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

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**Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on  
WATER AND LAND**

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023  
12:30 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 1484  
RELATING TO THE STATE PARKS SPECIAL FUND**

Senate Bill 1484 proposes to allow the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to expend the moneys from the State Parks Special Fund for programs aimed at environmental protection. **The Department opposes this measure for the reasons provided below.**

The Department appreciates the recognition that the Department needs additional funds to fulfill our mission to conserve Hawai'i's unique and limited natural, cultural and historic resources held in public trust, but asks that support for programs aimed at environmental protection be funded from additional legislative appropriations, or measures such as the proposed visitor impact green fee program. The Department still receives less than 1% of the State's budget to steward Hawai'i's natural, cultural and historic resources that sustain life for current and future generations. The Department's needs for environmental protection far surpass what the State Parks Special Fund can provide.

The original intent of the State Parks Special Fund remains largely unfulfilled. For decades, the Department's Division of State Parks (State Parks) was so poorly funded that we required a substantive amount of capital improvement project (CIP) funds due to the inability to address repair and maintenance on a regular basis. Modest revenues were applied to modest increases in staffing and park enhancements, but with the 2020 fee increases, revenues are now robust and commensurate with the value of public lands that the system contains. State Parks is finally generating adequate income to be able to address its chronic backlog of repair and maintenance, a lack of sufficient staffing to protect resources and educate and manage the millions of annual park visitors, and to begin to plan and implement for future needed enhancements. State Parks is in a position to reduce our reliance on CIP over the next several years.

**DAWN N.S. CHANG**  
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

While State Parks has begun to address some of these management enhancements through fee collection and reservations system development, many underdeveloped and undermanaged parks remain, and parks-derived revenue should target upgrading facilities and staffing in those areas, many of which do not possess significant revenue generating potential but still contain fragile natural and cultural resources in need of protection.

One of the clear priorities of the legislature and the new administration this session is to create a user green fee to address the large conservation funding gap. The proposed green fee is intended to mitigate the impacts of visitors to all of Hawai'i's outdoor spaces through a variety of environmental and cultural protection initiatives. This green fee as proposed will produce significantly greater funding than the State Parks generate, will negate the need to use the State Parks Special Fund for environmental protection outside of the park system boundaries, and is an appropriate vehicle to provide for enhanced environmental protection.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to this measure.