

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

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

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

DEAN D. UYENO
ACTING 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 House Committees on
WATER AND LAND

Thursday, February 8, 2024
9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 430 & Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2721
RELATING TO WILDFIRE PROTECTION

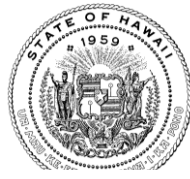
House Bill 2721 proposes to establish a fire-shed partnership program within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) and make appropriations. **The Department supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

The Department agrees with the Legislature's findings that the devastation wrought by the deadly wildfires on Maui on August 8, 2023 illustrates the urgency to take action to reduce the risk of wildfires to communities throughout Hawai'i and the need to increase capacity within organizations that are already working on fire mitigation across the state. The Department performs fuel reduction projects on lands it manages (1,368,002 acres, 26% of the lands in the state) and assists with planning efforts and outreach with the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) for lands outside of the Department's purview. Creating a fire-shed partnership program will allow for broader planning and more cohesive fire fuel reduction projects across landowner boundaries. The fire-shed partnership program is modeled after the Watershed Partnerships, founded in 1991 to protect the islands' source of freshwater. The benefits of collaborative management practiced under the Watershed Partnerships are many:

1. Management actions address large landscapes and threats affecting multiple habitats and species;
2. The ability to leverage limited dollars for maximum benefits and allow the pooling of resources as well as expertise to reduce redundancy efforts;
3. Capacity building for landowners; and
4. Conservation of other ecosystem services such as water, recreation, culture, education, and jobs.

The Department looks to apply this model to the management of the wildland fire environment and the wildland-urban interface fire environment to better protect the communities, rangelands, and forested landscapes of the state, working in close collaboration with HWMO, the University of Hawai'i, the counties, and private landowners. The Department's primary role would be technical advice and granting funds to viable projects in collaboration with its partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
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
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
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

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2721

February 8, 2024
9:00 a.m.
Room 430 and Videoconference

RELATING TO WILDFIRE PROTECTION

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

House Bill (H.B.) No. 2721: 1) creates the Fireshed Partnership Program (FPP) within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to establish fireshed partnerships; 2) establishes the Fireshed Management Special Fund (FMSF) that would derive revenues through legislative appropriations, donations, contributions, grants, and interest for FPP planning and coordination efforts; and 3) appropriates an unspecified sum of general funds for FY 25 for deposit into the FMSF and an unspecified sum of special funds for FY 25 for the establishment of a full-time FPP coordinator within DLNR.

As a matter of general policy, B&F does not support the creation of any special fund which does not meet the requirements of Section 37-52.3, HRS. Special funds should:

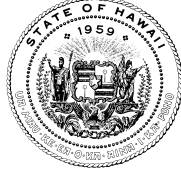
- 1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose, scope of work and an explanation why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process;
- 2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon the users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue;
- 3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity; and

4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining. Regarding H.B. No. 2721, it is difficult to determine whether the proposed FMSF would be self-sustaining or successfully implemented under the general fund appropriation process.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawai'i*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRMAN, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. DUCATT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIRMAN
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawai'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 8, 2024 AT 9:00AM IN CR 430

HB 2721, RELATING TO WILDFIRE PROTECTION

February 8, 2024

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) supports this bill which would 1) establish a fire-shed partnership program within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and 2) make appropriations.

The DHHL manages over 200,000 acres of Hawaiian Home Lands (HHL) and much of the HHL inventory is located in rural and wildfire hazardous areas. DLNR's proposed watershed program would facilitate the coordination of DHHL and DLNR's wildfire plans for a more efficient response. This measure would be a step forward in implementing fire-risk reduction through resource mapping and educational exchange.

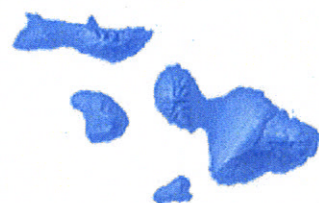
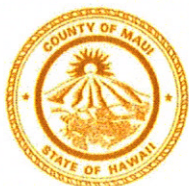
Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
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

February 7, 2024

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Committee on Water and Land
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 426
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairs Ichiyama,

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL (HB) 2721 RELATING TO WILDFIRE PROTECTION

I am Bradford K. Ventura, member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. The SFC supports HB 2721, which establishes a Fireshed Partnership Program within the Department of Land and Natural Resources and makes appropriations.

Wildfires are a serious threat to Hawaii's native ecosystems and wildland urban interface areas. 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 SFC envisions the partnerships and appropriation proposed by HB 2721 should improve Hawaii's wildfire risk assessment and mitigation effort. The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of HB 1841.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Ventura", written over the word "Sincerely,".

BRADFORD K. VENTURA
Fire Chief

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

**HONOLULU FIRE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA KINAI AHI O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

636 SOUTH STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 723-7139 • FAX: (808) 723-7111 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



SHELDON K. HAO
FIRE CHIEF
LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

JASON SAMALA
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF
HOPE LUNA NUI KINAI AHI

February 7, 2024

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Committee on Water and Land
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 426
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Ichiyama:

Subject: House Bill (HB) 2721 Relating to Wildfire Protection

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The HFD supports HB 2721, which establishes a fire-shed partnership program within the Department of Land and Natural Resources and makes appropriations.

Wildland fires are a serious threat to Hawaii's native ecosystems and wildland urban interface areas. Due to climate change and associated droughts, the annual land 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 HFD envisions that the partnerships and appropriation proposed by HB 2721 should improve Hawaii's wildland fire risk assessment and mitigation effort.

The HFD urges your committee's support on the passage of HB1841.

Should you have questions, please contact Administrative Specialist Gary Lum at 723-7169 or glum@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Fire Chief



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 430
Thursday, February 8, 2024 AT 9:00 A.M.

To The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair
The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Water & Land

SUPPORT HB2721 RELATING TO WILDFIRE PROTECTION

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS HB2721** which establishes a fireshed partnership program within the department of land and natural resources.

The Chamber supports the intent and, coming from Maui, we truly appreciate all of the efforts to help our island and the rest of our state given the lessons learned from the August 8 wildfires. However, we see a lot of overlap in proposed bills (bills on funding for fire equipment, fire marshal and elite firefighters and creating numerous boards and workgroups (HB2106, HB1926, HB1843, etc.)) There are many ideas addressing the same/similar solutions. Some that appear to overlap in personnel and equipment and other ideas that may just need to be integrated into a comprehensive program. While we appreciate the intent of all wildfire-related bills, we are hoping they can be integrated into a more cohesive and comprehensive plan to avoid duplication and overspending and get the best return on our investment, given that taxpayers will be expected to pay more for these new investments.

Senate Bill 2356 (Establishes within the Department of Defense the position and duties of State Wildfire Marshal, the position and duties of State Wildfire Chief, the State Wildfire Corps, and the State Wildfire Fuel Reduction Task Force) is a bill that includes an extensive State Wildfire Fuel Reduction Task Force that addresses the concerns this bill seeks to address.

For these reasons we **support HB2721**, but request that the House consider our comments on consolidation of bills into a comprehensive and coordinated plan.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

Testimony by Dr. Clay Trauernicht IN SUPPORT of HB 2721, Relating to Wildfire Mitigation

For the hearing on February 8th, 2024, Conference Room 430

To Representatives Linda Ichiyama and Mahina Poepoe, Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Committee on Water and Land:

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 2721 Relating to Wildfire Protection. I have been working at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the field of wildfire science and management since 2013, however, I am submitting this testimony as an individual and not as an official University of Hawai'i (UH) spokesperson. Please excuse the late submission.

I support the proposed bill as it correctly recognizes and addresses the complexity of wildfire risk mitigation and proposes an effective strategy, namely the Fireshed Partnership model, to plan and initiate place based, landscape scale wildfire protection measures around at-risk communities.

The Maui fires clearly exposed our extreme vulnerability to wildfire impacts. But even among those of us working on wildfire for years within the state, these fires revealed how much more work is needed to identify and plan specific risk reduction projects across the landscapes around our communities.

The Fireshed partnership model proposed follows and builds upon the Watershed Partnership model, which has united multiple landowners and expanded the state's capacity to tackle watershed and native ecosystem protection across the Hawaiian Islands. The Fireshed Partnerships would extend this effort makai, into the fire-prone landscapes that envelop so many of our communities and build on more than a decades' history of cooperative effort by Department of Land and Natural Resources, the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, and the University of Hawaii. This will be a crucial step in assessing fire risk reduction is happening, identifying the pukas we need to fill, planning for long-term projects that suit community needs and wants, and ultimately ensuring contiguous fire protection measures around our communities through effective management of vegetation, water, and other resources.

Sincerely,



Clay Trauernicht, PhD
Extension Specialist in Ecosystems and Fire
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa