

JAN 28 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CONSERVATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that numerous species in
2 Hawaii are on the brink of extinction, in particular many
3 indigenous birds found nowhere else in the world. While the
4 State has made progress in addressing the myriad causes
5 contributing to extinction, the legislature finds that existing
6 efforts must be supplemented to prevent further loss of
7 biodiversity.

8 The legislature recognizes that Zealandia (Te Mara a Tane)
9 is a pioneering conservation sanctuary in Wellington, New
10 Zealand, best known for proving how dramatically nature can
11 rebound with proper protection. Built as a fully fenced,
12 predator-excluded sanctuary, Zealandia creates a safe haven
13 where native birds, reptiles, and plants thrive and recover in
14 near-natural habitats, safe from invasive predators and vectors.
15 This model has not only enabled the reintroduction and rapid
16 growth of iconic native species that were once on the brink of



1 extinction, but it has also transformed the valley into a living
2 example of ecosystem restoration in a modern city.

3 Just as importantly, Zealandia's impact extends beyond its
4 fence line: thriving populations disperse outward into
5 surrounding neighborhoods and green spaces, helping native
6 wildlife return to the wider region. Zealandia also facilitates
7 community engagement by welcoming volunteers, residents,
8 researchers, and visitors and serving as a hub for school
9 programs and hands-on learning. Its success in engaging
10 community and visitors has helped Zealandia become largely
11 self-funding through admissions, memberships, tours, and
12 experiences that reinvest directly into conservation.

13 The legislature also recognizes that successful sanctuary
14 models in the United States generate substantial revenue for
15 conservation efforts. They serve as educational centers for
16 local schools, destinations for visitors, and provide critical
17 habitat for endangered and other species. Hawaii's climate and
18 environment offer a more natural habitat for many species than
19 found elsewhere in the continental United States. With
20 appropriate considerations and protections to ensure no adverse
21 impact on Hawaii's own environment, the State can improve the



1 living conditions of rescued animals from other states and
2 generate significant revenue for Hawaii's conservation efforts.

3 The legislature believes that the State is uniquely
4 positioned to become a national center for endangered species
5 research, education, and protection. Establishing sanctuaries
6 in Hawaii like those that have proven successful elsewhere can
7 advance the State's position as the premier place for endangered
8 species work and conservation and create pathways for local
9 education, jobs, investment, and research.

10 The legislature also believes that these successful
11 nonprofit models for establishing and operating potential
12 endangered species sanctuaries are preferable to a
13 government-run program. They provide more flexibility and
14 adaptability for management, operations, innovation, and
15 community engagement.

16 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to enable the
17 establishment of a nonprofit partner to collaborate with the
18 State to create and manage endangered species sanctuaries.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 195D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
20 amended by adding a new section to part II to be appropriately
21 designated and to read as follows:



1 "§195D- Hawaii conservation sanctuary; established.

2 (a) There shall be established the Hawaii conservation
3 sanctuary as a nonprofit group to work with the department to
4 enhance and support the work of conservation and endangered
5 species and wildlife preservation, and to oversee ancillary
6 programs.

7 (b) The Hawaii conservation sanctuary shall protect and
8 expand populations of endangered species and other wildlife from
9 within and outside the State by developing and operating
10 conservation sanctuaries in the State.

11 (c) The Hawaii conservation sanctuary may:

12 (1) Operate for-profit business enterprises;

13 (2) Hold or lease property; and

14 (3) Enter into contracts to support its mission

15 (d) The qualifying standards and conditions related to the
16 receipt of funds contained in chapter 42F shall not apply to
17 funds received by the Hawaii conservation sanctuary; provided
18 that if the Hawaii conservation sanctuary in turn contracts with
19 a recipient or provider, then the qualifying standards,
20 conditions, and other provisions of chapter 42F shall apply to
21 the recipient or provider and the contract.



1 (e) The department shall assist the Hawaii conservation
2 sanctuary with identifying and accessing appropriate land to
3 support its mission."

4 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

5 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

6
INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Chen', written over a horizontal line.

S.B. NO. 3253

Report Title:

DLNR; Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary; Endangered Species;
Wildlife; Conservation

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Conservation Sanctuary as a nonprofit group to work with the Department of Land and Natural Resources to support conservation, wildlife preservation, and ancillary programs by establishing sanctuaries in the State.

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