

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,

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

LAURA H.E. KAAKUA  
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  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on  
WATER & LAND

Wednesday, February 15, 2023  
12:30 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 409  
RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION

Senate Bill 409 proposes to appropriate funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities. **The Department strongly supports this measure.**

With changes in land use and climate in Hawai'i, wildfire is a significant and growing hazard in many places across the state. Research in wildfire science shows that vegetation is a key component for recurring wildfire. Vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazard, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases risk for fire. Funds are needed by the Department to reduce hazardous fuels on the landscape that threaten not only the watersheds the Department manages but also the adjacent communities and critical public infrastructure such as powerlines and communication facilities. The requested funds will be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA  
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 321  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
[www.labor.hawaii.gov](http://www.labor.hawaii.gov)

February 10, 2023

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair  
Committee Water and Land  
The State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 210  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Inouye:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 409 Relating to Fire Prevention

I am Kazuo Todd, Chair of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC). The SFC supports SB 409, which appropriates approximately \$1,500,000 for fiscal year (FY) 2024 and the same sum for FY 2025 for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) community fuels reduction project to support wildfire prevention and hazardous fuel reduction measures.

The DOFAW is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 acres of the State of Hawaii's forested watersheds (or 25% of the land area in Hawaii) and supports federal and county responders on remaining areas in the State. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual area burned in Hawaii has grown in past decades. In fact, the percentage of land area burned annually in Hawaii exceeds the national average and, in some years, it surpasses the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The DOFAW's fire and emergency response mandates require specialized equipment. The DOFAW collaborates with the county fire departments to extinguish fires on forested land managed by the DOFAW and residential areas (the wildland-urban interface) managed by the counties. The DOFAW provides specialty expertise, equipment, and other resources in these environments which the county fire departments do not possess due to training, funding, or mission requirement. The Department also assists counties during natural disasters, such as hurricanes and lava flows.

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair

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February 10, 2023

The DOFAW's expertise and collaboration with the county fire departments has been invaluable in protecting residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the encroachment of wildland-urban interface fires throughout Hawaii.

The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 409.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 808-723-7169 or [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kazuo Todd", written in a cursive style.

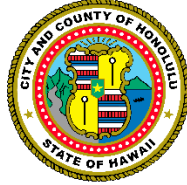
KAZUO TODD  
Chair

KT:GL

HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

636 South Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813-5007  
Phone: 808-723-7139 Fax: 808-723-7111 Internet: [www.honolulu.gov/hfd](http://www.honolulu.gov/hfd)

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR



SHELDON K. HAO  
FIRE CHIEF

JASON SAMALA  
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF

February 10, 2023

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair  
Committee Water and Land  
The State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 210  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Inouye:

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 409 Relating to Fire Prevention

My name is Sheldon K. Hao, Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The HFD supports SB 409, which appropriates approximately \$1,500,000 each for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) community fuels reduction project to support wildland fire prevention and hazardous fuel reduction measures.

The DOFAW is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 acres of the State of Hawaii's (State) forested watersheds (or 25% of the land area in Hawaii) and supports federal and county responders on remaining areas in the State. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual area burned in Hawaii has increased in past decades. In fact, the percentage of land area burned annually in Hawaii exceeds the national average and, in some years, surpasses the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The DOFAW's fire and emergency response mandates require specialized equipment. The DOFAW collaborates with county fire departments to extinguish fires on forested land managed by the DOFAW and residential areas (the wildland urban interface) managed by the counties. The DOFAW provides specialty expertise, equipment, and other resources in these environments which the county fire departments do not possess due to training, funding, or mission requirement. The DOFAW also assists counties during natural disasters, such as hurricanes and lava flows.

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair  
Page 2  
February 10, 2023

The DOFAW's expertise and collaboration with the county fire departments has been invaluable in protecting residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the encroachment of wildland urban interface fires throughout Hawaii.

The HFD urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 409.

Should you have questions, please contact Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 808-723-7169 or [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO  
Fire Chief

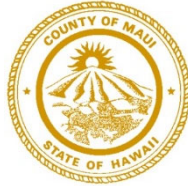
SKH/GL:cn

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA**  
Acting Managing Director

**BRADFORD K. VENTURA**  
Fire Chief

**GAVIN L.M. FUJIOKA**  
Deputy Fire Chief



**DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & PUBLIC SAFETY**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 DAIRY ROAD  
KAHULUI, MAUI, HAWAII 96732  
[www.mauicounty.gov](http://www.mauicounty.gov)

February 13, 2023

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair  
Water and Land Committee  
The State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 210  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Inouye,

**SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 409 RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION**

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department (MFD). The SFC supports SB 409, which appropriates approximately \$1,500,000 for fiscal year (FY) 2024 and the same sum for FY 2025 for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) community fuels reduction project to support wildfire prevention and hazardous fuel reduction measures.

The DOFAW is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 of the State of Hawaii's forested watersheds (or 25% of the land area in Hawaii) and supports federal and county responders on remaining areas in the State. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual area burned in Hawaii has grown in past decades. In fact, the percentage of land area burned annually in Hawaii exceeds the national average, and in some years, it surpasses the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The DOFAW's fire and emergency response mandates require specialized equipment. The DOFAW collaborates with the county fire departments to extinguish fires on forested land managed by the DOFAW and residential areas (the wildland-urban interface) managed by the counties. The DOFAW provides specialty expertise, equipment, and other resources in these environments which the county fire departments do not possess due to training, funding, or mission requirements. The Department also assists counties during natural disasters, such as hurricanes and lava flows.

The DOFAW's expertise and collaboration with the county fire departments has been invaluable in protecting residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the encroachment of wildland-urban interface fires throughout Hawaii.

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair

February 13, 2023

Page 2

The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 409.

If you have any question, please contact SFC Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at (808) 723-7169 or [glum@honolulu.gov](mailto:glum@honolulu.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Ventura". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BRADFORD K. VENTURA  
Fire Chief

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land**

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 12:30 pm**

**Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**SB 409, Relating to Fire Prevention**

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I am in **strong support** of SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

I am an Assistant Chief for the Maui County Department of Fire and Public Safety and have been dealing with the effects of large wildfires throughout Maui County especially due to the changing land management conditions from flourishing ranch and agricultural used lands to now overgrown and no ranch or agricultural use on those same lands. I have seen the value of good vegetation management through these industries as well as what happens when those designated areas are left unused and unkempt. Due to these circumstances, we as a department have taken a more progressive approach to reduce wildfire hazards through fuel mitigation efforts that not only decrease the hazardous fuels but also provide training opportunities for our personnel.

I fully support the passage of this bill because I know that the management of vegetative fuels is absolutely essential in reducing wildfire hazards and creates safer conditions for our community as well as our firefighters.

If this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

I strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,



Henry Lindo

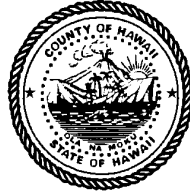
Assistant Chief of Operations

County of Maui Department of Fire and Public Safety



**Mitchell D. Roth**  
*Mayor*

**Lee E. Lord**  
*Managing Director*



**Kazuo S.K.L Todd**  
*Fire Chief*

**Eric H. Moller**  
*Deputy Fire Chief*

**County of Hawai'i**  
**HAWAI'I FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
25 Aupuni Street • Suite 2501 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720  
(808) 932-2900 • Fax (808) 932-2928

February 14, 2023

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land**  
**Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 12:30 pm**  
**Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**SB 409, Relating to Fire Prevention**

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

We are in **strong support** of SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

The Hawai'i Fire Department is the primary response agency for fire in the County of Hawai'i, and works very closely with our partnering fire response agencies such as Federal Fire departments at PTA and State Dept. of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW). We collectively have seen many challenges with fighting wildland fires. Over the years we have seen an increase in wildland fires and fire intensities due to various reasons, one of them being the effects of weather. Due to the changes in weather patterns and different types of fuel loads with invasive species spreading fast over our landscapes, the challenges of being able to effectively fight fires have increased significantly.

Another challenge for us here on the Big island, is the large geographical area and open land without infrastructure or resources to support our firefighting efforts. With that being said, having additional support to fund mitigation and prevention efforts on the front end, we could potentially eliminate fires or at the very least, limit the amount of fire spread and intensity when a wildfire does start. As many of you know, we recently had that largest wildfire in history on Hawai'i Island, and it viciously burned through and burned 3 structures including a residence, in a DHHL homestead (Pu'ukapu Farm Lots). Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fires are extremely dangerous, because it affects people and lives. With weather patterns continuing to trend in an unfavorable direction, we all need to be better prepared to minimize the risks and hazards that they pose to our community.

The Hawai'i Fire Department has partnered with The Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization to help mitigate hazards and educate our communities to better prepare



themselves for wildfire threats. But we also need to manage fuels and landscapes to match the efforts and build a better and safer community.

Along with the topics shared above, and just as importantly if not more, are the safety of the men and women on the ground, in the field who are fighting these intense wildfires. Our primary mission as Fire Fighters is to assure the safety of our community. If we are not able to keep our personnel safe, we would not be able to assure the safety of the community.

We support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks.

If this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can save five times more in damages. And it's not just about saving money - this is about saving lives, homes, and livelihoods.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darwin Okinaka". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Darwin Okinaka  
Assistant Fire Chief  
Emergency Operations  
Hawai'i Fire Department

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 8:01:27 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>                                    | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Nani Barretto       | Testifying for Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Senate Bill 409 proposes to appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities. **The Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) supports this measure.**

Since 2002, and on behalf of our agency and community partners, HWMO has been serving as the region's primary hub of wildfire prevention, mitigation, and planning activities in the Hawaii-Pacific region through proactive, collaborative, and forward-thinking projects.

With changes in land use and climate in Hawaii, wildfire is a significant and growing hazard in many places across the state. Research in wildfire science shows that vegetation is a key component for recurring wildfire. Vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazard, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases risk for fire. Funds are needed by DLNR to reduce hazardous fuels on their landscape that threaten not only the watersheds but also the adjacent communities and critical public infrastructure such as powerlines and communication facilities. The requested funds will be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 9:48:17 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization                                     | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|--------------|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| Matthew Glei | Testifying for Kamilonui Valley / Mariner's Cove | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

We are in **strong support** of SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

Kamilonui Valley and Mariner's Cove became a Firewise Community in 2018 because of wildland / urban interface fires in 2017 and 2018. We have continued to make efforts each year to lessen fire danger in this community, but with our non-native grasses and shrubs it is a constant battle. Any assistance in this fight helps all our communities.

We support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks.

If this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can save five times more in damages. And it's not just about saving money - this is about saving Hawaiians' lives, their homes, and their livelihoods.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,

Matthew Glei  
Kamilonui Valley / Mariner's Cove Firewise Community Board Member

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:46:32 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization                                | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|--------------|---|--------------------|------------------------|
| Nancy Jones  | Testifying for Hydroponics Alternatives LLC | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

We present this testimony in **strong support** of SB 409 which appropriates funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

We are farmers in the Wai`anae Ag. Park, which has been devastated by wildfires fueled by uncontrolled vegetation in June 2012, November 2016, the worst in August 2018 and another fire toward the mauka end of the Ag. Park in July 2020. We have witnessed severe damage to our shadehouses, equipment, and our crops have been smothered by residual soot and ash resulting in significant losses to us.

Vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serves as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases wildfire risks for us and all of our farm neighbors in Wai`anae Valley – and all farming communities throughout Hawai`i.

By passing SB 409, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

For every dollar spent on wildfire prevention and mitigation, Hawai`i can save five (5) times more in damages. And it's not just about saving money - this is about saving lives, homes, and livelihoods.

For all of the above reasons, we respectfully urge you to pass SB 409 out of our committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony.

Mahalo,

*Nancy A. Jones/Zeb Jones*

Managers, Hydroponics Alternatives

PO Box 1472, Wai`anae, HI 96792

Email: [nancyhydroalt@gmail.com](mailto:nancyhydroalt@gmail.com)



3728 Stone Creek Way  
Boise, ID 83703-4745

208.869.1755

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land  
Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 12:30 pm  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**SB 409, Relating to Fire Prevention**

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

As a nationally known and respected wildfire mitigation specialist, NFPA instructor (wildfire mitigation), Certified Wildfire Mitigation Specialist and Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) Board Member, I am excited for this opportunity for Hawaii to invest in proactive actions that are proven in reducing wildfire damages and losses. I **strongly support** SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

The passage of this bill is critical in reducing vegetation that will decrease severe wildfire behavior, create safer conditions for firefighters and residents, and maintain diverse, healthy and sustainable native plant communities. This bill would provide funding for progressive and effective fire management strategies as climate change, invasive species and populations continue to increase wildfire risks to Hawaiian communities and valuable natural resources.

When this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands adjacent to communities can be reduced, making them more resistant to wildfire damages and easier to control. These funds can also be used to create firebreaks that reduce intense fire behavior for communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

Funds invested in proactive actions like wildfire prevention and mitigation have been shown to save five times more in community and natural resource losses and damages. These are the before-the-event actions that reduce not only dangerous and damaging human-cause ignitions and infrastructure losses but make first responders safer and more effective.

I strongly urge you to make a progressive change in reducing future wildfire losses by passing this legislation! Future Hawaiian generations and resources will benefit from this wise investment!

Mahalo,

Pat Durland  
Board Member, Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization  
Principal, Stone Creek Fire LLC

February 14, 2023

Big Island Invasive Species Committee  
23 E. Kawili St  
Hilo Hi 96771  
(808) 933-3340



February 15, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Water & Land  
RE: SB409

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

The Big Island Invasive Species Committee strongly supports SB409 which would appropriate funds to DLNR to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

As an organization on the front lines of fighting invasive plants, we are all too familiar with the difficult job of controlling invasive weeds like fountain grass, a dangerous fire fuel which contributes each year to bigger, hotter and more dangerous fires on our island. With each fire, we lose more native vegetation and create more space for the incursion of invasive grasses which in turn lead to more fuel for fire – a vicious cycle that can only be broken with intensive, boots-on-the-ground effort.

We support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks. The requested funds will be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression. On the same day as this hearing a (Feb 15) a webinar on wildfire in Hawaii as part of Hawaii Invasive Species Awareness month. We encourage all members of the committee to become more familiar with the growing wildfire threat and its relationship to invasive species by watching the recording (it will be posted on the HISC YouTube page at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFT6SAASZIUxd\\_XgZMCiGsQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFT6SAASZIUxd_XgZMCiGsQ)).

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can **save five times more** in damages, along with saving homes, livelihoods, and lives.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information.

Mahalo,

Franny Kinslow Brewer  
Communications Director  
fbrewer@hawaii.edu





2023  
Board of  
Directors

February 14, 2023

Elizabeth Reilly  
President

Hawai'i State Senate  
Committee on Water and Land

Allen Tateishi  
Vice President

Meeting on February 15, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Dianne Gleib  
Secretary

RE: **Strong support for SB409, Relating to Fire Prevention**

Marian Grey  
Treasurer

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and WTL Committee Members,

Dean Takebayashi  
Director

As a founding member of O'ahu's first Firewise Community, Livable Hawaii Kai Hui is proud to testify in **strong support** of SB409, which appropriates funds for the next two fiscal years in support of the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (DLNR) Community Fuels Reduction Project, and, more importantly, establishes the appropriation as its own line item within the DLNR budget thereafter.

Gary Weller  
Director

Mardi LaPrade  
Director

Kendrick Chang  
Community Outreach

With the help of the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization, LHKH officially formed the Kamilonui-Mariner's Cove Firewise Community in 2018, bringing together neighborhood residents and community partners who were galvanized into action after a particularly devastating string of wildfires the previous year. Today, we continue this important work with the indispensable assistance of Hawaii Kai Strong.

Dylan Ramos  
Communications &  
Operations

Fuel reduction is a key focus of fire prevention efforts, ours included, as exemplified by the creation and maintenance of firebreaks in Kamilonui Valley. These firebreaks are meant to stop wildfires from advancing by denying them further combustible material. We are happy to see this Legislature funding DLNR's efforts to promote similar measures for the safety of all Hawai'i's residents.

**Website**

[www.hawaiiikaihui.org](http://www.hawaiiikaihui.org)  
[www.kaiwicoast.org](http://www.kaiwicoast.org)

**Like us on Facebook**  
Livable Hawaii Kai Hui  
Aloha Aina O Kamilo Nui  
Ka Iwi Coast

Livable Hawaii Kai Hui is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, community organization serving East Honolulu since 2004. We strive to promote sensible growth, respect for cultural & natural resources, and upholding the integrity of the East Honolulu Sustainable Communities Plan.

Mahalo,

Elizabeth Reilly  
Founder/President

Dylan Ramos  
Communications & Operations

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 11:18:41 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>  | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Victor Salis        | Testifying for Puu Lani Ranch HOA and Pu'uanahulu Firewise Committee | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water and Land.

We strongly support SB409 which would appropriate funds to the DLNR to reduce wildfire fuels on lands adjacent to communities.

As a retired firefighter and the President of Puu Lani Ranch HOA on the Big Island, I am a volunteer on the Pu'uanahulu Firewise Committee. Our neighborhood borders are surrounded by State land leased as ranch land. It is our Firewise Committee's mission to reduce fire hazards in our neighborhood and in the Pu'uanahulu Community.

This bill will provide funds to reduce those wildfire fuels that pose a danger to all communities adjacent to State land. The requested funds will be used for projects to create firebreaks, reduce dry brush and grasses, managed grazing and provide water infrastructure for fire suppression.

Every dollar spent on wildfire prevention and mitigation saves five times or more in damages. It can prevent the wildfires that have happened on the mainland, especially with the recent high winds in mind. So it is not just about saving money but it could save lives and many homes.

We cannot emphasize enough for you to pass this critical legislation. Thank you for this opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,

'Victor M. Salis

President- Puu Lani Ranch HOA

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 1:46:30 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melissa Chimera     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

As you may know, nearly a quarter of our state's lands are covered in non-native, flammable grasslands, and this footprint is ever expanding with each subsequent fire. I support this wildfire fuels reduction funding for reducing wildfire hazards, increasing protection of our watersheds and the communities and public infrastructure that are adjacent to them.

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 10:08:54 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Palani Kurashige    | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land**

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 12:30 pm**

**Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**SB 409, Relating to Fire Prevention**

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

We are in **strong support** of SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

As the Fire Prevention Branch Battalion Chief of the Hawaii Fire Department, I am in charge of the prevention of fires to include wildfires. Our main task is to preserve life and property. Overgrown and numerous fuels on the island of Hawaii are in abundance. When a wildfire starts on State Land (which is one of the largest landowners on Hawaii Island), numerous agencies and resources come together to mitigate or extinguish the fire. Sometimes, this can take days or weeks to extinguish which can be expensive. Unmanaged brush and vegetation that are in close proximity to homes increases the risk of wildland fire spreading and endangering communities, lives, and property. I'm sure there are other impacts such as endangering animals and the watershed. Reducing fuels is a major precaution to help protect the wildland urban interface

(WUI) area and also to help protect residents, visitors, and firefighters from the dangers of these wildfires.

*(Insert background information on you/your organization – its mission, services, impacts, etc.)*

We support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks.

If this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can save five times more in damages. And it's not just about saving money - this is about saving lives, homes, and livelihoods.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,

*Palani Kurashige*

*Battalion Chief, Fire Prevention Branch*

*Hawaii Fire Department*



# Daniel Dennison

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land  
Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**SB 409, Relating to Fire Prevention**

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Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I am in **strong support** of SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

For the past nine years I have served as the statewide Fire Information Officer for all fires on DLNR lands. In addition I serve on the board of directors for the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization. Both of these roles put me in close contact with wildfire leaders, managers, supporters, and field crews on a regular basis. I have documented the devastating impacts of wildland fires on native ecosystems and entire communities. For the past six years I had led a multi-partner awareness campaign called Wildfire and Drought LOOKOUT! and continue providing essential information to Hawai'i residents before, during, and after wildland fires.

I support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks.

If this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can save five times more in damages. And it's not just about saving money - this is about saving Hawaiians' lives, their homes, and their livelihoods.

I strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,

*Dan Dennison  
Senior Communications Manager  
Hawai'i Dept. of Land and Natural Resources*





# YOUR LETTERHEAD

Jack M. Minassian  
Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land  
Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

## SB 409, Relating to Fire Prevention

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Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I **strongly support** SB 409 which would appropriate funds to the Department of Land & Natural Resources to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape, particularly on lands adjacent to communities.

I am an Associate Professor at Hawai'i Community College and I teach Fire Science. I have over 40 years' experience in wildland fire suppression, and managing fuels is essential to offset the invasion of fire adapted alien grasses which have altered the natural fire regime of Hawai'i.

I support the passage of this bill because we know vegetation management is essential for reducing wildfire hazards, creating safer conditions for firefighters, and serving as a key climate adaptation strategy as climate change increases our wildfire risks.

If this bill is passed, the build-up of hazardous fuels on state lands that are adjacent to communities will be reduced, making our communities safer too. The requested funds will also be used to create firebreaks between communities and watersheds, reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through projects like managed grazing, and provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire suppression.

For every dollar we spend on wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state can save five times more in damages. And it's not just about saving money - this is about saving Hawaiians' lives, their homes, and their livelihoods.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,

Jack M. Minassian  
Associate Professor

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:46:58 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| David Smith         | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Fuels reduction is money well spent, but should include ecological restoration after fires and green fuel breaks.

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 4:07:54 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Heather Forester    | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I am writing in SUPPORT of SB409 relating to fire prevention. Though it is not always in the front of our minds, wildfire is a dangerous issue that faces our State. With adiquite funding to manage fuels, we stand a chance at preventing these devistating wildland fires that threaten lives and property.

Mahalo,

Heather Forester

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 6:37:36 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Michael schorr      | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

As a homeowner on leeward Kohala and volunteer Wildfire Home Ignition Zone Assessor with the HWMO, I fully support SB 409; I only wish it could be more per annum. We, as a community, have a lot of work ahead of us to adapt and protect.

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 7:55:31 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

**LATE**

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| John J Buckheit     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As a 34 year member of the fire service I can personally attest to the staggering losses from uncontrolled fire. Usually losses are recorded as direct losses, that is physical property that is destroyed. Indirect losses are estimated to be many, many times more. The loss of use, disruption in operations, et cetera, not to mention the losses in terms of pain, suffering, fear, and even death.

Monies spent to help establish countermeasures against fire losses is money well spent. We have many well established countermeasures and new, better countermeasures are continually being discovered. Urban, suburban, and rural communities can exist in proximity to wild lands, if we have the foresight to put in place effective countermeasures to fire. Please pass SB409 to help us utilize these countermeasures

Respectfully;

John Buckheit

**SB-409**

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 8:29:14 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM



| Submitted By  | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Chris Brosius | Individual   | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

**I strongly support SB409** as it will provide much needed support for fire prevention. Watershed lands are steadily being burned away by increasing incidents of wildfire. At the end of 2022 irreplaceable Hawaiian forests in west Maui were lost and may never be the same. Species were pushed closer to the brink of extinction. The water collection capacity of the forest in an already drought stricken community was further decreased. Erosion into our near shore reefs is currently causing severe damage to fisheries and reefs that are important to our communities and economy. The damage is still being assessed and unfolding as we brace to thwart the pending invasion of more fire prone species that will want to permanently displace the once pristine forest. Although much can be restored with large investments, prevention is the best way to mitigate the problem.

This same story is unfortunately being told too many times and all throughout the state.

This bill seeks to prevent the above cycle and provide funding to support priority projects. It will also help leverage private landowner support and participation while also leveraging federal dollars to Hawaii through competitive grant programs. Much work is shovel ready and can make a huge difference.

This is a major step in the right direction for Hawaii to help stop the loss of its natural resources. Fire is a problem that is here to stay and is predicted to increase with climate change. We need to have this investment. It is key to our environmental and economic sustainability.