

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
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 Committee on
WATER AND LAND**

**Tuesday, March 12, 2024
9:00 AM**

State Capitol, Conference Room 430 and Via Videoconference

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2143 SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Senate Bill 2143 Senate Draft 1 proposes appropriate funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife to provide grants to nonprofit organizations for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive FY 2025 Supplemental Budget Request.**

The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) is the primary responder for wildland fires across 1,368,002 acres of the State of Hawai'i's forested watersheds (or 26% of the land area in Hawai'i) and supports federal and county responders on the remaining regions of the State. DOFAW is also tasked with coordinating prevention outreach and planning efforts, which include assisting communities in developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, encouraging communities to join the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Community Program, and applying for federal grant programs like the United States Forest Service's (USFS) Wildland Urban Interface Grant Program and Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program. DOFAW does not have the staffing capacity or resources to adequately provide programming for all the State's wildfire preparedness needs and instead partners with nonprofit organizations such as the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization to fill this gap. Wildfire prevention nonprofits cannot count on receiving federal grant funding annually through DOFAW and are often outcompeted by larger, national nonprofits for federal grants. Therefore, it is necessary to secure permanent State funding to support nonprofit partners that provide education, training, and support for communities and large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects. Providing permanent annual funding for wildfire prevention nonprofits through DOFAW

will increase the Department's capacity to assist communities in planning, preparing, and mitigating the potential impacts of future wildfires that are growing in frequency, size, and duration due to increased periods of drought coupled with heavy loading of wildfire fuels on unmanaged lands. There is an urgent need for additional funding and resources for the State's fire service to do pre-suppression work such as fuel reduction and improved forest management, maintain readiness and capacity for fire suppression, and restore and recover landscapes in the aftermath of wildland fires. By funding pre-suppression and recovery, including wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming, public exposure to catastrophic wildland fires will decrease.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in 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

March 8, 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: Senate Bill (SB) 2143, Senate Draft (SD) 1, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)

I am Kazuo Todd, Chair of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC). The SFC supports SB 2143, SD1, which appropriates funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

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 agrees that DOFAW has been underfunded for providing grants to and working with nonprofit organizations, such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization. This measure would support those nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness and mitigation through grant disbursements.

As an example, The Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) could use additional funding for the statewide Firewise Communities program, that supports communities to reduce wildfire risk and the Wildfire Resilient Landscapes program, which provides education and training for large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects.

Funding and support for DOFAW, HWMO, and other nonprofits will be invaluable in protecting the environment, residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Page 2
March 8, 2024

threat of wildland fires throughout Hawaii. The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 2143, SD1.

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

Sincerely,

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

KAZUO TODD
Chair

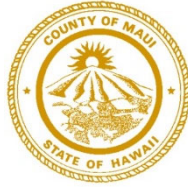
KT/GL:

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

March 8, 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: SENATE BILL (SB) 2143, SENATE DRAFT (SD) 1, RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DLNR)

I am Bradford Ventura, member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Maui Fire Department. The SFC supports SB 2143, SD1, which appropriates funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

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 agrees that DOFAW has been underfunded for providing grants to and working with nonprofit organizations, such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization. This measure would support those nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness and mitigation through grant disbursements.

As an example, The Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) could use additional funding for the statewide Firewise Communities program, that supports communities to reduce wildfire risk and the Wildfire Resilient Landscapes program, which provides education and training for large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects.

Funding and support for DOFAW, HWMO, and other nonprofits will be invaluable in protecting the environment, residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the threat of wildland fires throughout Hawaii. The SFC urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 2143, SD1.

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama, Chair

Page 2

March 8, 2024

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

**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

March 11, 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: Senate Bill (SB) 2143, Senate Draft (SD) 1 Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)

I am Sheldon K. Hao, Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The HFD supports SB 2143, SD1, which appropriates funds to the DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife's (DOFAW) Wildfire Management Branch to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildland fire preparedness and mitigation programming.

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 and exceeded the national average. In some years, it surpassed the 12 most fire-prone western states.

The HFD agrees the DOFAW has been underfunded for providing grants to and working with nonprofit organizations, such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO). This measure would support those nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildland fire preparedness and mitigation through grant disbursements.

As an example, the HWMO could use additional funding for the statewide Firewise Communities program that supports communities to reduce wildland fire risk and the Wildfire Resilient Landscapes program, which provides education and training for large landowners to manage fire risks through mitigation plans and projects.

Funding and support for the DOFAW, the HWMO, and other nonprofits will be invaluable in protecting the environment, residences, buildings, and critical infrastructure from the threat of wildland fires throughout Hawaii.

The Honorable Linda Ichiyama
Page 2
March 11, 2024

The HFD urges your committee's support on the passage of SB 2143, SD1.

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

Sincerely,

SHELDON K. HAO
Fire Chief

SKH/GL:cn



Hawai'i Forest Industry Association

7192 Kalaniana'ole Hwy
Suite A-143A, #249
Honolulu, HI 96825
Phone: 808/933/9411
Email: hfia@hawaiiforest.org

Date: 03/09/24

TO: WAL Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe and WAL Committee Members Chun, Ganaden, Hashem, Mizuno, Morikawa, Takayama, Souza

FROM: Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA)

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of SB2143 SD1 Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe and WAL Committee Members,

On behalf of the Directors and members of the Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA), please support SB2143 SD1 Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

The Hawaii Forest Industry Association recognizes the State's need for Hawaii's nongovernment Natural Resources Sector partners, consisting of numerous non-profits (as well as private entities and landowners), to participate in wildfire preparedness and mitigation efforts. Many of these groups are already doing this naturally through their work, via land management. HFIA's own sister organization, the Hawaii Forest Institute (HFI), is doing this via the creation, promotion and dispersal of a native plant guidebook (Go Native), encouraging Hawaii residents and businesses to plant using native species as opposed to resource exhaustive exotic species. HFI is coordinating with the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization to supply them with copies of the guidebook to inform their work.

Considering warming climate trends, windy and dry conditions, vast expanses of pyrophytic weeds and grasses surrounding our communities and covering concerningly sizeable swaths of our islands, and the fact that the State has more land than it can successfully manage, any additional funding available to be awarded to nonprofits to either continue and/or increase their wildfire preparedness and mitigation efforts should be widely supported.

We hope that you will support SB2143 SD1.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Guy Cellier, President
Hawai'i Forest Industry Association

HFIA's mission is to promote healthy and productive forests and a sustainable forest industry through management, education, planning, information exchange, and advocacy. HFIA has over 130 members including woodworkers, landowners, sawyers, foundations, foresters, growers, educators, environmentalists, architects, millers, ranchers, and others interested in HFIA's mission and goals.

HFIA Board of Directors

Officers: President Guy Cellier, Vice President Irene Sprecher, Secretary Taylor Coons, Treasurer Wade Lee
Directors: Jeremy Campbell, Aaron Hammer, Nicholas Koch, Michael Sowards, Aileen Yeh

PROTECT KAHO‘OLAWE ‘OHANA
1733 Wili Pa Loop, B-1
Wailuku, Hawai‘i 96793



March 9, 2024

Strong Support for SB3327_SD1: Relating to the Water Commission

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice-Chair Poepoe and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Dr. Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor and I am testifying today on behalf of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana in strong support of SB3327,SD1.

SB3327_SD1, when passed, will implement decades-long recommendations to try to have the Water Commission be free from the variable influence of changes in gubernatorial politics. The proposed changes will enable the Commissioners and their staff to better focus on protecting our state’s islands’ water resources and fulfilling their kuleana.

The proposal to have the CWRM deputy position become an Executive Director who reports directly to the Water Resource Management Commission, is a positive structural change, similar to the structure of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC). This structure has been effective for the KIRC in its focus on healing the island of Kaho'olawe. Having the BLNR chair serve as a member of the commission, instead of the chair has also been effective for the KIRC. Instead on the KIRC, the commissioners take a poll on who should serve as chair and forward their recommendation to the Governor. Most state commissions have volunteer chairpersons - Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commssion, Land Use Commission and the UH Board of Regents.

The bill would also increase fines for violations of rules. We support this. Again, for Kaho‘olawe, substantial fines have served to make the rules that protect the island's marine resources more effective.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration of this testimony. Respectfully, I urge your committees to pass SB 3327, SD1.

Ola i ka wai!

Mahalo
Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor
Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana



Testimony of **Lahaina Strong**
Before the House Committee on
Water and Land

In Consideration of Senate Bill No. 2143 SD1
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

To Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and the honorable members of the committee,

We are writing on behalf of Lahaina Strong, an organization that was initially formed in 2018 following the Hurricane Lane fire in Lahaina and re-energized last year after the devastating Lahaina fires on August 8. Lahaina Strong has been at the forefront of relief and advocacy efforts, including initiating the "Fishing for Housing" camp, which has been in operation for over 17 weeks along Kaanapali Beach, highlighting the need for dignified housing for Lahaina fire victims. Our organization is the largest grassroots, Lahaina-based community organization, with over 20,000 supporters, engaged in emphasizing the importance of local voices and community-driven solutions.

Lahaina Strong stands in support of SB2143 SD1, which would appropriate funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife to provide nonprofit organizations with much-needed grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

We would like to emphasize the critical need for immediate action to address the escalating threat of wildfires in our state. The urgency of this matter has been underscored by the tragic events of the August 2023 Maui wildfires, which ravaged communities and landscapes, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. These catastrophic events serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need to strengthen our wildfire management efforts and invest in proactive measures to mitigate future disasters.

If it happened to Lahaina, it could happen anywhere. As stewards of this unique environment, we must recognize that our current approach to wildfire management is woefully inadequate. The underfunding of the wildfire management branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife has left us vulnerable and ill-prepared to confront this mounting crisis.

Moreover, the reliance on nonprofit organizations, such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, highlights the urgency of securing sustainable funding to support their vital work in wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming. These organizations play a pivotal role in educating communities, training landowners, and implementing mitigation plans to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

Lahaina Strong stands in support of SB2143 SD1, which seeks to appropriate necessary funds to bolster the wildfire management branch and provide essential support to nonprofit partners. We must appropriate funds to organizations willing to engage in boots-on-the-ground efforts to mitigate the future risk of wildfires to our communities. These frontline organizations are instrumental in implementing proactive measures such as fuel reduction, firebreak construction, and community outreach initiatives.

Mahalo for your attention and commitment to the well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

Jordan Ruidas, Courtney Lazo, Pa'ele Kiakona

Lahaina Strong



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

SB 2143, Relating to the Department of Land & Natural Resources

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in resolute **support of SB 2143**, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming. We are writing as the co-directors of the nonprofit that has been at the forefront of wildfire prevention and preparedness for over 20 years, before others even acknowledged or were aware of the issue.

Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) serves as the state's primary hub of wildfire prevention, mitigation, planning, and collaborative risk-reduction and post-fire recovery projects. We were founded in 2000 to fill in the gaps of our fire and forestry agencies, who do not have the capacity for this type of work. Until August of last year, wildfire has been de-prioritized by everyone except our organization. We have written every wildfire protection plan in Hawaii since 2010 and have mapped every ignition and large fire since 1999. We run the only community wildfire preparedness program (Firewise Communities Program) for the state and do so for DOFAW. We also co-lead a fire science exchange network for the state (Pacific Fire Exchange) in partnership with UH-Manoa. Since August, we have had a 1500 percent increase in requests for our technical assistance, prevention and mitigation resources, and programming. Our fire departments, forestry, and emergency management agencies have been sending concerned citizens our way, as we have strong partnerships with these agencies, and have been serving in this capacity for a very long time already.

Our organization stands firmly behind the passage of this bill, recognizing the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations play in the realm of wildfire preparedness and mitigation. These organizations are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very safety and fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering five times or more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians from wildfire. To date, this work for Hawaii has been almost entirely led, coordinated, and prioritized by our nonprofit.

In the interest of our collective well-being, sustainability, and the thriving future of our state, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to champion the passage of SB 2143. Your support of this crucial legislation will resonate for generations to come, laying the groundwork for a safer, wildfire-prepared and wildfire-resilient, and flourishing Hawaii.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143.

Mahalo nui loa,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is 'Andrea Barretto' and the signature on the right is 'Elizabeth Pickett'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea (Nani) Barretto and Elizabeth Pickett
Co-Executive Directors
Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization

YOUR LETTERHEAD

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

SB 2143, Relating to the Department of Land & Natural Resources

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in resolute **support of SB 2143**, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

Our neighborhood on the Windward side of Oahu, Hawai'i is very susceptible to high winds and fire issues because of our wild landscaping and valley position. To further complicate things, there is only one way in and one way out of our residential community of over 400 homes. In the event of road blockage due to fire hazard or compounded panicked residents trying to leave, we are basically in a death trap not that dissimilar to the events that took place in Lahaina last year. We have been working with local government and the Firewise leadership program to better equip our community with life saving tips and actions to keep our neighborhood safe.

Our organization stands firmly behind the passage of this bill, recognizing the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations play in the realm of wildfire preparedness and mitigation. These organizations are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering five times more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

In the interest of our collective well-being, sustainability, and the thriving future of our state, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to champion the passage of SB 2143. Your support of this crucial legislation will resonate for generations to come, laying the groundwork for a safer, more resilient, and flourishing Hawaii.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143.

Mahalo nui loa,

Claire Broussard
Firewise Committee Chair
Lanikai Neighborhood Community “LNC”

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

SB 2143, Relating to the Department of Land & Natural Resources

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in resolute **support of SB 2143**, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

As Safety Chair for Mahanalua Nui HOA in Launiupoko, and as a member of Firewise community we support this funding bill for the safety of West Maui particularly and all of Hawaii. We can use funds to create Firebreaks Mauka & Makai of our community, and also for our Green waste removal days. Other projects we support are the Olowalu Fire Station and any and all fire safety initiatives.

Our organization stands firmly behind the passage of this bill, recognizing the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations play in the realm of wildfire preparedness and mitigation. These organizations are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering five times more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

In the interest of our collective well-being, sustainability, and the thriving future of our state, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to champion the passage of SB 2143. Your support of this crucial legislation will resonate for generations to come, laying the groundwork for a safer, more resilient, and flourishing Hawaii.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143.

Mahalo nui loa,

Tom English
Chair of MNHA, Rules, Safety and Security Committee

Kohala Ranch Community Association
Fire Protection Subcommittee
Kohala Ranch, Hawai'i County

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

SB 2143, Relating to the Department of Land & Natural Resources

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in resolute **support of SB 2143**, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

Kohala Ranch is a 3000 acres community located in the North West dry part of the Big Island of Hawai'i in a dry and windy savannah region which has increasingly prone to fire. On August 8, 20223, the same day and in the same meteorological situation as Lahaina, we experienced a major fire , the 'Akoni Pule fire, which burned some 1800 acres including 100 acres on our Ranch. Some 22 lots were scorched, but fortunately no structure was lost. The fire season is with us again with 3 smaller fires in our vicinity on February 25 and two on March 7. The Hawai'i Fire Department was able to extinguish those fire rapidly.

With the constitution of the Fire Protection Subcommittee our Ranch is getting organized address the rapidly increasing challenges of Wildfire:

- Owners education and alignment of Ranch regulations to Firewise best practices
- Fire risk mitigation both from individual owners and the KR community. Vegetation Control within the Ranch through mechanical methods and grazing, and maintenance of fuel breaks such as those opened by the Department of Transportation.
- Organization of the Ranch emergency response and training
- Improving infrastructure resilience
- Engaging in partnership with the State and County authorities (Civil Defense, Fire Department, Police, DOFAW, DHHL), HWMO and Firewise communities, the local cluster of communities (Kohals Ranch, Kohala Estates, Kohala by the Sea, Kohala Waterfront and other relevant actors (e.g., HECO).

Kohala Ranch is now a Firewise accredited community and we are working very closely with the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) and the Division of Forestry and Wildfire.

We stand firmly behind the passage of this bill, recognizing the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations, such as HWMO, play in the realm of wildfire preparedness and mitigation. These organizations are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering five times more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

In the interest of our collective well-being, sustainability, and the thriving future of our state, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to champion the passage of SB 2143. Your support of this crucial legislation will resonate for generations to come, laying the groundwork for a safer, more resilient, and flourishing Hawaii.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143.

Mahalo nui loa,

Bernard Sadoulet
Coordinator of the Kohala Ranch Fire Protection Subcommittee
Member of the Board of the Kohala Ranch Community Association
59-727 Ka'ala Road
Kamuela, HI 96743

Cell: 510 703 3840
bsadoulet@gmail.com

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 9:07:28 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack Moses Minassian	Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Jack M. Minassian and I am currently employed by Hawaii Community College as an Associate Professor and the Fire Science Program Coordinator. I am also serving as a member of the Board of Directors for the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO). I have 35 years experience fighting wildland fires, and in 2004 I retired as the Pacific Island Fire Management Officer for the National Park Service stationed at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. I have lived in Hawaii since 1988.

I fully support SB2143 because the HWMO fills the gap between fire service agencies, and community and homeowners. HWMO provides communities and homeowners the information they need to establish a Firewise Community, and for homeowners to establish a defensible space around their residences. The HWMO has promoted the partnership between the government and the civilian population. The Lahina Fire has increased the public's awareness of the potential wildland fires have in Hawaii.

I again support passage of this bill due to its importance in help saving lives, and property from wildland fires.

Sincerely,

Jack M. Minassian, Associate Professor

Fire Science Program Coordinator

Hawaii Community College

Erin Peyton ~ PO Box 319 ~ Maunaloa, HI 96770

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water and Land
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m. ~ Conference Room 430 & Video conference

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, Esteemed Members of the Water & Land committee

I write to you today in resolute support of SB 2143, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

We are a community of volunteers on the island of Molokai that rely on funders to successfully place apparatus access roads, reduce high fuel loads, locate alternate evacuation routes, create and distribute emergency preparedness brochures, participate in community education opportunities and collaborate with public and private land owners.

In recognizing the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations play in the realm of wildfire preparedness and mitigation. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save five times more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143 - please help us to continue to safeguard our community from wildfire.

Mahalo nui loa,
Erin Peyton
Paniolo Hale Firewise USA, Lead
HWMO Community Wildfire Ambassador of the island of Molokai



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 430
Tuesday, March 12, 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 SB2143 SD1 RELATING TO THE WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS SB2143 SD1.**

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 equipment and creating numerous boards and workgroups (SB2808, SB2356, SB2842, SB2143, etc.). There are many ideas addressing the same/similar solutions. Some appear to overlap in personnel and equipment and other ideas 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.

While the other bills mentioned above create new departments, positions, and/or task forces under the state, we appreciate that you're looking at a private sector solution through nonprofit organizations to help address wildfire preparedness and mitigation. *The nonprofit sector may be able to reach more people in their local communities and bring in volunteers which could save money overall. Therefore, we would like to see this discussion continue and feel this should be included in a comprehensive plan.*

For these reasons we **support SB2143 SD1**, 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.

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2024 2:06:39 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Yes to appropriating funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife to provide nonprofit organizations with grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

Declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2045.

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 7:40:56 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Horowitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Maui resident I support SB 2143

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 7:56:19 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cliff O'Donnell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write in support of SB2143. The funds are essential for the work of the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources to help prevent wildfires. I work with Firewise and know the important work they do.

Thank you for your consideration!

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 7:58:05 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelly Aina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Passage of this bill is critical for the protection of lives and properties in the WUI. This past year demonstrated the need to resources to combat the extreme threat of wildfire.

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 8:17:33 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gordon Firestein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in enthusiastic support of SB 2143, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources.

As co-chair of the Launiupoko Firewise Committee and having witnessed first-hand the devastating fire in Lahaina last August, it is critically important to our community that those agencies and nonprofits that work so hard to mitigate the risks of the next wildfire be fully supported. Unfortunately it is no longer hyperbole to say this is literally a matter of life and death.

Thank you for your public service and for shouldering such vital responsibilities.

Mahalo nui loa,

Gordon Firestein

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 8:21:56 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Franz Weber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in **support of SB 2143**, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to allocate essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

In the last few months, I became certified as a home assessor regarding Fire Prevention. This is a crucial service to the public, since many homes and condos are next to undeveloped properties that are covered by dry, easy to ignite brush and dead trees.

This bill recognizes the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations play in the realm of wildfire preparedness and mitigation. These organizations are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering five times more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

In the interest of our collective well-being, sustainability, and the thriving future of our state, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to champion the passage of SB 2143. Your support of this crucial legislation will resonate for generations to come, laying the groundwork for a safer, more resilient, and flourishing Hawaii.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143.

Mahalo nui loa,

Franz Weber

Community Wildfire Ambassador and Home Assessor, Hawai'i Wildfire Management
Organization

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 8:22:40 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John J Buckheit	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have been a member of the Fire Service for 34 years. During that time I have seen first hand the tremendous pain and loss to uncontrolled fire. Modern fire preparedness experts agree that Fire Service alone is not enough to help our society from the dangers of fire. We need a ready Fire service, as well as well managed and prepared occupancies, and an informed and ready public.

Money directed towards SB2143 SD1 will be money well spent. I strongly encourage the Legislature to pass this bill. Just this past November we had a serious wildfire up the road from our community in KuluaKoi here on Molokai. The Fire Service acted with great skill and suppressed this fire, but if the fire had jumped the road and continued mauka the outcome could have been severe. We need to attack the fire problem from many angles with many participants. Please support this Bill, which will help in this important work!

Mahalo nui loa

John Buckheit

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 8:57:47 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lee McCartan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha- I write to you today in support of SB 2143, as a fellow resident and member of the Paniolo Hale FireWise Committee in Maunaloa, Molokai. I recognize, first-hand, the pivotal role that nonprofit organizations in the realm of wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and prevention. Such organizations are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable entities, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable ‘āina that define our beloved state.

Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of Hawaii’s critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners. Therefore, passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities.

For every \$1 allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering 5x times more in potential damages! Furthermore, we need to prioritize safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

-Mahalo nui for considering this testimony.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Water & Land
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

SB 2143, Relating to the Department of Land & Natural Resources

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in **support of SB 2143**, legislation that seeks to allocate **essential funds to the Wildfire Management Branch of the Department of Land & Natural Resources**. This allocation is aimed at providing nonprofit organizations with vital grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming.

As a resident of Maui, and a Wildfire Ambassador, trained by the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, I am acutely aware of the role of non-profits and volunteers such as myself in ensuring preparedness of our communities, and educating community members about wildfire mitigation.

Non-profit organizations and their volunteers are often the bedrock of expertise, community engagement, and resource mobilization needed to implement highly effective programs. By allocating funds to these invaluable nonprofits, we are ensuring their sustained capacity to safeguard our communities and the irreplaceable natural landscapes that define our beloved state.

Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the challenging landscape our local nonprofits face. Operating in Hawaii means contending with fierce competition for exceedingly scarce federal dollars designated for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Without the infusion of additional funding provided by SB 2143, the burden of our state's critical wildfire education, planning, and mitigation initiatives would fall disproportionately on our already strained county and state agency partners.

Passing this bill is not merely an act of financial support; it is an investment in the very fabric of our communities. It enables our nonprofit organizations to take proactive measures toward shielding our populace, enhancing public safety, conserving our precious natural resources, mitigating the staggering economic impacts of wildfires, and fortifying our collective resilience in the face of adversity.

For every dollar allocated to wildfire prevention and mitigation, our state stands to save a staggering five times more in potential damages. However, beyond the financial aspect, this is fundamentally about safeguarding the lives, homes, and livelihoods of our fellow Hawaiians.

In the interest of our collective well-being, sustainability, and the thriving future of our state, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to champion the passage of SB 2143. Your

support of this crucial legislation will resonate for generations to come, laying the groundwork for a safer, more resilient, and flourishing Hawaii.

Thank you sincerely for considering our perspective and for the opportunity to submit this testimony in unwavering support of SB 2143.

Mahalo nui loa,

Robin S. Knox
Wildfire Ambassador
Kihei, Maui

SB-2143-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 4:36:25 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/12/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenneth Hirsch, MD, PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

I write to you today in resolute **support of SB 2143**. I am a member of the Firewise Committee in our residential community, Wiailae Iki 5. As such, I have become increasingly aware of the dangers of fire in general and wildfire in particular. Prior to moving to Hawaii in 2003, my community in San Diego lost one in every three homes to a wildfire.

This bill provides for grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Efforts that suchg funding would support saves lives and property, and does so in a very cost-effective manner.

I strongly urge that you supporty this legislation.

Thank you very much,

Kenneth Hirsch