as a catalyst for ecosystem regeneration.

The communities myself and my hui work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe our environment, the foundation of our very existence and “that which feeds” us all, requires long-term investment through a shared vision of achieving ‘āina momona (abundance) once again.** To get there requires dedicating more resources for mālama ‘āina (caring for our environment), including through this measure to better understand and recognize the loko i‘a of Hawai‘i, as well as cultivate and highlight the importance of community involvement in caring for our shared biocultural resources like loko i‘a. Our decisions today will continue to shape the future that our keiki’s keiki’s keiki will one day inherit – we hope for a future of shared and harmonious abundance, and hope you do, too.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to submit testimony. Please **PASS** HB309 HD1. **Aloha ‘Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.**

Me ka ha'aha'a (humbly/respectfully)  
Amanda

**LATE**

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

My name is Pohai Olomua, and I serve as the Operations Manager for the Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving Hawaii's rich cultural and ecological heritage through loko i'a restoration. I write in strong support of HB309 HD1, which seeks to establish a collaborative working group to develop a comprehensive inventory of all loko i'a on state land.

This bill is a vital step toward empowering DLNR to better identify, restore, and protect these cherished fishponds through strengthened community partnerships. Loko i'a are more than historic sites—they are living systems that nourish our 'āina, fortify food sovereignty, enhance community well-being, and uphold Hawaiian cultural integrity. At a time of increasing political uncertainty and environmental challenges, dedicating resources to safeguard these sacred places is not just important—it is urgent.

I urge your support for this bill to ensure loko i'a continue to thrive for generations to come.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Pohai Olomua