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GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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

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

Wednesday, February 5, 2025  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
**SENATE BILL 1084**  
**RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Senate Bill 1084 proposes to appropriate funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this bill, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget Request.**

The mission of the Department's Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) is to work with the people of Hawai'i to manage, conserve and restore the state's unique aquatic resources and ecosystems for present and future generations. This measure would provide much-needed capacity for DAR to carry out this mission.

DAR processes up to 300 environmental reviews and 75 Special Activity Permits (SAPs) per year. In recent years, the number of requests for SAPs, film permits, and environmental reviews has increased, and DAR has struggled to keep up. This is despite DAR assigning additional staff to assist with permitting and environmental review, as well as efforts to streamline the processing of SAPs through modifications to the online application portal. Establishing two (2) new Aquatic Biologist positions for permitting and environmental review will enable DAR to process permits and environmental reviews thoroughly and in a timely manner to ensure that impacts to aquatic resources and habitats are minimized and mitigated.

Natural disasters and acute anthropogenic impact events are occurring with increasing frequency. Emergency preparedness is key to minimizing long-term damage when they occur. This bill would establish a new lead Aquatic Biologist position to coordinate environmental response to

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CHAIRPERSON  
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FIRST DEPUTY

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

emergencies, including response to storm events, ship groundings, oil spills, and other disasters. This position would develop response plans and provide training and coordination with DAR District Biologists and other agencies, such as the Hawai'i Department of Health, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the US Coast Guard.

DAR is currently dealing with major outbreaks of an invasive soft coral in Pearl Harbor and an invasive anemone in Kāne'ōhe Bay that threaten to severely alter the landscape of Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystem. Investing in the prevention and management of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is critical to ensure the integrity and resilience of our coral reefs. This bill would establish a new Aquatic Biologist position to serve as the lead biologist for DAR's AIS team to manage and prevent non-native species introduction via ship ballast water, vessel hull fouling, and other sources.

Fishing is a way of life for so many in Hawai'i. Ensuring fishing access and quality fishing opportunities for residents and visitors alike is a high priority for DAR. Due to staff retirement and internal reorganization, DAR currently lacks a position dedicated to supporting noncommercial fishing, which encompasses subsistence, cultural, and recreational fishing and gathering activities. This bill would establish a new Noncommercial Fisheries Aquatic Biologist position to focus on overseeing noncommercial fisheries projects, developing and implementing recreational and subsistence fishing opportunities, liaising with the fishing community, and improving noncommercial fisheries catch and effort surveys.

DAR currently has no civil service staff on Molokai, despite the growing needs of the community. Establishing two (2) Aquatic Biologist positions and two (2) Fishery Technician positions on Molokai will enable DAR to better serve the Molokai community through aquatic resource monitoring, collaborative research, issuance of licenses and permits, and education and outreach.

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

**SB-1084**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:56:54 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>                     | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jacqueline Leinau   | Testifying for Malama<br>Pupukea Waimea | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Mālama Pūpūkea Waimea Supports SB1084 which appropriates funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources. Mahalo.

**SB-1084**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:25:54 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

| <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:

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition **SUPPORTS** additional positions funding for DLNR DAR. The additional positions will help DAR protect reefs, oceans, ecosystems and related species. Mahalo!

# Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



February 5, 2025

Senate Committee on Water & Land  
Hawai'i State Legislature

Re: SUPPORT for Senate Bill 19, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources; and  
SUPPORT for Senate Bill 1084, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force supports SB 19 and SB 1084, relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources. These bills appropriate funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force represents more than 100 individuals and organizations who are committed to advancing the protection and restoration of Hawai'i marine resources. This work is not possible without the qualified and hardworking DLNR public servants who are responsible on a day-to-day basis for ensuring environmental regulations are implemented and enforced.

We deeply appreciate this committee's commitment to advancing solutions that empower communities while protecting Hawai'i's ocean resources. Funding for needed staffing at DLNR is vital to a healthy marine ecosystem. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the passage of these bills.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of these important measures.

*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.*

**SB-1084**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:54:10 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am in strong support and urge you to pass this measure.