



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

COMMITTEE REFERRAL: EEP

MARCH 21, 2024

HCR 197/HR 177, REQUESTING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO FILE A LAWSUIT AGAINST BIG OIL CORPORATIONS FOR CLIMATE DAMAGES TO THE STATE AND ENGAGE A THIRD-PARTY LAW FIRM THAT HAS EXPERTISE IN THIS LEGAL AREA.

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HCR 197/HR 177, which requests the Attorney General to file a lawsuit against big oil corporations for climate damages to the state and engage a third-party law firm that has expertise in this legal area.

According to a report produced by the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission, global sea levels could rise more than three feet by 2100, with more recent projections showing this occurring as early as 2060. In turn, over the next 30 to 70 years, approximately 6,500 structures and 19,800 people statewide will be exposed to chronic flooding. Additionally, an estimated \$19 billion in economic loss would result from chronic flooding of land and structures located in exposure areas. Finally, approximately 38 miles of coastal roads and 550 cultural sites would be chronically flooded, on top of the 13 miles of beaches that have already been lost on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui to erosion fronting shoreline armoring.

As we work to reduce carbon emissions and stave off the worst consequences of climate change, we must begin preparing for the adverse impact of sea level rise on our shores. We are now quantifying the speed at which we must act. We cannot continue to develop the 25,800-acre statewide sea level rise exposure area—one-third of which is designated for urban use—without risking massive structural damage and, potentially, great loss of life.

Last year, we witnessed the impact of the climate emergency on our shores. On August 8, 2023, wildfires swept across Maui and killed at least 100 people, making it one of the nation's deadliest natural disasters. The spread of the fires has been attributed to climate change conditions, such as unusually dry landscapes and the confluence of a strong high-pressure system to the north and Hurricane Dora to the south. The wildfires destroyed over 2,200 structures, including numerous residential buildings, historic landmarks, and school facilities. In September 2023, a report from the United States Department of Commerce estimated the total economic damage of the wildfires to be roughly \$5.5 billion. Investing in renewable energy generation could not be more urgent, given the growing threat of climate-induced catastrophes to our island home.

Therefore, **our state should take steps to accelerate our transition to a clean energy economy and continue our fight against climate change, including by pursuing litigation against the big oil companies that have recklessly worsened the climate crisis.** Previous IPCC reports have concluded that human activities such as burning fossil fuels are the primary cause of climate change: about 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions come from burning fossil fuels for electricity, transportation, and industry. Despite the scientific consensus on the cause and urgency of the issue, the fossil fuel industry has used disinformation and delay tactics to slow down the enactment of climate policies, resulting in our current reality, where increases in global average temperatures are rapidly exceeding 1.5 degrees C, much to the peril of our planet.

Mahalo nui loa,

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To: The House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Thursday, March 21, 2024, 9:31am

In strong support of HCR197/ HR177

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and Energy and Environmental Protection Committee members,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports HCR197/ HR177** that requests the Attorney General to file a lawsuit against big oil corporations for climate damages to the state and engage a third-party law firm that has expertise in this legal area.

We wish to thank the Energy and Environmental Protection Committee, who recently hosted an informational briefing on climate change with the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment. This informational briefing was very timely and provided much needed updates.

The remarks made by one of the presenters, Retired Hawaii Supreme Court Justice Michael Wilson, were particularly insightful and profound. He noted that the City and County of Honolulu and Maui County's current lawsuits against big oil companies "may be the most important lawsuit in the United States." He further notes the counties have moved forward to **represent** the community, to try to hold accountable those that are causing injury, the oil companies, alleging fraud on the part of the oil companies.

Justice Wilson further noted that this trial will now occur in the state where citizens have seen Lahaina burn to the ground, where they've seen a rain bomb destroy the north shore of Kauai, and where citizens are seeing what's happening to Waikiki. These citizens are now going to be able to sit as jurors.

We are grateful that the counties have taken the lead in representing the public against deceptive oil companies who have lied to us for decades, resulting in serious harms to People and the Planet, all in the name of their corporate profits. It is time for the State to follow the counties lead and seek further damages to the state caused by these criminal companies.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org

HCR-197

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 9:29:22 AM

Testimony for EEP on 3/21/2024 9:31:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dave Mulinix	Greenpeace Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, & Committee Members,

My name is Dave Mulinix, Co-Founder & Statewide Organizer for the Hawaii Chapter of Green Peace, the largest environmental organization with an international membership of over 3 million. On behalf of Greenpeace Hawaii's thousands of members and supporters statewide we stand in Strong SUPPORT of HCR197/HR177.

It is well documented that the fossil fuel industry hid from government agencies and the public the fact that they knew that the burning of fossil fuels was contributing to global warming and the ultimate destruction of a stable climate.

It is time for the fossil fuel industry to take responsibility for their amorale behavior. HCR197/HR177 is an important step in that direction.

Mahalo for hearing this resolution,

Dave Mulinix, Co-Founder & Statewide Organizer

Greenpeace Hawaii