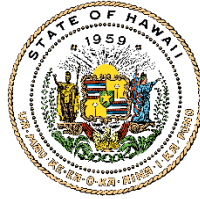


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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

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

**Before the Senate Committees on
WAYS AND MEANS
and
JUDICIARY**

**Wednesday, March 1, 2023
10:05 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 300, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE EXPENDITURE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR LAND
IMPROVEMENTS**

Senate Bill 300, Senate Draft 1 proposes to prohibit the expenditure of public moneys for any land improvement if the land is not owned or leased by the State, unless the moneys are appropriated by the Legislature, or the Legislature approves the expenditure by concurrent resolution. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) opposes this measure.**

The Department frequently uses both state funds and federal grants for infrastructure improvements on private lands and has many multi-year contracts that support these private land improvements. These projects have wide public benefits and often are supported by matching funds from the private landowner. Private lands contain unique resources, such as populations of endangered plants and animals, rare ecosystem types, and irreplaceable cultural and historical sites. Frequently, a private parcel may have existing infrastructure or a strategic location that justifies public infrastructure investments such as water tanks for firefighting, or radio repeater towers for emergency response. Additionally, most large natural resource protection projects, such as fences built to protect watershed areas and our fresh water supply, need to cross both public and private lands to be the most effective. Invasive species, such as the exploding populations of Axis deer and feral goats, do not follow landowner boundaries and efforts to control them can only be successful if the state funds improvements like fences that cross both private and public lands. Sixty-six percent of the forest lands in the state are located on private

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

land (including land owned by nonprofits, ranches, and generational local families), and protection of forests serves the public interest for water supply and other ecosystem services.

This measure would significantly constrain the flexibility of the Department to be able to carry out our mandate by requiring prior specific authorization by the Legislature for private land assistance. The additional bureaucratic approval process that this measure establishes could have the unintended consequences of delay and inability to assist when the Department needs to be proactive or respond quickly. Examples of urgent and unforeseeable situations that require the Department to fund improvements on private land include building a firebreak road to contain a life-threatening wildfire, finding the last population of a rare plant that needs fencing for its survival, or finding a new population of a damaging invasive species which needs to be contained to avoid spread to other lands.

If the measure proceeds, the Department requests an exemption for projects with the purpose of natural and cultural resource management.

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