



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 86**  
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES.  
House Committee on Water and Land  
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 6, 2025

9:00 AM

Room 411

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Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT of HB86** which appropriates moneys to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent Makai Watch Coordinator position. Funding a full-time coordinator is a smart investment to ensure the continued success of the Makai Watch program which not only recognizes and empowers community co-management of resources but also saves DLNR money by having citizens serve as the eyes and ears of the department.

OHA recognizes the value and importance of community-based stewardship and management which, in practice, is aligned with Native Hawaiian traditional and customary resource management practices. The Makai Watch program is a collaborative, statewide program that engages citizens and non-profits in the management of marine resources by promoting compliance with rules and community-based education and monitoring of resources. The Makai Watch program engages people who are directly impacted or live closest to the natural and cultural resources and are thus in the best position to assist in understanding the overall landscape. This is a modern reflection of the ahupua'a management practices led by konohiki (caretakers) and aha councils (place-based subject matter experts). In funding this position, the Makai Watch program is able to commit to facilitating community engagement, and leverage government resources to protect the natural and cultural resources.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT of HB86**.

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

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LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
DAWN N.S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on  
WATER & LAND

Thursday, February 6, 2025  
9:00 AM

Via Videoconference, State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 86  
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill 86 proposes to appropriate moneys to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent Makai Watch Coordinator position. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

The Makai Watch Coordinator works with existing and prospective Makai Watch communities throughout the state to train and inform them on rules and regulations relating to marine activities. Additionally, the Makai Watch Coordinator trains these communities on how to document and report violations as well as acting as a liaison between communities and the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE). The Makai Watch Coordinator is a very important position within DOCARE as the Makai Watch Program expands DOCARE's enforcement footprint and gives communities an opportunity to engage with the Department concerning their valued ocean resources.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



Testimony Before The  
House Committee on Water and Land (WAL)  
**IN SUPPORT OF HB86**

February 6, 2025, 9:00 a.m., Room 411 & Via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Kevin Chang, Kua'āina Advocate and Executive Director, 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 supports HB86 as an incremental step towards 'āina momona.**

This bill would appropriate funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to secure state funding for the full-time permanent Makai Watch Coordinator position.

The state's [Makai Watch Program](#) was formed in the early 2000s as a collaborative statewide program where community members and groups can partner with DLNR's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE), Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), and Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR) to help monitor, educate, and promote our state nearshore fishery laws and rules. The program has grown significantly since its inception, now involving collaborations over 20 different communities on five of the main Hawaiian Islands. **For over twenty years now, the Makai Watch Program has served to better enable DOCARE, DAR, and DOBOR to more effectively manage the state's nearshore fisheries, which has proven to be far too great a task for one state agency alone to effectively manage without strong community support and partnerships.**

KUA was surprised to learn that funding for the state's Makai Watch Program, including the main Coordinator position and two new island-based positions, has to-date received no dedicated state funding, supported only by various grants and federal funding. **Individual community groups also need to apply for their own grant funding to participate in this program – a big barrier to effectively gaining more community support and stability to continue participation.** Indeed, it is a wonder that this program has continued to grow considering this lack of funding – but we envision *how much more it could grow* with dedicated state funding. Furthermore, the Makai Watch Program website clearly states that while funding has been supported only by grants thus far, it was at some point DOCARE's intention to request funding for the Coordinator position in their budget "to institutionalize the position within DLNR-DOCARE." We also heard that the position was funded in 2019 through legislation, but never filled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and then a hiring freeze, and eventually the funding and position lapsed.

**Many of the communities in our KUA networks are part of the Makai Watch Program, which serves as a great example of successful community partnerships with the state, building trust and relationships, while also better enabling awareness of and compliance with established state rules.** Many others we talked to were unaware that the state provided no dedicated funding for this program, especially given its widespread recognition, support, and community participation. With the current political climate of federal funding in a constant flux, it is evermore important to ensure our state is caring for its own regardless. Establishing state funding for the main Coordinator position for our well-established Makai Watch Program is a good and reasonable place to start.

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 it requires taking the steps necessary for greater self-sufficiency, development of a pipeline of new and more innovative career pathways, mindsets, relationships, and resources for mālama 'āina efforts. Passing this bill out of your committee supports reaching our goal to once again realize the abundant and thriving ecological balance in Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support. Please **PASS** HB86.

**Aloha 'Āina Momona no Nā Kau ā Kau.**

# Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



February 6, 2025

House Committee on Water and Land  
Hawai'i State Legislature

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 86, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force strongly supports House Bill 86, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources, which takes an important step toward strengthening the Makai Watch program and ensuring the long-term sustainability of Hawai'i's nearshore marine resources. As a coalition of over 100 individuals from diverse organizations and communities, we recognize the critical role Makai Watch plays in promoting collaborative stewardship, enhancing coastal resilience, and protecting vital marine ecosystems.

Establishing a permanent Makai Watch Coordinator position within the Department of Land and Natural Resources would provide a valuable foundation for streamlining program efforts. By ensuring that this position remains actively engaged with community stakeholders and agency partners, there will be greater access to resources and support necessary to manage nearshore marine areas effectively. This initiative will also foster stronger partnerships, reinforcing the shared responsibility of caring for Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources.

This serves as more than a community-driven initiative; it is a model of co-management that bridges traditional knowledge with modern conservation strategies. Investing in the program not only strengthens marine resource management but also builds capacity for future generations to continue this stewardship. This measure represents an opportunity to expand public engagement in resource protection while empowering local communities with 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.*

**HB-86**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 9:41:08 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Yagodich	Malama Pūpūkea-Waimea	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

We write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB86 which will appropriate moneys to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) permanent Statewide Makai Watch Coordinator position.

We are proud to have been the first State of Hawai'i Makai Watch program on O'ahu.

The Hawai'i Makai Watch Program is a collaborative, statewide initiative where communities become directly involved with the Department of Land and Natural Resources's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DLNR/DOCARE) in the management and protection of nearshore marine resources through promoting education and compliance to rules and regulations. Created in the early 2000's, the Makai Watch approach is based on the idea that people who utilize, serve, and live closest to our natural and cultural resources are in the best position to help protect them. There are currently over 20 Makai Watch communities across the state collectively contributing to ensuring nearshore marine abundance now, and for future generations.

Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea (MPW), the organization that stewards the Pūpūkea Marine Life Conservation District, became O'ahu's first Makai Watch community in 2005. In partnership with DLNR/DOCARE, and in collaboration with the Statewide Makai Watch Coordinator, MPW has trained hundreds of volunteers who have conducted thousands of educational interventions and effectively reported hundreds of in-progress violations. This collaborative approach has resulted in an increase of awareness about the rules and regulations protecting our marine resources and a decrease in both intentional and unintentional poaching. This has a direct, positive impact on the nearshore marine environment.

Mahalo for your support of HB86 to establish a full-time, permanent Statewide Makai Watch Coordinator position.

Jenny Yagodich, Director of Educational Programs, Malama Pūpūkea-Waimea



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Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the House Water & Land Committee,

The Hawaii 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 HB86.**

By facilitating increased community involvement and collaboration, this position will play an integral role in promoting the sustainable management of our natural resources. A full-time coordinator will provide the necessary leadership and organization to enhance the program's effectiveness, ensuring that conservation actions are not only initiated but sustained over the long term.

The Hawaii Farmers Union recognizes the interconnectedness of land and sea, understanding that healthy marine ecosystems are crucial for agricultural prosperity. Coastal degradation and declining fish populations can adversely impact traditional farming practices and jeopardize the livelihoods of those who depend on nature's balance. By supporting HB86, we are advocating for a system that nurtures Hawaii's environmental integrity and economic resilience.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawaii Farmers Union

**HB-86**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 11:48:53 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

A DOCARE Makai Watch Coordinator is essential to organizing the support needs of marine communities, stewardship efforts and DOCARE agents.

**HB-86**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 7:01:09 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chad Wiggins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

I began supporting Makai Watch as a nonprofit partner in 2008 and remain engaged today as a community coordinator, fisher, and sailor in west Hawai'i Island. Over the years the program has gotten better and more effective due in large part to DLNR coordination of many diverse ocean people

Since Its inception, the Makai Watch Program has amplified the capacity of the DLNR through Active engagement with and training of oceangoers. For every Enforcement agent there are thousands of us who spend time on the water and know our ocean well. By working together and sharing knowledge, we create a protective net for the waters that feed us.

Coordination is vital to weave this net and to mend it when it is torn, as happens in community empowerment work from time to time. We cannot rely on the positive momentum that has been built through many years of solid coordination to sustain the program forever. We must invest in enduring coordination to maximize the capacity and return on investment of this successful experiment.

The result of perpetuating Makai Watch by ensuring coordination will be more engaged constituent communities, fewer violations, and healthier oceans for all of us to enjoy. Thank to to DLNR for leading this vital program and to you for approving this sensible bill to keep it going.

Sincerely,

Chad Wiggins

chad@kiholo.org