

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 14 2025

RE: S.B. No. 617
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Government Operations, to which was referred S.B. No. 617 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Require each draft environmental assessment or draft environmental impact statement to receive a public hearing in the community directly affected by the underlying proposed action; and
- (2) Require the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to adopt administrative rules.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from Animal Rights Hawai'i and two individuals.

Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Department of Land and Natural Resources and Office of Planning and Sustainable Development.

Your Committees find that there are concerns from many communities in the State that they do not have an adequate voice in the decisions that directly affect them, including proposed land use actions. Your Committees note that holding public



hearings in communities directly affected by a proposed action would ensure that areas that are often underserved and underrepresented receive an opportunity for direct input and engagement with critical issues that require environmental assessments or environmental impact statements. Your Committees note that the existing environmental review process requires a thirty-day public comment period on a draft environmental assessment. According to testimony received by your Committees, the administrative burden to conduct all the public hearings required in this measure would be substantial. Amendments to this measure are therefore necessary to address this concern.

Accordingly, your Committees have amended this measure by:

- (1) Requiring each draft environmental impact statement to receive a public hearing in the community affected by the underlying proposed action; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Government Operations that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 617, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 617, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committees on Judiciary and Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committees on Agriculture and
Environment and Government
Operations,



ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, Chair



MIKE GABBARD, Chair



