



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Monday, February 24, 2025 at 2:00 p.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 FISHPONDS

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports House Bill 309 HD1 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

House Bill 309 HD1 proposes to establish a fishpond inventory working group led by Hawai'i Sea Grant to develop an 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 testimony in support of this bill.

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 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308

HOUSE BILL NO. 309 HD1
RELATING TO FISHPONDS

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

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. Important to note that the purpose of traditional Hawaiian fishponds was for food production including, but not limited to shellfish, shrimp/prawn, and limu. The Department of Agriculture requests that on Page 3, line 16, item (9) be added to include the foods that were grown in the specific fishponds as part of the inventory of information being gathered.

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



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

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
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MANAGEMENT
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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
FINANCE

Monday, February 24, 2025
2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

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

House Bill 309, House Draft 1, proposes to establish a fishpond inventory working group with the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory of all state-owned fishponds. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

The Department has a close working relationship with Hui Mālama Loko I'a, a collaborative network of practitioners, cultural leaders, educators, and communities dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and perpetuation of Hawaiian fishponds. The Department recognizes that loko i'a are an integral part of Hawaiian culture, history, and sustainability practices, and that they showcase the ecological knowledge of early Hawaiian communities. Loko i'a are invaluable cultural and ecological resources that contribute positively to coastal ecosystems and the well-being of their adjacent communities.

In conjunction with Hui members, the Department developed the Ho'āla Loko I'a program to streamline the permitting process for the restoration and maintenance of traditional Hawaiian fishpond systems. Approximately 20 community organizations have utilized the streamlined program since its inception in 2015.

The Department believes that developing an inventory of fishponds is an important next step in the restoration of additional loko i'a throughout the State

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



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

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 24, 2025

2:00 PM

Conference Room 308

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance:

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.

OHA is the constitutionally established body created to uphold the State's public trust duties to Native Hawaiians and protect and advocate for Native Hawaiian traditional practices and cultural resources. Loko i'a (fishponds) are a valuable traditional and cultural resource that also provides solutions and support for modern-day self-sufficiency goals.

Pre-contact Hawaiians developed an approach to resource management that sustained an abundance of resources for over a millennium.¹ The ancient Hawaiian economy was enduring and able to self-sustain a population of over 1 million more people than currently live on present day O'ahu.² Loko i'a were central to the fully developed moku system design for self-sufficiency, and if re-implemented today, would help to restore improve our modern native ecosystems, help 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 and an affirmative step by the State to meet their public trust obligations. Loko i'a restoration both protects Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices and promotes the use of

¹ Kawika B. Winter et al., *The Moku System: Managing Biocultural Resources for Abundance within Social-Ecological Regions in Hawai'i*, 10 SUSTAINABILITY, Oct. 4 2018.

² Kamanamaikalani Beamer, *Island and Indigenous Systems of Circularity: How Hawai'i can inform the Development of Universal Circular Economy Policy Goals*, 28 ECOLOGY AND SOC'Y, no. 1, 2023, at 4.

resources in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of the self-sufficiency of the State. [OBJ]

For the reasons above, we respectfully urge this committee to **pass HB309 HD1**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter for Hawai‘i’s sustainable future.

Josh Green
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



Co-Chairs:
Chair, DLNR
Director, OPSPD

Commissioners:
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Chair, Senate WTL
Chair, House EEP
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Chairperson, DOE
Director, C+C DPP
Director, Maui DP
Director, Hawai'i DP
Director, Kaua'i DP
The Adjutant General
Manager, CZM

**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 House Committee on
FINANCE**

**Monday, February 24, 2025
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & 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 impacted 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.



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

February 24, 2025

2:00 PM

Conference Room 308

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

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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 unique. The various types of loko i'a found in our islands were constructed using highly sophisticated engineering and design strategies 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. Such restoration and stewardship of loko i'a 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 science, practices, and values – and further protect our ocean ecosystems, including through the mitigation of runoff and the enhancement and preservation of estuarine habitat.

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

Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



February 24, 2025

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Legislature

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

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force strongly supports House Bill 309, relating to fishponds, which takes an important step toward restoring and sustaining Hawai'i's traditional fishponds. As a coalition of over 100 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 Before The
House Committee on Finance (FIN)
IN SUPPORT OF HB309 HD1
February 24, 2025, 2:00 p.m., Room 308 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 – at one time producing an average of 400-600 pounds of fish per acre per year, yielding over 2 million pounds of fish annually throughout Hawai'i. (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** such as the devastating Lahaina fires and 2018 floods, climate change, and long lasting pandemics.

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'iha'i 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, is about long-term investment and a vision of 'āina momona.** To get there requires taking the steps necessary for greater self-sufficiency, development of new and more innovative career pathways, mindsets, relationships, and resources for mālama 'āina efforts that encourage and build upon the time-tested techniques of our ancestors in Hawai'i.

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

Aloha 'Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.

HB-309-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 7:49:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Ted Bohlen | Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

SUPPORT!



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Negus Manna
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India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, O'ahu

Natalie Urminska
Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports HB309.**

By establishing a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program, the bill underscores the need for a dedicated body to conduct thorough research and documentation, providing a foundation for informed management and conservation strategies.

The allocation of funds to facilitate this detailed exploration of state-owned fishponds is an investment in Hawaii's rich cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. Through a comprehensive literature review and up-to-date mapping, HB309 supports the sustaining of traditional practices that can complement modern production methods, fostering resilience and food security. This effort aligns well with the broader goals of the Hawaii Farmers Union by promoting sustainable production systems and integration of traditional ecological knowledge.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union



February 22, 2025

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and the House Committee on Finance

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,
Jeanette Burdick & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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
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'Aiea, Hawai'i 96701
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Testimony Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Monday, February 24, 2025
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In support of

HB 309 HD 1

Aloha Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Finance,

Mahalo nui loa for your steadfast aloha and for the opportunity to present testimony today.

My name is Kehaulani Lum, and I am the Pelekikena (President) of Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club which was founded in 1973 and chartered in that same year as a member of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AHCC). AHCC was founded in 1918 by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, Hawai'i's delegate to the U.S. Congress, and has a membership of over 5,000 members (and their clubs) in Hawai'i and across the country, all of whom advocate for the improvement and perpetuation of Native Hawaiian culture, health, economic development, education, social welfare, nationhood and other Native Hawaiian practices.

We are humbled and honored to offer our strong support for HB 309 HD1 and respectfully request the Committee's approval of this measure.

Through our Civic Club commitment, Ali'i Pauahi accepted the kuleana of entering into a relationship with the U.S. Navy in 2014 to help restore Loko I'a Pā'aiau, one of the last remaining fishponds in the federal stewardship area of Pu'uloa (Pearl Harbor). We have welcomed over 30,000 residents, visitors, schools, businesses, non-profit organizations, and local, national and international dignitaries to the fishpond, to help return Queen Kalanimanu'ia's ecological system of peace and abundance to full operation again. The Queen built the pond around 500 years ago, during the time of Machu Picchu, and along with two others in her complex, 'Opu and Pa'akea, left a legacy of aloha until today. Except for a period of 80 years, when the public was not able to access the pond, beginning shortly after the bombing of the harbor, it operated as a valuable space for our ancestors to thrive. Today, as we

work together to remove the silt, invasive species and detritus that was not present during the Queen's time, it is a beacon of light and evidence of the greatness that is created when community, government, schools, businesses, and concerned individuals work together in the spirit of aloha towards a common purpose based on clarity and understanding of who we are, where we came from, and where we are headed.

As a national historic site, we have benefited greatly in our design and planning from the Navy's archeological and preservation plans, as well as from the treasures of historical context that are found in the State's Bureau of Conveyance, Hawaii State Archives, Native Hawaiian language newspapers, the esteemed Mary Kawena Pukui's scholarship, oral histories, māhele documents, and numerous other references. Sources that require hours of on-site work.

In fact, it was through an original native testimony, which we uncovered while researching Loko I'a Pā'aiau at the Hawaii State Archives, that we discovered the original presence of a unique and vital feature, called a "kī'apu," that is not visible today. Without this awareness, no matter how much future effort and fiscal resources that we may have expended, the ecological integrity of the fishpond might have been forever fleeting. A proper inventory is critical.

We are grateful to the makers of this resolution for understanding the cultural need for this working group, inventory, mapping, and reporting. And, we echo the sentiments of all who support its passage.

In addition, we offer, with great interest, at this moment, that beyond its cultural and ecological merits, it is the kuleana of the State of Hawai'i to mālama all of its resources, on the land and in the waters, as a matter of societal well-being. The report of this working group may inspire significant community-wide benefits, via improved mental health of restoration and visitors activity. According to an article published in Nature Communications in 2019, scientists Buckley, Brough, Hague et al. calculated the economic value of protected public areas (non-park) derived from the improved mental health of visitors. "A conservative global estimate using quality-adjusted life years, a standard measure in health economics, is US \$6 trillion p.a. This is an order of magnitude greater than the global value of protected area tourism, and two to three orders greater than global aggregate protected area management agency budgets."

Our own study, led by Dr. Thao Le, of UH CTAHR, at Loko I'a Pā'aiau, found that Native Hawaiian DOE youth who engage in fishpond restoration are happier, less anxious, and perform better in school and at home. Further, they are better equipped to pursue futures in academics (college and certificate), employment in trades, and/or seek jobs that will lead to a happy and productive life after graduation. When our youth are well cared for, happy, and engaged, society benefits for the long run.

Mahalo nui loa for your serious consideration and support,

Me ke aloha pumehana, Kehaulani Lum, Pelekikena

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting HB309 Relating to Fishpond Inventory**

**House Committee on Finance
February 24, 2025, 2:00 pm
House conference room 308 Via Video Conference**

Aloha pumehana e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

The Nature Conservancy **strongly supports** HB309 HD1 to establish a collaborative working group to develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land, better enabling 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.

Loko i'a hold 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.

Our organization co-manages Loko I'a O Kīholo with partners Hui Aloha Kīholo, is a member of the Hui Mālama Loko I'a and coordinates the Hawaii Island network of fishpond and anchialine pond managers – Hui Loko.

Please support Hawaii's heritage and loko i'a and **PASS** HB309 HD1!

Me ke aloha 'āina,

Emily J Fielding
Director, Hawai'i Marine Program

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i and Palmyra 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 work in over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands. We forge partnerships with government, private parties, and communities to protect forests and coral reefs for their ecological values and for the many benefits they provide to people.

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HB-309-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2025 7:00:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jenny Yagodich | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

SUPPORT for 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 state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review, and to appropriate funds.

Mahalo

FROM THE DESK OF
MARY ANN K. PAHUKOA

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 309
RELATING TO FISHPONDS
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 21, 2025

As a woman of East Maui and part of a family of subsistence fishers, I strongly support HB309, Establishing a working group to develop an inventory of Hawaii fishponds. Traditional Hawaiian fishponds (loko i'a) are vital to shoreline habitats, serving as nurseries for native fish and supporting biodiversity by creating a balanced ecosystem between freshwater, seawater, and coastal vegetation. These ponds act as natural filters, improving water quality while providing sustainable, locally sourced seafood, which is crucial for food sovereignty and reducing reliance on imported goods.

Restoring and maintaining loko i'a revives indigenous aquaculture practices, strengthens community-based stewardship, and builds resilience against climate change impacts. By integrating 'ike Hawaii, traditional knowledge with modern conservation efforts, fishponds help sustain both cultural heritage and local food systems today, and for our future generations.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support.

Me Ke Aloha 'Āina 'O'i'a'i'o,



MARY ANN K. PAHUKOA



HB-309-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:47:12 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Shauna Springer | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

kāko‘o wau i kēia pila *HB309*.

I support this bill.

mahalo!

HB-309-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:56:12 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Amber Datta | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha:

I am writing as a Hawai'i resident in support of this bill. Loko I'a (fishponds) are an important as a cultural and subsistence resource for our communities, and serve as a nursery for fish and a habitat for birds. Creating an inventory working group and understanding the current status of fishponds across the islands is an important step towards their revitalization.

Mahalo,

Amber Datta