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STATE OF HAWAII
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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2464,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
WATER AND LAND

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony to **SUPPORT** HB 2464.

House Bill 2464 proposes to establish a dedicated fund to receive finances for the dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program and to reappropriate funds for the dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program. Hawaii'i Emergency Management Agency **strongly supports** this measure and offers the following comments:

Act 134, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, established a dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program and appropriated \$10,000,000 in seed funding to financially assist private dam owners to maintain and bring their dams into compliance with current safety standards. The Department recognizes that dams provide many beneficial uses and ensuring dams are safe will best serve the public's interest.

To enable the Department to implement this program, the creation of a dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program special fund and reappropriation of \$10,000,000 in general funds to be utilized as initial seed funding, is necessary.

The Department is currently working on establishing the procedures, administrative framework, and the criteria that will be used in evaluating, ranking, selecting, and awarding grants to applicants in fiscal year 2025 and beyond.

Currently, there are 86 privately owned dams in the State of Hawai'i. Depending on the extent of each dam's deficiencies, the total cost to bring a single dam into compliance could easily run in the millions of dollars. Due to the high cost and to ensure the grant program can be sustainable, the Department recommends that the Legislature provide an annual recurring general fund appropriation into this special fund.

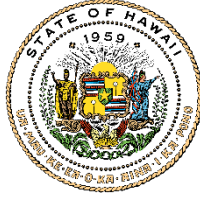
HI-EMA is in favor of this measure and **supports** HB 2464.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2464.

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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 & LAND

Thursday, February 8, 2024
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 2464
RELATING TO THE DAM AND APPURTENANCE IMPROVEMENT OR REMOVAL
GRANT PROGRAM

House Bill 2464 proposes to establish a special fund to receive funds for the dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program and to reappropriate funds for the dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

Act 134, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2023, established a dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program and appropriated \$10,000,000 in seed funding to financially assist private dam owners to maintain and bring their dams into compliance with current safety standards. The Department recognizes that dams provide many beneficial uses, and ensuring dams are safe will best serve the public's interest.

To enable the Department to implement this program, the creation of a dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program special fund and reappropriation of \$10,000,000 in general funds to be utilized as initial seed funding is necessary.

The Department is currently working on establishing the procedures, administrative framework, and the criteria that will be used in evaluating, ranking, selecting, and awarding grants to applicants in fiscal year 2025 and beyond.

Currently, there are 86 privately owned dams in the State of Hawai‘i. Depending on the extent of each dam’s deficiencies, the total cost to bring a single dam into compliance could easily run in the millions of dollars. Due to the high cost and to ensure the grant program can be sustainable, the Department recommends that the Legislature provide an annual recurring general fund appropriation into this special fund.

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



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February 8, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

TESTIMONY ON HB 2464
RELATING TO THE DAM AND APPURTENANCE IMPROVEMENT OR REMOVAL
GRANT PROGRAM

Conference Room 430 & Videoconference
9:00 AM

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

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 2464, which establishes a Dam and Appurtenance Improvement or Removal Grant Program Special Fund to receive moneys for the Dam and Appurtenance Improvement or Removal Grant Program and appropriates funds for the Dam and Appurtenance Improvement or Removal Grant Program.

While dam and reservoir safety rules represent an important public safety initiative, the rules codified in HRS chapter 179D are having an adverse effect by reducing water storage capacity across the state. At a time when changing weather patterns have demonstrated alternating periods of drought punctuated by significant storm events, coupled with the noble goal of achieving food security for our island state, water storage is more critical than ever. The new rules will discourage new dam and reservoir construction, and in many cases cause dam and reservoir owners to minimize the capacity or decommission existing storage capability.

Many of the reservoirs – built in an era of plantation agriculture—no longer generate enough revenue to be economically sustainable. But they are needed in ways few people have yet imagined. The issue of how to pay for the upgrading and maintenance of this critical infrastructure is now gaining more attention as the state's budget comes into focus.

Dams and reservoirs are the keys not just to a future sustainable agricultural system in Hawai'i, but to the entire water and environmental health of the State. In addition to the

conventional benefits of storing and delivering reliable water for agriculture in dry times, wildlife habitats, flood control during large storms, erosion control, and the reduction of sediment loading on our nearshore ocean reefs, reservoirs also ensure a supply of potable drinking water (after treatment) and provide water to help battle wildfires.

Reservoirs also help recharge our groundwater aquifers by capturing stormwater (for later release) that would otherwise rush to the ocean. There is growing evidence that there will be a pattern of fewer, but larger storms separated by longer intervals of drought. If the large rainfall flows are not captured, overall groundwater recharge may be significantly reduced. Groundwater is our primary source of drinking water and demand is relentlessly rising. We already face declining groundwater recharge every time we place hard impermeable surfaces (e.g. concrete) over previously open ground (agriculture).

Recent Dam and Reservoir Safety rules levy additional burdens on reservoir owners and Hawai'i farmers. Fuel, labor, equipment, transportation, and other expenses are already higher in Hawai'i than on the mainland, placing locally-grown products at a competitive disadvantage. Inevitably, increased costs will be passed on to consumers and are counterproductive to efforts to grow more food in Hawai'i. Some landowners will simply decommission their dams, abandon their reservoir systems, and decide what to do with their now-fallow lands when agriculture is no longer viable.

The availability of grants through the Dam and Appurtenance Improvement or Removal Grant Program will help owners and operators comply with the laws and regulations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to the agricultural community.