STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2631

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 2 0 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2972
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Agriculture and Environment, to which was referred S.B. No. 2972 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO OAHU CORAL REEF RESTORATION,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to temporarily prohibit the:

(1) Taking by spearing of uhu or kala in state marine waters around the island of Oahu; and

(2) Commercial sale of uhu and kala taken by spearing in state marine waters around the island of Oahu;

until the Holomua Marine Initiative of the Division of Aquatic Resources' process adopts applicable regulations.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Friends of Hanauma Bay; Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition; Na Kama Kai; Fish Pono - Save Our Reefs; Sierra Club of Hawai'i; Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force; Nature Conservancy, Hawai'i and Palmyra; Hawai'i Food+ Policy; and twenty-four individuals.

Your Committees received testimony in opposition to this measure from the Native Hawaiian Gathering Rights Association and three individuals.

Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Department of Land and Natural Resources and one individual.

Your Committees find that populations of herbivorous reef fish species, which are essential to maintaining the health and resilience of state coral reefs, are declining especially around the waters of Oahu. While your Committees recognize that the Holomua Marine Initiative of the Division of Aquatic Resources works with community stakeholders to develop and establish grassroots plans and strategies for the stewardship of the State's nearshore ecosystems, the Division has not yet adopted regulations that would recover populations of herbivorous reef fish species that would sufficiently protect coral reefs from being smothered by seaweed. This measure will improve the health and resilience of state coral reefs in the near-term until the Division can adopt and implement regulations that further the prosperity of the reefs and the fish that support them.

Your Committees acknowledge the concerns raised in testimony that a ban on the commercial sale of uhu and kala would unfairly harm the livelihood of responsible commercial fisherman. Amendments to this measure are therefore necessary to address these concerns.

Accordingly, your Committees have amended this measure by:

(1) Inserting legislative findings;

(2) Deleting language that would have prohibited the commercial sale of uhu or kala that were caught by spearing;

(3) Inserting a blank sunset date; and

(4) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Agriculture

and Environment that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2972, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2972, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Judiciary.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the members of the Committees on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Agriculture and Environment,

MIKE GABBARD, Chair

CHRIS LEE, Chair

The Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
WLA

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:
SB 2972	WLA/AEN, JDC	2-11-2026

☐ The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure.

If so, then the previous decision was to: _____

The Recommendation is:

☐ Pass, unamended 2312 ☑ Pass, with amendments 2311 ☐ Hold 2310 ☐ Recommit 2313

Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
LEE, Chris (C)	✓			
INOUYE, Lorraine R. (VC)	✓			
CHANG, Stanley	✓			
LAMOSAO, Rachele	✓			
DECORTE, Samantha	✓			
TOTAL	5			

Recommendation: ☑ Adopted ☐ Not Adopted

Chair's or Designee's Signature:

Lorraine R. Inouye

Distribution: Original — File with Committee Report; Yellow — Committee; Pink — Drafting Agency

*Only one measure per Record of Votes

Revised: 01/21/26

The Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Agriculture and Environment
AEN

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:
SB2972	WLA/AEN, JDC	02/11/26

☐ The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure.

If so, then the previous decision was to: _____

The Recommendation is:

☐ Pass, unamended 2312 ☒ Pass, with amendments 2311 ☐ Hold 2310 ☐ Recommit 2313

Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
GABBARD, Mike (C)	X			
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (VC)		X		
DECOITE, Lynn		X		
RHOADS, Karl	X			
AWA, Brenton			X	
TOTAL	2	2	1	—

Recommendation: ☒ Adopted ☐ Not Adopted

Chair's or Designee's Signature:

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Revised: 01/02/26