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STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
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Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS

Thursday, February 22, 2024
10:05 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211 and Via Videoconference

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

Senate Bill 2143 proposes to 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 grants for wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this measure.**

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 areas in the state. DOFAW is also tasked with coordinating prevention outreach and planning efforts, which includes assisting communities in developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, encouraging communities to join the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Community Program, and apply 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 to plan, prepare, and mitigate the potential impacts from future wildfires that are increasing in frequency, size, and duration due to increased periods of drought

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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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 fire will be decreased.

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



Hawai'i Forest Industry Association

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Date: 02/19/24

TO: WAM Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and WAM Committee Members Aquino DeCoite, Hashimoto, Inouye, Kanuha, Kidani, Mercado Kim, Lee, Shimabukuro, Wakai, Fevella

FROM: Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA)

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

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Directors and members of the Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA), please support SB2143 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.

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



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 225
Thursday, February 22, 2024, 10:05 A.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Ways and Means

SUPPORT SB2143 RELATING TO THE WILDFIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

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

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**, but request that the Senate 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.