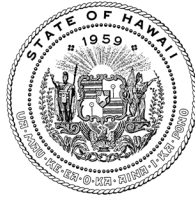


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ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on  
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Friday, April 11, 2025  
10:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 56  
URGING THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP A  
NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Senate Concurrent Resolution 56 urges the United States government to develop a national biodiversity strategy. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure.**

Much of Hawai'i's unique plants and wildlife are found nowhere else on Earth, and these species and their habitats face tremendous challenges due to habitat loss and the introduction of non-native invasive species. More than half of the native habitats have been lost, and the introduction of non-native plants, animals, and diseases constitutes an ongoing threat to species in restricted ranges. A national biodiversity strategy would support the coordination and planning needed to reduce the threats of these invasive species and identify the need for additional funding and capacity to manage Hawai'i's native species. On a State level, Hawai'i has committed to protecting 30% of our priority watershed forests by 2030 and is undertaking other biodiversity initiatives across habitats from marine to alpine ecosystems. The success of these goals largely depends on support from the federal government in providing funds, staff, and policies to protect native biodiversity.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and House Committee Members on Agriculture and food systems,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy submits testimony in **strong support** of SCR56, which urges the United States government to develop a National Biodiversity Strategy. In Hawaii our identity, health, and survival are deeply intertwined with the 'āina. The loss of biodiversity is visible in the dying coral reefs, the shrinking forests, the empty lo'i, and the silencing of birdsongs that once greeted our mornings. Along with being the native species capital of the world Hawai'i is the **endangered species capital of the world**. This is a glaring reminder of the devastating consequences that demand urgent attention.

Right now, **biosecurity threats** like the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle are not only decimating native trees like niu, but also threatening our food systems, our cultural practices, and our ability to feed ourselves in the future. We can't afford to let these losses continue unchecked. A national strategy helps bring the resources and coordination necessary to protect Hawai'i's fragile ecosystems, which can serve as an example of the broader biodiversity crisis facing the planet.

Another critical element of this resolution is increasing educational awareness around biodiversity issues. People can't care about what they don't know exists. This bill calls upon the general public to provide development of a biodiversity strategy. Extending input to the people who know their 'āina, who have generational knowledge on their lands and waters is essential in developing an effective strategy. Biodiversity loss is irreversible. Once a species disappears, it's gone forever and there are no second chances. That is why passing this resolution is not just important, it's urgent. It's a necessary step to protect the heritage of this Hawai'i and the country before it's too late.

Mahalo,

The Food+ Policy Team

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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.

**SCR-56**

Submitted on: 4/9/2025 5:57:25 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/11/2025 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Melissa Price	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in support of this legislation. Hawai'i has more than 580 endangered and threatened species (~25% of the nation's endangered species). These unique species contribute to our nation's biodiversity, alongside critical ecosystem services such as pollination, seed dispersal, and pest control. Recent research in my lab demonstrates that we can save these species and return them to abundance for future generations to enjoy. Community and government support are critical to these efforts, and this legislation is an important step.

**SCR-56**

Submitted on: 4/10/2025 7:19:29 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/11/2025 10:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Stacy Lucas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write in support of the resolution urging the United States government to develop a national biodiversity strategy. As residents of Hawai‘i, where the relationship between people and nature is deeply rooted in cultural identity, sustainability, and community well-being, We believe it is critical that the US take bold and coordinated action to address the accelerating biodiversity crisis.

Hawai‘i is both a beacon of biodiversity and a warning sign—home to over 550 endangered species, yet disproportionately underfunded in conservation efforts (Spectrum News, 2023). The loss of native ecosystems and species is not just an ecological concern—it is directly tied to the health, security, and sustainability of our food systems. Native species and ecosystems provide critical services such as pollination, pest control, soil fertility, and water retention, all of which are essential for sustainable food production (Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, 2023; FoodPrint, 2023).

Hawai‘i currently imports nearly 90% of our food, making us highly vulnerable to disruptions in supply chains and climate-related events (Hawai‘i Sea Grant, 2018). Strengthening local food systems is a priority, but doing so depends on preserving the natural biodiversity that supports resilient agriculture, traditional crops, and subsistence practices (University of Hawai‘i News, 2024; BFN, 2018). The biodiversity crisis threatens this goal by degrading the natural environment that is needed for food self-sufficiency.

The impacts of invasive species and climate change, which are accelerated by biodiversity loss, are already reducing the productivity and reliability of agricultural land across the islands (Juniper Publishers, 2018). Developing a national biodiversity strategy would support Hawai‘i’s efforts to restore native ecosystems and improve food security by aligning federal support with

local and Indigenous knowledge systems (Transforming Hawai‘i’s Food Systems Together, 2025).

This resolution is timely and necessary. It promotes science-based decision-making, equity, and collaboration. These values are essential to addressing food insecurity and environmental degradation together. Protecting biodiversity is not just about saving species; it is about ensuring that our keiki and future generations have access to healthy, culturally appropriate, and locally grown food.

Mahalo for your consideration and commitment to this critical issue.

Respectfully,

Stacy Lucas

Food+ Policy Intern, University of Hawai‘i-West O‘ahu

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