# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
## ʻŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAIʻI

Legislative Testimony
Hōʻike Manaʻo I Mua O Ka ʻAhaʻōlelo

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Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Monday, February 26, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.
By
Brennon Morioka, Dean
College of Engineering
And
Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

HB 1949 HD1 – RELATING TO THE GENERATION OF WILDFIRE SUSCEPTIBILITY MAPS FOR HAWAII

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunty to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1949 HD1 provided its adoption does not impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget. This measure establishes and appropriates funds for the University of Hawaiʻi to develop wildfire susceptibility and vulnerability maps for the State of Hawaiʻi.

These maps 1) help identify areas that are more susceptible to wildfire hazard, 2) allow decision-makers to prioritize high-risk areas for targeted risk reduction strategies, and 3) assist in the development of adaptation policies that lessen the disastrous impacts of future wildfires. Decision-makers can use wildfire vulnerability maps to guide zoning regulations to reduce the impact of wildfires on communities. Moreover, authorities will be more informed about policies allowing construction in vulnerable areas and locating essential facilities (e.g., hospitals, schools, and firefighting stations) in areas that are less vulnerable to wildfires.

In collaboration with the National Weather Service, the Hawaiʻi Department of Land and Natural Resources-Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Hawaiʻi Emergency Management Agency, and county fire departments, the results of this project will be used to develop the best mitigation strategies such as ecological forest management (fuel reduction to restore to natural conditions), creation of defensible space (using native and/or fire-resistant vegetation), and development of greenbelts (diverse vegetation including trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, that act as natural buffers to create separation from wildlands) in each county to reduce the impacts of wildfires.

The UH Mānoa (UHM) College of Engineering and UHM Water Resources Research Center's research capabilities, combined with the extensive outreach activities and technical solutions from the UHM College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, will provide the full range of skillsets and research, as well as the climate data necessary to develop this important tool for Hawaii's decision-makers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**HB-1949-HD-1**
Submitted on: 2/25/2024 3:29:34 PM
Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Shane Sinenci | Maui County Councilmember | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Supportive.

**HB-1949-HD-1**
Submitted on: 2/25/2024 10:55:55 AM
Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tamara Paltin | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on HB1949 HD1.

I am in strong support of the generation of wildfire suceptibility maps for Hawaii. As we have recently seen Hawaii is by no means exempt from major devastating wildfires and this is something that we need to be better prepared for with web-GIS wildfire suceptibility and vulnerability maps for the State of Hawaii to be better informed to determine which communities, landscapes, buildings and infrastructure are most vulnerable to future wildfires and mitigate those vulnerabilities so that we do not endure any more disasters of this magnitude in the future.

Mahalo for your service and commitment to our communities,

Tamara Paltin