



‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAI‘I

Legislative Testimony

Hō‘ike Mana‘o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.

By

Megan Donahue, Acting Director
Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology

And

Charles “Chip” Fletcher, Interim Dean
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

HB 848 HD1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII INSTITUTE FOR MARINE BIOLOGY

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support for HB 848 HD1, which appropriates funds for the following support staff positions at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB):

- 1) Building Maintenance Worker II
- 2) Administrative Officer APT-B
- 3) Website specialist APT-B

HIMB is a world-class center for research and education with a mission to advance understanding and stewardship of oceans and coasts locally and globally. The proximity of the twenty-six acre campus with high-quality lab facilities to a living coral reef provides unparalleled opportunities for research. HIMB's scientists, educators, and support staff bring in close to \$9M in research, education, and outreach funds annually that contribute to our ability to hire Windward-based staff. As these programs continually expand, new permanent staff positions are crucial to help us sustain daily operations and meet the needs and expectations of our community partners.

HIMB has a long history of undertaking cutting edge science and our scientists were the first to report large scale coral bleaching in Hawai‘i and link it to high water temperatures, calling the world’s attention to the consequences of global climate change. We apply our knowledge to address local as well as global problems. HIMB is pilot testing construction of hybrid reefs – human-built structures that interact with natural processes to create living reefs – that could reduce wave energy and protect nearshore cultural and infrastructure resources. HIMB is also testing novel shoreline erosion mitigation techniques that build on traditional practices to work *with* nature rather than fighting against it to shore up coastlines.

HIMB is well-known for internationally recognized training for students in conservation oriented and place-based scientific research, but we have also been working to expand vocational and technical training opportunities for local students. For example, we recently created a paid experiential learning internship program for local community college students to train with

Facilities, Administration, Water Safety, Fiscal or Human Resources departments within our institution, preparing local students for real world jobs close to home.

Success in growing such programs, which provide direct benefits to local students and the State, is dependent on having permanent support staff that possess the institutional memory to efficiently navigate the State and University systems and do not turn over with individual grant cycles.

Building maintenance is critical to the operations at HIMB, with 8 research buildings, 5 housing buildings, storage facilities, boat docks, and sheds. HIMB is already operating under a minimal facilities crew and struggles to keep up with existing infrastructure maintenance needs. This hire is critical for health and safety concerns. Filling this position will allow research and education activities that are highly relevant to the university and the State to continue operating safely in well-maintained buildings. Without adequate building maintenance, HIMB may not be able to maintain a functional research infrastructure.

HIMB currently has only two permanent Administrative Officers to support 25 faculty and manage over 130 project accounts. This project load requires extensive grant management, account maintenance, budget oversight, forecasting, procurement, and disbursement of appropriated, extramural, and revolving funds. Hiring this third Administrative Officer position is essential to avoid overtime pay, staff burnout (with subsequent departure), and loss of research capacity. This hire is critical for maintaining a minimum base level of research productivity; without it, extramural grant submissions and success would likely be significantly diminished, resulting in reductions in extramural funding and associated research spending in the state.

HIMB has never had a permanent Website Specialist position. Website support was previously fulfilled by graduate assistants or extramurally-funded part-time staff, but these positions have been discontinued. HIMB has been without dedicated website and information services support for several years. With extensive programming in research, education, visitor, and community service, HIMB critically needs a permanent staff member who can manage the entirety of our web presence, online dissemination, and social media needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support for HB 848 HD1, provided that its passage does not impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

HB-848-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 12:46:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

While it is the year of the limu, we must ensure that more research can go into supporting and revitalizing the limu population. We need more researchers and people to help find out more about our precious marine life, and the fact that Hawai'i Institute for Marine Biology is highly understaffed is criminal. With that said, I am writing this bill in support so we can ensure we can get to know more about how we can help limu.

HB 848 HD1 – RELATING TO HAWAI‘I INSITUTE OF MARINE BIOLOGY

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support for HB 848, which appropriates funds for the following support staff positions at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB):

- 1) Building Maintenance Worker II
- 2) Administrative Officer APT-B
- 3) Website specialist APT-B

As outlined in the bill’s language, HIMB is a world-class center of innovation for science and technology, place-based education, and indigenous resource management approaches, with a mission to advance understanding and stewardship of oceans and coasts locally and globally. HIMBs ~29 acre campus and associated facilities and programs provide direct benefits to local students and the State, are dependent permanent support staff and that possess the institutional knowledge to efficiently navigate the processes of the State and University of Hawaii. The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to establish new permanent support staff positions that are critical to sustaining daily operations for the initiatives at HIMB.

My name is Malia Rivera, and I submit this testimony as an individual, and thus it doesn’t not represent official testimony of the University of Hawai‘i.

I have been at HIMB since 2005, serving as a tenured faculty member whose work focuses on K-20 marine science education and training, with an emphasis on creating access to place-based marine science research experiences for Hawai‘i students and facilitating pathways to undergraduate careers in this discipline. The goal of my efforts is to increase representation in professional pathways amongst students from Hawai‘i with the hopes of bolstering local workforce development. As a kama‘āina who grew up in ‘Āhuimanu and a graduate of James B. Castle High School, the communities around Kāne‘ohe Bay and the bay itself are special to me and thus my work is of personal importance, as my own journey navigating this pathway presented many challenges and barriers as an underrepresented student in STEM at UHM.

Despite the gains in increasing the number of marine STEM programs such as the ones I have created at HIMB for our local students, I, and my colleagues at HIMB, remain significantly hampered by the extremely heavy administrative and non-discipline related workloads we as individual faculty and staff must endure at the institute, relative to our colleagues on the main campus. Because HIMB at Moku o Lo‘e is a campus unto itself, we have burdens (both actual and fiscal) as far as the physical plant maintenance, grounds caretaking and administration that most other units at the University need not worry about (or pay for). For example, although my main responsibility is to create and deliver education and training programs for Hawai‘i students, I estimate I spend ~ 50% of my time on administrative tasks because our existing administrative staff are incredibly overtaxed. Since 2005, my program’s education and teaching staff have also been doing our own janitorial work, as HIMB has not had sufficient janitorial coverage for as long

as I can remember. We make do, but it comes at the expense of doing our primary jobs, that is, educating Hawai'i K-20 students in marine science. Relatedly, our website and communications, which help the broader community gain access to HIMB information and programs, and better understand HIMB's important work in marine conservation science, are dated and obsolete because existing staff have no time to address or update it.

Funding for these support positions is critical to HIMB's mission and would be a first step to help offset the existing significant burdens on current faculty and staff so they can more efficiently do the important work they were actually hired to do.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Zack Rago and I am a 3rd year PhD student at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology. I am writing this letter as an individual in support of the bill HB1136 and HB848. Having now worked at the institution for over 3 years I have seen first hand how incredibly dedicated our community is to making HIMB a one of a kind research station and holding ourselves to the highest standards of innovation and scientific excellence. Moku o Loe is a truly special place as it is the only marine research station located directly on a coral reef in the USA and is also backdropped by the beautiful Koolau range and Kaneohe Bay. That being said, the island in general is in desperate need of funds, support staff and the capacity to manage a degrading infrastructure. Seawalls around the island, including around my own experiments, are in terrible condition and quite frankly, even dangerous in certain locations. The degrading seawalls are only the tip of the iceberg. Generally the island's infrastructure is decades old and has been largely neglected despite an incredible facilities team who simply could never keep up with the number of repairs and developments that are needed to make HIMB safe, functional and more effective at producing top quality research. I firmly believe that this institution is one of the most important and unique assets to the University of Hawaii as well as to the state of Hawaii as a whole. However, this place is oozing with untapped potential that is being held back by this failing infrastructure and the inability to make significant changes without support from the state. The passing of this bill would immediately lead to positive outcomes for HIMB and our capacity to continue growing our reputation as world leader in marine science would continue on a trajectory where the state of Hawaii will be the national leaders in innovative science and technology, education and community outreach, and the professional development of countless up and coming researchers in the marine sciences.

Kindly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zack Rago". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the name.

HB-848-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 10:10:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judy Lemus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Finance Committee:

I am providing personal testimony in support for HB848, which appropriates funds for three support staff positions at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB).

Since the 1950s, the University of Hawai‘i has had a marine science lab located on Moku o Lo‘e. And over the past seven decades, HIMB scientists helped establish aquaculture in the State of Hawai‘i, provided the first demonstration of coral bleaching as a result of thermal stress, and conducted the first studies on Hawaiian sharks. HIMB continues to occupy a pre-eminent position in research on coral reef ecosystem processes, marine animal biosensory ecology and bioenergetics, marine evolutionary and ecological genetics, and coastal technologies. HIMB faculty are leading experts in tropical marine biology research and education, advancing the informed stewardship of Hawai‘i’s marine and coastal biodiversity.

As a former interim Director of HIMB, Associate Director, and a current faculty member, I have first hand experience with the stressors and challenges that insufficient staffing creates on the productivity and innovation at HIMB. Faculty and staff are top-notch, but are continuously overloaded with work. For example, one full-time building maintenance worker is simply not enough to maintain all of the research, education, and housing buildings and auxiliary facilities on the 26-acre island campus. Elsewhere on UH campuses, there would be several workers to cover this amount of space and infrastructure.

Likewise, our productivity and ability to manage extramural funding is hampered by a shortage of administrative support. We have been quite successful attracting funding, in fact, our extramural awards are double what they were several years ago. But we are now challenged in operationalizing these awards due to heavy procurement and contracting protocols. Our existing two administrative staff do not have the bandwidth to provide all of these functions for 25 highly productive researchers. There is a real risk we may not be able to fulfill all of our award obligations without additional support, thus jeopardizing future funding for our Hawai‘i-based research and education.

Finally, our website and social media presence are essentially our digital calling cards to the rest of the world, both here in Hawai‘i and abroad. Today’s funders and donors EXPECT premier research institutions to have modern, innovative, and forward facing online platforms. Community members and schools rely on this online information about our many

educational programs, internships, and tours. HIMB has never had dedicated website support and at this critical time in which we are experiencing unprecedented growth, a full-time website specialist is especially important to our continued success.

Mahalo nui for your consideration in appropriating these important positions for HIMB.

HB-848-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 11:07:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Madin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee,

As a Windward community member and scientist who is impacted by this bill, I strongly support its passage. The Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) is a world-class research institution that we are fortunate enough to have here on O'ahu which provides tangible benefits to both the global scientific community and our local community. These benefits arise through both HIMB's research and community outreach roles. The new permanent support staff positions proposed in this bill are critical to sustaining daily operations for initiatives at HIMB so that the institute can continue to provide the people of the state of Hawai'i, and indeed the global scientific community, with these many benefits. This bill would help ensure that HIMB can continue into the long-term future and I believe it is a wise investment of funds.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elizabeth Madin

Kailua, HI