SB 536, SD 1, RELATING TO STARLIGHT RESERVE

House Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection,
And Water, Land and Ocean Resources

March 24, 2009   9:00 a.m.   Room: 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **supports** S.B. 536, S.D. 1, which requires the State Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) to develop a statewide starlight reserve strategy, including an intelligent statewide lighting law, to preserve the quality of the night sky and its associated cultural, scientific, astronomical, natural, and landscape-related values. The bill also calls for the establishment of a temporary advisory committee to assist DBEDT in the creation of the starlight reserve strategy. OHA would have a representative on this advisory committee.

The night sky is an important instrument for Native Hawaiians. In Hawaiian culture, stars, planets and the moon predict weather conditions, foretell events in the form of hoÿailona, or omens, and serve as a calendar and land markers. The night sky instructs farmers what to plant, fishers what to catch and open-ocean navigators where to go. As Native Hawaiians continue to reconnect and revive ancient traditions, the integrity of the night sky becomes more and more significant.

Light pollution, particularly in heavily developed areas, has limited the ability of Native Hawaiians to learn about the night sky and use it as their ancestors once did. Moreover, artificial light represents a major threat to some seabirds. For example, bright lights such as street lights can blind and disorient Newell's Shearwater fledglings, resulting in many of these young birds being hit by cars or preyed on by cats and dogs.

The statewide starlight reserve strategy contemplated in this measure would help address some these issues by protecting the night sky as an important cultural landscape for Native Hawaiians and ensuring the safety of some of our native seabirds.

OHA urges the Committees to PASS SB 536, SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.