



# 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 Higher Education  
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Brennon T. Morioka, Dean  
College of Engineering

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### SB 1146 SD1 – RELATING TO THE ALA WAI CANAL

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

It is a pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of SB 1146 SD1 which is intended to engage the University of Hawai'i to assist the state in the development of an action plan and pre-engineering concepts to help address the debris accumulation and management as well as water quality issues in the Ala Wai Canal and the overall watershed.

The University of Hawai'i, through the College of Engineering, SOEST, and the UH Community Design Center, has been asked by the state to work with the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Department of Transportation (HDOT) to develop solutions for both near-term and long-term management of debris within the watershed that ends up in the canal and Ala Wai Boat Harbor areas following intense rain and weather events as witnessed recently over the last few months. This watershed is a critical component of an important ecosystem and natural resource both in terms of access and recreation for local residents but also an incredible asset for Hawaii's economy.

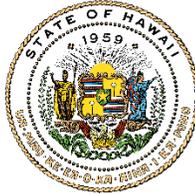
Through the use of student projects and faculty and industry mentoring, we believe this kind of collaboration between government, academia and industry professionals can serve as a sustainable and productive model for solution-oriented initiatives that can be utilized for a variety of problems facing our state.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our testimony in support and respectfully ask for your favorable consideration, provided its adoption does not impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget.

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

Testimony of  
DAWN N.S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on  
HIGHER EDUCATION

Wednesday, March 12, 2025  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 1146 SENATE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO THE ALA WAI CANAL

Senate Bill 1146 Senate Draft 1 proposes to appropriate funds to the University of Hawai'i for the development of an action plan and pre-engineering concept plan to help with debris management and water quality control in the Ala Wai watershed. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure as amended.**

Currently, during storms and heavy weather, debris—consisting of both vegetation and non-natural items—enters the Ala Wai Canal, Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor, and ultimately the ocean from the upstream reaches of the Pālolo, Makiki, and Mānoa Streams. This debris creates potential navigational hazards for boaters and recreational users of the canal, harbor, and ocean waters. The Department notes that much of this debris originates outside of its jurisdiction (the Ala Wai Canal and Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor), yet the Department is regularly responsible for clearing the debris with its own funds, and sometimes with its own staff.

The Department's Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR) has installed a permanent debris trap spanning a portion of the area where the Ala Wai Canal meets the Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor. This debris trap catches about 30% of the debris that comes through the waterway during storms and heavy weather, which must then be cleared by heavy machinery. DOBOR pays its contractor about \$20,000 each time this debris trap needs to be cleared.

In the recent heavy rains in January 2025 alone, DOBOR expended a total of \$115,128.93 for debris trap cleanup, a significant and avoidable amount that could be put towards better uses such as harbor improvements. The Department appreciates the cooperation and assistance from the Hawai'i Department of Transportation and City & County of Honolulu in this most recent

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES  
ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

weather event, but these last-minute cleanups, while still preventative in nature, are only a temporary solution to the longstanding problem because they do not address the issue at its source. A long-term, proactive solution is needed to ensure that an adequate plan is in place to minimize the impact of weather events on debris levels across the entire Ala Wai watershed.

Therefore, the Department is supportive of any assistance it can receive regarding this issue and looks forward to working with the University of Hawai'i College of Engineering in developing near-term and long-term solutions to the chronic and recurring issues of debris management and water quality in the Ala Wai watershed.

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

**SB-1146-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 10:02:29 AM

Testimony for HED on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jillian Anderson	Waikiki Neighborhood Board	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Waikiki Neighborhood Board stands in **support** of SB1146 SD1.

For residents living along the Ala Wai Canal, seeing debris buildup along the waterway, especially following heavy rains, is an all too common sight. Increasing dedicated efforts for debris management and water quality control would greatly help in reducing the negative impacts experienced regularly by those who both live along and engage in recreational activities in and near the canal.

As we saw following heavy rains in October 2024, the lack of preventative actions and continual management caused for severe debris buildup at the Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor and floating debris continued to be visible in the days following as it made its way down the canal.

An action plan and pre-engineering concept would allow us to be proactive rather than reactive in these circumstances, which is vital for the safe recreational use of the canal and harbor, as well as for the aquatic habitats in and near this waterway.

For these reasons, the Waikiki Neighborhood Board asks for your continued support of this measure which would greatly benefit our community.



Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 2:00pm.

By  
Rick Egged, President  
Waikiki Beach Special Improvement District Association

SB1146 SD1 - RELATING TO THE ALA WAI CANAL

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato and honorable members of the committee:

**The Waikiki Beach Special Improvement District Association (WBSIDA) is pleased to provide this testimony in support of SB1146 SD1** which is intended to engage the University of Hawai‘i to assist the state in the development of an action plan and pre-engineering concepts to help address the debris accumulation and management as well as water quality issues in the Ala Wai Canal and the overall watershed.

Cleaning-up the Ala Wai Canal is in the best interest of the entire community. It has also attracted the attention of local and international partners committed to healthy ecosystems and community resilience. Improving the Ala Wai Canal requires management of its tributaries from Mānoa, Makiki and Palolo valleys, and in turn, managing the Ala Wai Watershed to mitigate run-off and pollution. As such, an Ala Wai “cleanup” can be a showcase for the leading edge of environmental work and engineering design in Hawai‘i, which is increasingly refocusing on the interconnected relationships of intensive mountain rainfall, forests, streams, drainage systems, harbors, reefs and near-shore waters. The WBSIDA supports a comprehensive review and evaluation of the engineering designs included in the 2015 engineering report commissioned by the DLNR titled “[Ala Wai Canal Flushing System & Ala Wai Golf Course Detention System](#)” as a great example of the type of debris management and water quality improvement that could be achieved through robust environmental design.

The WBSIDA is very pleased to see the collaboration and partnership that has formed between the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Department of Transportation (HDOT) to develop solutions for both near-term and long-term management of debris within the watershed that ends up in the canal and Ala Wai Boat Harbor areas following intense rain and weather events. Collaboration through existing networks such as the Ala Wai Watershed Partnership can also foster better coordination among residents, businesses, paddlers, sailors, swimmers, environmentalists, interested scientists, and government. Engaging the entire “Community” in this project will increase awareness about how to manage the mountain-to-seas ahupua‘a in modern time and in an urban setting.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**SB-1146-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 12:20:43 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
JONATHAN LOTT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha members of the committee,

I live in the middle of Waikiki across from where Palolo Stream enters the canal and have a nice view of the canal from my apartment. That is, except after heavy rains, when the amount of floating debris in the canal is shocking. A lot of the debris eventually sinks unless it is scooped up (and usually it is not). I support this bill since it seems like a solvable problem appropriate for graduate students to tackle.

Mahalo,

Jon

**SB-1146-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:12:27 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise Boisvert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I fully SUPPORT this bill because it will help to design the best way to reduce the amount of trash that ends up floating down to the Ala Wai Canal.**

**The trash makes the canal look disgusting; and Waikiki residents and visitors should not be forced to see it. We should all be embarrassed by it and should do something about it!**

**It is especially terrible how it ends up in the harbor and pollutes the ocean and become a danger to marine life.**

**SB-1146-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:34:06 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kim Jorgensen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I SUPPORT this bill; please pass it.**

**My daily morning walk usually starts along the Ala Wai Canal. After a hard rain, it is astounding how much trash ends up in it.**

**The trash will sometimes sink and eventually cause more hours of dredging when that project is done periodically; but most of it floats in all its ugly glory down to the harbor, and pollutes the ocean.**

**This is a serious and disgusting manmade problem that needs a serious study to find a way to solve it.**