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H.B. NO. 2895

A Bill for an Act Relating to Environmental Impact Statements.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is a need to clarify that the preparation of environmental assessments or environmental impact statements should identify and address effects on Hawaii's culture, and traditional and customary rights.

The legislature also finds that native Hawaiian culture plays a vital role in preserving and advancing the unique quality of life and the "aloha spirit" in Hawaii. Articles IX and XII of the state constitution, other state laws, and the courts of the State impose on government agencies a duty to promote and protect cultural beliefs, practices, and resources of native Hawaiians as well as other ethnic groups.

Moreover, the past failure to require native Hawaiian cultural impact assessments has resulted in the loss and destruction of many important cultural resources and has interfered with the exercise of native Hawaiian culture. The legislature further finds that due consideration of the effects of human activities on native Hawaiian culture and the exercise thereof is necessary to ensure the continued existence, development, and exercise of native Hawaiian culture.

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Require that environmental impact statements include the disclosure of the effects of a proposed action on the cultural practices of the community and State; and
- (2) Amend the definition of "significant effect" to include adverse effects on cultural practices.

SECTION 2. Section 343-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending the definitions of "environmental impact statement" or "statement" and "significant effect", to read as follows:

"Environmental impact statement" or "statement" means an informational document prepared in compliance with the rules adopted under section 343-6 and which discloses the environmental effects of a proposed action, effects of a proposed action on the economic [and] welfare, social welfare, and cultural practices of the community and State, effects of the economic activities arising out of the proposed action, measures proposed to minimize adverse effects, and alternatives to the action and their environmental effects.

The initial statement filed for public review shall be referred to as the draft statement and shall be distinguished from the final statement which is the document that has incorporated the public's comments and the responses to those comments. The final statement is the document that shall be evaluated for acceptability by the respective accepting authority.

"Significant effect" means the sum of effects on the quality of the environment, including actions that irrevocably commit a natural resource, curtail the range of beneficial uses of the environment, are contrary to the State's environmental policies or long-term environmental goals as established by law, or adversely affect

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the economic [or] welfare, social welfare[.], or cultural practices of the community and State.”

SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved April 26, 2000.)