

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**

P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON WATER & LAND AND
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1669

**February 8, 2022
8:30 a.m.
Room 430 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO SEA LEVEL RISE ADAPTATION

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1669 requires the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to establish a pilot program to convene a working group to develop a Waikīkī adaptation and resilience plan (WARP) to address climate change and sea level impacts in the Waikīkī special district and appropriates \$400,000 in general funds for FY 23 for the development of the WARP.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and

- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

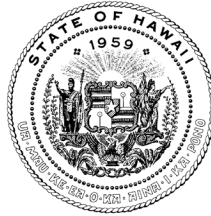
Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ROBERT K. MASUDA
FIRST DEPUTY

M. KALEO MANUEL
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson

Before the House Committees on
WATER & LAND
and
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Tuesday, February 8, 2022
8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 430, Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1669
RELATING TO SEA LEVEL RISE ADAPTATION

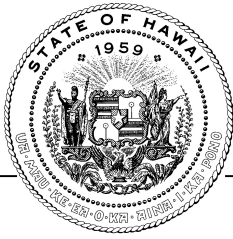
House Bill 1669 proposes to require the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to establish a pilot program to convene a working group to develop a Waikiki adaptation and resilience plan to address climate change and sea level impacts in the Waikiki special district. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports the bill.**

The proposed project would build off the Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission's 2017 report, *Hawaii Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report*. This report has been extremely valuable in the Department's mission to protect the State's natural and cultural resources and has guided many of our decisions over the past five years.

This bill will take the macro-level recommendations contained in the commission's report, along with other studies, to create a community-level adaptation and resilience plan for Waikiki under the leadership of the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development. The Department believes that a successful pilot project will provide a useful model for other coastal communities in the State that are facing serious threats from sea level rise.

In order to ensure the success of the project, the Department would request that the Committee consider including an implementation strategy as a component of the plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804

Telephone: (808) 587-2846
Fax: (808) 587-2824
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov/>

Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS
Director, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development
before the
**HOUSE COMMITTEES ON WATER AND LAND AND ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**
Tuesday, February 8, 2022
8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

in consideration of
HB 1669
RELATING TO SEA LEVEL RISE ADAPTATION.

Chairs Tarnas and Lowen, Vice Chairs Branco and Marten, and Members of the House Committees on Water and Land and Energy & Environmental Protection.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) commends the legislature for its continued recognition of sea level rise as part of the climate emergency. Waikiki is a significant asset to the State and has unique challenges and opportunities relating to coastal erosion and sea level rise. The OPSD supports the intent of **HB 1669** and provides the following comments:

To provide flexibility to address needs and concerns during the coordination process that may not already be stated in this measure, the OPSD offers the following proposed amendments for the purposes of flexibility in defining the scope of work:

Page 4, Lines 1-5 “SECTION 2. (a) The office of planning and sustainable development shall [~~convene a Waikiki adaptation and resilience plan working group as~~] establish a pilot project to develop an adaptation and resilience plan that addresses the climate change and sea level rise impacts in the Waikiki special district.

Page 4, Lines 6-7 (b) The Waikiki adaptation and resilience plan shall [~~include~~] assess nature-based, as appropriate and urban designs for sea-level rise...

Page 4, Lines 13-17 (c) The [~~working group~~] office of planning and sustainable development shall [~~comprise~~] coordinate with representatives

from the University of Hawaii, city and county of Honolulu, department of land and natural resources, Waikiki beach special improvement district association, and Waikiki neighborhood board.

Page 5, Lines 1-2 (d) [~~In developing the~~] The Waikiki adaptation and resilience plan [~~the working group~~] shall [~~obtain and~~] use the best data ...

Page 5, Line 5-6 The [~~working group~~] Waikiki adaptation and resilience plan may consider the coastal flood adaptation architectural design...

Page 5, Line 15 [~~(e) The working group shall dissolve on January 1, 2024.~~]

The OPSD recognizes that this scale of planning is typically county-led and therefore OPSD would work closely on the City and County of Honolulu to ensure that the outcomes funded by this proposed measure are complementary to and consistent with county planning efforts without being duplicative of any activities currently being undertaken at the county level.

The OPSD additionally recognizes that establishing and developing sustained state capacity for sea level rise adaptation efforts is necessary to support and coordinate the implementation of activities that will be consistent with the final Waikiki Adaptation and Resilience Plan. Staffing capacity for the OPSD Coastal Zone Management Program is funded through a federal award. Staff workplans are submitted prior to the fiscal year and must be consistent with addressing federal mandates and the CZM federally approved strategy. Current strategic priorities serve to implement the Hawaii Ocean Resources Management Plan which focuses on addressing management gaps and collaboration with CZM network agencies to improve upon **statewide policy**.

Current CZM workplans do not include allocations for the management of this regional-scale project. Given the significance of the value of Waikiki at both the state and county level, a project of this significance requires staff time with a dedicated position (Exempt, 1.0 FTE, Salary ~\$81,744) to support the initiative. OPSD would require additional staff capacity in order to adequately lead, manage, and procure consultant services to carry out the activities in this mandate as well to staff future coordination efforts to ensure activities in the area are consistent with the Waikiki Adaptation and Resilience Plan.

The OPSD appreciates the overall concept of this bill but we are concerned that its passage may replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
630 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HI 96843
www.boardofwatersupply.com



February 8, 2022

RICK BLANGIARDI, MAYOR

BRYAN P. ANDAYA, Chair
KAPUA SPROAT, Vice Chair
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NA'ALEHU ANTHONY

JADE T. BUTAY, Ex-Officio
DAWN B. SZEWCZYK, Designate Ex-Officio

ERNEST Y. W. LAU, P.E.
Manager and Chief Engineer

ELLEN E. KITAMURA, P.E.
Deputy Manager and Chief Engineer

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
and Members
Committee on Water and Land
House of Representatives
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 430
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nicole E. Lowen, Chair
and Members
Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection
House of Representatives
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 430
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Tarnas, Chair Lowen and Members:

SUBJECT: House Bill 1669: Relating to Sea Level Rise Adaptation

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) supports House Bill (HB) 1669 relating to sea level rise adaptation, which establishes a pilot program working group for the Waikiki Special District. The BWS is actively working with the City's Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency Office and the City's One Water Panel to address sea level rise adaptation from climate change. We express our interest in participating in the working group.

The BWS recognizes that sea level rise and coastal erosion will impact the water distribution system in low lying and coastal areas and adaptation measures need to be prioritized and implemented. BWS has already experienced difficulty in repairing main breaks along Ala Wai Boulevard, Ala Moana Boulevard and Nimitz Highway having to wait for low tide to complete pipe repairs. We anticipate sea level rise exacerbating water system maintenance and repair in the decades to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1669.

Very truly yours,

ERNEST Y.W. LAU, P.E.
Manager and Chief Engineer



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Water & Land
and
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
Tuesday, February 8, 2022; 8:30am
By
Darren T. Lerner, PhD
Director, Sea Grant College Program,
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
And
Charles "Chip" Fletcher, PhD
Dean, School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology
And
Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1669 – RELATING TO SEA LEVEL RISE ADAPTATION

Chairs Tarnas and Lowen, Vice Chairs Branco and Marten, and members of the committees:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) and the Climate Resiliency Initiative (CRI; formerly Coastal Geology Group) supports HB 1669. This legislation requires the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to establish a pilot program to convene a working group to develop a Waikīkī adaptation and resilience plan to address climate change and sea level impacts in the Waikīkī special district. Hawai'i Sea Grant offers the following comments and suggestions to strengthen this bill.

1. The bill correctly acknowledges the need to develop community-supported adaptation and mitigation plans that help address the impacts of sea level rise and guide policies at the macro-level. The value and importance of community engagement cannot be overstated.
2. The connection to other municipalities that have developed similar resilience strategies is an important aspect of developing a comprehensive plan and the University of Hawai'i has experience with reviewing many of the resilience plans identified in the bill.
3. This bill identifies the State Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) to convene a Waikīkī adaptation and resilience plan working group as a pilot project to develop an adaptation and resilience plan. It is not clear who will lead the development and composition of the plan and it is recommended an independent consultant assist the working group to develop the plan in collaboration with the OPSD and the working group.
4. Coastal hazard research has shown that inundation and flooding of Waikīkī related to climate change will occur from multiple sources: storm drain backflow, groundwater inundation, wave run-up and marine hydrostatic (passive) flooding, heavy precipitation and the associated watershed flooding associated with extreme weather events.
5. Waikīkī, like so many of the other resort communities in the state, is in a sea level rise vulnerable area and requires a comprehensive adaptation and resilience plan to deal with projected climate change and sea-level rise.

6. Recent University of Hawai'i scientific research supporting the Hawai'i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report¹ found that 3.2 feet of sea level rise will have profound impacts on O'ahu. \$12.9 billion in structures and land could be lost; 3,800 structures could be flooded, including hotels and resorts in Waikīkī; over 13,000 residents could be displaced; and nearly 18 miles of major roads could be flooded. The report estimates that O'ahu will account for an estimated 66% of the total statewide economic losses due to sea level rise. The report recommends private and public entities such as Waikīkī should begin planning for sea level rise adaptation to prepare for higher sea levels in the future.
7. A recent University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program study on coastal flood adaption for Waikīkī has developed architectural rendering through a series of design charrettes to envision future sea-level adaption urban designs. This may be complimentary to the effort to develop a community- based resilience plan.

Hawai'i Sea Grant's mission is to provide integrated research, extension, and education activities that increase understanding and use of ocean and coastal resources of the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands and support the informed personal, policy, and management decisions that are integral to realizing this vision. Hawai'i Sea Grant is part of a national network of 34 university-based programs associated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that promote better understanding, conservation, and use of coastal resources.

The Climate Resiliency Initiative is a newly-established applied research program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. CRI is an affiliation of researchers, technicians, undergraduate, and graduate students spread across campus working on challenges related to climate change. CRI researchers conduct investigations of sea level rise and community design, increasing resiliency to extreme weather events, projecting future climate stresses and shocks, marine and reef impacts, and better understanding community exposure to rising heat, storms, and drought. This requires cross-disciplinary and integrated research investigation on a range of spatial and temporal scales.

Hawai'i Sea Grant and the CRI support HB 1669 and recommends consideration of the above mentioned amendments. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

¹ Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission. 2017. *Hawai'i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report*. Prepared by Tetra Tech, Inc. and the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands. Page 152-162



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

February 8, 2022 8:30 AM Conference Room 430

In SUPPORT of HB1669: Relating to Sea Level Rise Adaptation

Aloha Chairs Tarnas and Lowen, Vice Chairs Branco and Marten, and Members of the Water & Land and Energy & Environmental Protection Committees,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **strongly supports HB1669** Relating to Sea Level Rise Adaptation.

HB1669 recognizes the need for the counties, in cooperation with state and federal agencies, to develop community-specific and community-driven adaptation plans to deal with sea level rise and other climate threats. It calls for, and funds, a pilot project to develop a Waikīkī adaptation and resilience plan that would not only protect an economic engine of Hawai'i, but also serve as a model for development of adaptation plans elsewhere throughout the islands.

While Waikīkī is a very important area, generating much economic activity, Climate Equity principles require development of similar adaptation and resilience plans for frontline communities such as Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Island populations. HB1672, also being heard today, may help to address this need by authorizing counties to create special improvement districts for purposes including climate-change related natural hazard mitigation.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to provide testimony on **HB1669**.

Mahalo,

Dave Raney
Co-Chair
Sierra Club Climate Adaptation and Restoration Team

Coalition to Mitigate the Impacts of Sea Level Rise
CMISLR2100@gmail.com

We strongly support HB1669 and its companion bill SB2724 as they promise to develop a long-overdue, truly science-driven framework for a comprehensive community resiliency and adaptation plan pertaining to sea level rise within a six month time frame.

However, this cannot be accomplished unless we set politics aside and acknowledge that the latest research puts in question a sea level rise threshold of “just” 3.2ft. (1 meter) by 2100 as it could readily exceed 4 feet much before that time. We must also acknowledge that immediately mitigating the impacts of sea level rise starts with pausing all development in the 4-foot sea level rise zone, especially all high rises, and also address possible relocation of the potentially most vulnerable population such as from the new high rise in Waikiki’s 3-foot sea level rise zone that presently touts \$1,200/month “affordable” rental studios. The resiliency and adaptation plan can therefore not truly meet its lofty goals unless it also addresses such issues as they relate to the need for long-term affordable housing which the State has not properly addressed and which also fuels the homeless crisis.

Klaus Radtke Ph.D.
Environmental Scientist



HAWAI'I LODGING & TOURISM
A S S O C I A T I O N

Testimony of
Mufi Hannemann
President & CEO
Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

House Committee on Water & Land
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
House Bill 1669: Relating to Sea Level Rise Adaptation
February 8, 2022

Chair Tarnas, Chair Lowen, and members of the Committees, mahalo for the opportunity to offer comments on behalf of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, the state's largest private sector visitor industry organization.

The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association—nearly 700 members strong, representing more than 50,000 hotel rooms and nearly 40,000 lodging workers—recognizes the various issues associated with sea level rise and how quickly this could affect many of our members who own and operate businesses in and around sea level rise exposure areas.

We feel that it is important that working groups like the one proposed in this measure are established in order to study sea levels rise and help to develop “comprehensive, feasible, and appropriate adaptation and resilience policies” in order to protect the many homes, businesses, and structures near our shores. Our only suggestion centers around the organizations that are proposed in this measure. We feel strongly that an individual or organization which represents private sector stakeholders must be at the table for these discussions. It is critical that diverse points of view and experience are included in this effort, and we ask that you consider adding private business owners or operators to the working group.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-1669

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 4:52:44 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Lois Crozer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Let's get on this. Climate change is here.

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:35:02 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Barbara Barry	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

This must be done.

Mahalo,

Barbara Barry

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/3/2022 9:43:35 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Samuel Mitchell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I supprt HB1669 because Hawaii will be affected by the rising of Sea levels. So we need to get ready by starting with how this change will affect are roads.

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/4/2022 11:31:06 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Marshall Hung	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives for the State of Hawaii,

Committee on Water & Land Chair Rep. David A. Tarnas;

Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection Rep. Nicole E. Lowen

RE: Support for HB 1669

With the warnings from the University of Hawai'i Professors Karl Kim and Chip Fletcher about the Climate Change extreme weather flooding of Waikiki, an emergency plan of action is needed to increase the drainage of flood waters out of Waikiki. Our preliminary study is that the State Government which owns the Ala Wai Canal must install sheet pile walls to return the capacity of water flow from 50% to 100%. The present dredging only goes to fifteen feet and needs to go to the original depth of twenty-five feet.

The canal and its walls were built 100 years ago. It must be updated for water capacity before creative solutions can be considered for draining Waikiki and the surrounding lands of the canal during and after the flooding.

Warmest Regards,

Marshall Hung

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/4/2022 2:35:54 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ken Hayashida	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives for the State of Hawaii,

Committee on Water & Land Chair Rep. David A. Tarnas;

Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection Rep. Nicole E. Lowen

RE: Support for HB 1669

With the warnings from the University of Hawai'i Professors Karl Kim and Chip Fletcher about the Climate Change extreme weather flooding of Waikiki, an emergency plan of action is needed to increase the drainage of flood waters out of Waikiki. Our preliminary study is that the State Government which owns the Ala Wai Canal must install sheet pile walls to return the capacity of water flow from 50% to 100%. The present dredging only goes to fifteen feet and needs to go to the original depth of twenty-five feet.

The canal and its walls were built 100 years ago. It must be updated for water capacity before creative solutions can be considered for draining Waikiki and the surrounding lands of the canal during and after flooding.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my strong support for H.B. 1669.

Sincerely,

Ken Hayashida

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/4/2022 4:29:24 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Denise Boisvert	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Representatives,

Whoever first said, *'There is no time like the present'* probably never realized how true those words would be ringing during this century.

Please pass HB1669 now, and before it is too late.

Respectfully yours,

Denise Boisvert

Waikiki

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/4/2022 5:05:45 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kim Jorgensen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha - If you have to hurry to eat your shave ice quickly on a summer day like I do, please think about the world's glaciers, and pass this desperately needed bill!

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/7/2022 8:03:27 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Drew Wilkinson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support HB1669 and believe bringing awareness to sea level rise and developing and implementing action plans is absolutely necessary to prepare for the future. \

thank you,

Drew Wilkinson

HB-1669

Submitted on: 2/7/2022 11:10:32 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/8/2022 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Arthur A Ushijima	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

There is much that has already been presented and published over the risks of climate change impacts. Waikiki, which may be considered the breadbasket of Hawaii tourism, is at substantial risk from sea level rise and flooding. However, there does not appear to be a cohesive plan and direction to mitigate these risks. There is little Hawaii can do to prevent global climate change. So, Hawaii must undertake major mitigation measures to protect essential economic and cultural sites and activities. Hopefully, the recommendations to come from the implementation of HB 1669 will provide clarity of direction and a call-to-action before it's too late. Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this important bill.