



To: The Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts (TCA)
and
The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment (AEN)
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 1:01pm

In strong opposition to SB52

Aloha Chairs Lee and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Inouye and Richards, and Committee members,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly opposes SB52**.

SB52 states the legislature finds that climate change is the most pressing issue of our time. 350Hawaii fully agrees. The planet faces an existential climate crisis and we must act now.

This bill also states the legislature recognizes that air travelers are “increasingly aware” of the climate change implications of their travel and notes that ease of purchasing offsets may have the effect of enhancing the desirability of travel to Hawaii. However, while carbon offset schemes claim to compensate for emissions with no cost to the climate – they don’t actually do that. They are simply an accounting trick.

According to the UN IPCC report, if we are serious about averting catastrophic planetary changes, we need to reduce emissions by 45 percent by 2030. Trees planted today can’t grow fast enough to achieve this goal. So even if the purchased offset is ‘verified,’ a newly planted tree can take as many as 20 years to capture the amount of CO2 that a carbon offset scheme promises. And during those decades we have to hope that this tree will survive the droughts, wildfires, and tree diseases that are occurring because of the global warming humans continue to cause by our on-going greenhouse gas emissions.

Moreover, new research shows that the Earth’s overheated climate will alter forests at a global scale. The study suggests that by 2040 forests will take up only half as much CO2 from the atmosphere as they do now, if global temperatures keep rising at the present pace, and that trees will start to exhale more CO2 than they can take in through photosynthesis.

It is important to also note that Indigenous rights organizations have labeled carbon offsets as “a further act of colonization,” stating that carbon offsets are a false solution to climate change, and that these carbon offset schemes create many negative impacts on the rights and livelihoods of women, Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Bottomline, carbon offsets are a distraction from the real solution to climate change, which is to reduce our carbon emissions. Offsetting simply allows companies like airlines to avoid taking meaningful action

on their carbon emissions and to continue with their unsustainable behavior while shifting their responsibility for the climate onto the consumer. These carbon offsets then allow individuals to feel better about polluting without actually doing anything about those emissions.

If we're serious about tackling climate change, there is only one answer to the problem: reducing our emissions. And that will mean moving away from a tourist economy to one that is more diversified and resilient.

Polluting industries have helped to "fuel" the denial that has enabled blocking any meaningful action to confront global warming. As a result, we have lost precious time and are now in the midst of a climate crisis. We cannot afford to waste more time on PR schemes. Our only recourse now is to act swiftly and boldly to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions lest we steal our children's future. We must continue to do our part to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org

SB-52

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 1:27:53 PM

Testimony for TCA on 2/5/2025 1:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE this bill. Will only raise costs.