

Statement of
Gabriel Hanohano
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions

before the
House Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 and Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology.

Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions strongly SUPPORTS HB 1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the State's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides dedicated funding for this purpose. Hawai'i's geographic position, extensive coastlines, and dependence on ocean systems uniquely position the State to lead in the emerging blue economy. Strategic investment in ocean focused innovation aligns squarely with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as a premier technology hub in the Pacific while creating durable, high quality jobs and attracting long term private investment.

Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions is a Hawai'i based drone technology and remote sensing company focused on infrastructure, environmental monitoring, and coastal systems. Our work spans commercial construction, public sector infrastructure, and research driven technology development, with increasing emphasis on advanced sensing, autonomy, and data workflows designed for challenging marine and coastal environments. We operate statewide, including on neighbor islands, and routinely work in conditions where ocean dynamics, weather variability, and coastal exposure drive both technical requirements and operational risk.

HTDC's programs play a critical role in enabling companies like ours to remain headquartered in Hawai'i while pursuing technically ambitious and globally relevant innovation. Ocean technology development requires coordination across research institutions, government agencies, and the private sector. HB 1615 directly addresses this need by enabling HTDC to engage specialized expertise to assess gaps, align initiatives, and accelerate execution across the State's ocean innovation ecosystem.

For our business, this bill supports the creation of a clearer pathway from research to commercialization. As a company currently engaged in federally funded research related to autonomous aerial systems for coastal monitoring, we see first hand how fragmented planning and limited coordination can slow adoption and dilute impact. A dedicated consultant, working under HTDC's leadership, can help identify priority focus areas, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure that public investment translates into deployable technology and economic growth within Hawai'i.

From an economic standpoint, ocean technology represents a resilient diversification strategy for the State. Our company employs a small but highly skilled local workforce spanning engineering, flight operations, data processing, and STEM education support. Our long term growth strategy is centered on intellectual property development, platform integration, and licensing rather than relocation or extraction of value out of state. HB 1615 supports this approach by strengthening the foundation needed for Hawai'i based companies to scale responsibly and competitively within global ocean technology markets.

In summary, HB 1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawai'i's leadership in ocean innovation, strengthen coordination across the blue economy, and convert strategic intent into measurable outcomes. Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions supports this bill as an important step toward a resilient, technology enabled future that leverages Hawai'i's ocean environment as a source of innovation, opportunity, and long term economic stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



Written Statement of
Trung Lam, Executive Director

before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 am
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee.

HTDC strongly supports HB1615, which mandates the engagement of a consultant to advance Hawaii's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides necessary appropriations. The blue economy represents a significant growth sector for Hawaii, with global ocean-based industries projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2030. Hawaii is uniquely positioned to lead in this space, given its geographic location, existing research institutions, and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The establishment of a dedicated consultant will accelerate the coordination and implementation of ocean technology projects, ensuring that Hawaii remains competitive in attracting federal research funding and private investment. According to recent data, every \$1 invested in ocean innovation yields up to \$4 in economic returns, supporting job creation in high-skill sectors such as marine robotics, renewable energy, and biotechnology. HTDC's experience with SBIR and accelerator programs demonstrates that targeted support and coordination can double the rate of commercialization for new technologies.

Furthermore, the consultant's work will strengthen partnerships between state agencies, research universities, and private industry, addressing critical challenges such as sustainable fisheries, climate resilience, and renewable ocean energy. This aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as the Pacific's leading technology innovation hub, particularly in the space and ocean sectors.

By supporting HB1615, the Legislature will catalyze economic diversification, foster high-wage job growth, and reinforce Hawaii's global leadership in the blue economy. We urge favorable consideration of this bill to ensure Hawaii's continued advancement in ocean technology and innovation.

HB-1615

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 3:17:20 PM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anthony John Escasa	Pacific Impact Zone	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF HB1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB1615, which requires the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract for technical consulting services to develop, coordinate, and implement statewide ocean technology and innovation initiatives.

HB1615 correctly recognizes that the “blue economy” is no longer limited to traditional ocean industries, but is increasingly driven by innovation in areas such as ocean technology, marine robotics, maritime cybersecurity, offshore energy, aquaculture, and ocean data systems. As the Legislature notes, these sectors represent one of the fastest-growing areas of the global economy and are projected to double in value to approximately \$3 trillion by 2030, with growth increasingly tied to technological advancement .

Hawai‘i is uniquely positioned to lead in this space. Our geographic location, deep research assets, defense presence, port infrastructure, and longstanding stewardship of ocean resources provide a strong foundation for ocean innovation. At the same time, Hawai‘i faces structural challenges common to emerging technology sectors: fragmented efforts across agencies, limited coordination between research and commercialization, and difficulty translating innovation into scalable economic outcomes. HB1615 directly addresses these challenges.

Requiring HTDC to contract for a dedicated consultant is a pragmatic and timely approach. The scope outlined in the bill focuses on strategy development, cross-agency coordination, industry and workforce analysis, public-private partnership identification, and federal funding alignment. These are precisely the functions needed to move from aspirational discussions of the blue economy to a clear implementation roadmap with defined roles, milestones, and accountability.

Importantly, the bill does not attempt to prematurely institutionalize a new program. Instead, it provides HTDC with targeted technical capacity to accelerate momentum during an interim period, while informing longer-term decisions about staffing, infrastructure, and sustained investment. This approach reduces risk, leverages existing HTDC relationships across

government, industry, academia, and federal partners, and allows the State to make informed, data-driven choices.

From a broader economic development perspective, HB1615 supports diversification beyond tourism, strengthens pathways for local entrepreneurship, and improves Hawai'i's competitiveness relative to other coastal states that have already advanced coordinated blue economy strategies. By aligning ocean innovation with commercialization, workforce development, and capital access, this bill positions Hawai'i to capture greater value from its natural and strategic advantages.

In summary, HB1615 is a focused, execution-oriented investment that enables Hawai'i to organize, coordinate, and advance its ocean technology and innovation ecosystem in a disciplined manner. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology (ECD)

Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair

Friday, January 30, 2026, at 10:00AM
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

RE: HB1615 Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is **Sherry Menor**, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii (“The Chamber”). The Chamber testifies in **strong support of House Bill 1615 (HB1615)**, which requires the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract for consulting services to support the development, coordination, and implementation of state ocean technology and innovation initiatives and appropriates funds for this purpose, for the following reasons:

Advancing Hawaii’s Blue Economy

HB1615 reflects the Chamber’s long-term vision for economic diversification and aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, particularly the policy pillar focused on Small Business. This bill promotes the growth of Hawaii’s blue economy, encompassing industries such as marine technology, offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, ocean data systems, and marine robotics—all sectors that can build a stronger, more resilient Hawaii economy.

Economic Opportunity with Global Momentum

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the global ocean economy could exceed \$3 trillion by 2030. With Hawaii’s strategic geographic position in the Pacific, access to world-class ocean research assets, and a talented local workforce, the State is well-positioned to serve as a regional hub for these emerging industries.

Employment and Economic Diversification

According to analyses by *UHERO*, innovation-driven sectors provide higher-than-average wages and greater economic stability. Developing a blue economy will not only diversify our industries beyond tourism—which still accounts for 17.1% of the State’s GDP (2023)—but also generate new, high-skill jobs for local residents.

Driving Sustainability and Local Self-Reliance



Hawaii currently imports about 85–90% of its food and about 67% of its energy (2024). Expanding ocean innovation in areas like offshore renewable energy and sustainable aquaculture supports State goals to reduce dependence on imports, enhance food and energy security, and work towards reaching 100% clean energy by 2045.

Additionally, investments in marine robotics and ocean data systems contribute to better environmental monitoring and stewardship—key to achieving Hawaii’s 100% clean energy goals, ensuring we grow our economy without compromising our natural resources.

Conclusion

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii believes HB1615 represents smart, strategic investment in the State’s most abundant asset—our ocean. This measure will strengthen our economic foundation while building a future that is innovative, sustainable, and diversified.

For these reasons, **The Chamber respectfully urges the committee to pass HB1615.**

HB-1615

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 4:56:43 PM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jim WYBAN	HIplan	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Ilagan and Committee Members,

I submit this testimony on behalf of HIplan in strong support of House bill 1615.

HIplan is a Hilo-based, 10 year old entrepreneur support organization. Our Founder/Chair Dr. Jim Wyban has many years in aquaculture and is globally considered the father of the SPF Broodstock industry. This industry was born in Hawaii from Hawaii-based R&D that transformed global shrimp farming and caused a 6-fold increase in global production. It berates \$20 M in Hawaii export sales/year. It is a great example of Blue Technology developed in Hawaii.

We want to see the State make a significant investment in the Blue Economy as it's a perfect fit with Hawaii's culture, environment, location and experience. More funding in the Blue Economy is a natural fit for Hawaii.

In summary HIplan strongly supports HB 1615.

Mahalo for your time and opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jim Wyban

Founder/Chair HIplan



Small Kine Farm

PO Box 600, Kailua, HI 96734

808-262-2724

smallkinefarm@gmail.com

www.smallkinefarm.com

Statement of
Fung Yang President Small Kine Farm
before the
ECD

Friday, January 30, 2026

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB1615
RELATING TO HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilgan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee.

Small Kine Farm **supports** HB1615 that creates positions and appropriates monies to HTDC for programs in support of the Marine and Ocean sectors.

HTDC core programs develop infrastructure, capital, and talent to facilitate the development of technology and manufacturing jobs in Hawai'i. Following their mission, HTDC programs aim to provide technical and financial support for innovative small businesses from the startup stage through growth and export.

My company is the only USDA Certified organic mushroom farm in the State. HTDC has helped us to start and stay competitive from the very beginning. I am hoping to see more small businesses who can benefit from their help with more staff and more funding. They are playing an important role in our economy. I am currently employing 5 full time and 1 part time workers at the farm. Last year revenue was \$350,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

HB-1615

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 8:46:24 PM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Ulm	Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Vice Chair,

My name is Dr. Nicholas Ulm, CEO of Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions LLC (HOPS). My company is a leader in marine renewable energy, driving our state towards our energy independence goals. This past year, I had the privilege of working with HTDC at a number of events to identify where Hawaii's technology economy can best grow. The efforts of HTDC has immensely benefited our company in networking with other Hawaii companies to help grow our local economy, hiring local people, and bring federal resources to the state of Hawaii. In all of these efforts, I was working with a variety of different members of the HTDC staff, but did not have an individual coordinating the efforts around the ocean or blue economy. Given the number of companies participating and voicing our needs at these events, it became abundantly clear to me that there would be a clear benefit to having an official role at HTDC towards the blue economy. Having participated in the NOAA Ocean Enterprise Accelerator program this past year, I have seen how other states have dedicated blue economy roles in their state technology offices and how coordination leads to better programmatic and economic outcomes. Having a central role that can connect different companies to collaborate, rally around common values and federal funding opportunities is in the best interest of the state. Currently, it feels like each company is functioning in singular efforts, as if we are in a silo. This means that we do not communicate, coordinate, and miss out on opportunities to other states. This past week, I brought a fellow around from the US Department of Energy's Water Power Technology Office, specifically for the blue economy, to all the different companies and efforts across the islands. He was incredibly impressed and could understand how funding needs to be allocated in the future because I was able to weave a story of what our local blue economy does. If I was able to direct him to a role at HTDC, this could have been coordinated at an even higher level.

With this in mind, I strongly support this bill.

Gtscientific LLC, a n advanced precision CNC machine shop located in Honolulu serving industries in defense, astronomy, marine, aerospace, semiconductors, consumer hardware, etc, since 2017.

Statement of
Grant Takara
Owner
Gtscientific LLC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Gtscientific LLC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also

creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Hawaii is in a unique location with access to abundant marine resources. In 2025 Gtscientific LLC won around \$20,000 worth of marine based work, mostly in defense, and is eager to competitively and locally support more work in the sector.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



Blue Startups

55 Merchant Street, Suite 1700
Honolulu, HI 96813

To be presented to the Committee on
Economic Development and Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026 at 10:00 am

Regarding **HB1615**:
“Relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation”

Testimony in Support

Date: January 28, 2026

From: Chenoa Farnsworth
Managing Director, Blue Startups
chenoa@bluestartups.com

To: Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan,
Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,
and Members of the Committee,

Aloha,

My name is Chenoa Farnsworth, and I am the Managing Director at Blue Startups. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of HB1615**.

Blue Startups was founded to help **diversify Hawai‘i’s economy** by building a stronger technology sector. For more than a decade, we have supported entrepreneurs with mentorship, product validation, investor introductions, and access to early capital. Blue Startups is also launching an **Ocean Tech DeepDive**, a **two-week intensive** designed to position Hawai‘i as a **global testbed for ocean innovation** aligned with **HTDC’s Ocean Technology** priority.

HB1615 strengthens Hawai‘i’s ability to compete in the **blue economy** by directing the **Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC)** to contract for **expert support** to develop, coordinate, and implement **ocean technology and innovation initiatives**. This includes building a statewide strategy, coordinating cross-agency work, identifying gaps and opportunities, pursuing funding, supporting workforce development, and reporting progress.

Hawai'i has a natural advantage as a **Pacific hub** for ocean-related innovation. But turning that advantage into **jobs** and **investable companies** requires **coordination**, **clear priorities**, and **consistent execution**.

This approach supports outcomes that matter statewide. It grows **high-skill jobs**. It accelerates **economic diversification**. It strengthens **resilience** through ocean observation and coastal solutions. It improves Hawai'i's ability to **attract and retain talent** and **investment**. It also increases **statewide participation** across all islands.

For an accelerator like Blue Startups, clearer statewide coordination and strategy in ocean innovation helps more founders understand where the opportunities are and how to connect to **public and private partners**. It also helps outside investors see Hawai'i has an organized **pipeline** and credible **infrastructure** for ocean technology development.

HB1615 is a **practical step** to move faster and more strategically in a **high-growth sector** where Hawai'i can lead. We respectfully urge the Committee on Economic Development and Technology to **pass HB1615** and advance it with a recommendation of **support**.

Mahalo,

Chenoa Farnsworth
Managing Director
Blue Startups



My name is Ronald Tardiff, and I submit this testimony on behalf of 1000 Ocean Startups (1000OS), a global coalition of incubators, accelerators, entrepreneur-support organizations, and investors working to support and scale ocean-impact startups globally. Collectively, 1000OS members have supported more than 600 ocean-impact ventures, valued at an estimated USD 11.25–14.64 billion. We also collaborate with research organizations, including the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, to analyze the enabling conditions that allow ocean solutions to scale and deliver durable outcomes.

1000 Ocean Startups sees merit in HB1829 alongside HB1615 because together they tackle a central enabling constraint in sustainability transitions: public-private governance capacity. Hawai'i is well positioned to close the scaling gap because it already has a dense, capable community of ocean innovators and support organizations, with more than twenty ocean innovation ventures active in the state. For example, Hawai'i-based Symbrosia (supported by Hatch Blue among others) recently raised \$5.8 million to scale methane-reducing seaweed feed, illustrating the commercially viable, climate-relevant innovation already emerging locally. By strengthening public-private governance capacity through HB1829, HB1615, and an ocean cluster designation, Hawai'i can better align priorities across agencies and partners and unlock greater collective impact through a clear coordination mandate and convening platform—reducing fragmentation, aligning investment and procurement signals, and enabling agencies, industry, and community partners to deliver shared priorities through repeatable collaboration.

Building local innovation capacity is also an economic strategy. When solutions are imported, Hawai'i may benefit as a test site or end user, but much of the value often accrues elsewhere through external ownership of intellectual property, supply chains, and service contracts. Supporting locally designed, locally anchored solutions increases the likelihood that high-value capabilities, jobs, and enterprises stay in Hawai'i—strengthening supply chains, developing the workforce, and positioning the state to export island- and coastal-relevant expertise and technology, not just adopt what's built elsewhere.

HB1829 also reflects a core design principle for equitable, effective sustainability innovation as who defines problems and designs solutions shapes who benefits. Locally grounded design and implementation can improve adoption, maintenance, and legitimacy because solutions better match place-based ecology, governance realities, and community priorities. By integrating Native Hawaiian knowledge and centering community benefit, the bill helps anchor innovation in Hawai'i's stewardship context and supports more durable social and ecological outcomes.

For these reasons, 1000 Ocean Startups considers HB1829 as well as HB1615 as practical, evidence-aligned next steps to strengthen Hawai'i's ocean innovation system, support Hawai'i's ocean economy, and increase the likelihood that locally grounded solutions translate into sustained reductions in ocean pressures.

Sincerely,

Ronald Tardiff
Executive, 1000 Ocean Startups
<https://www.1000oceanstartups.org>



DATE: 1/28/2026

TO: Rep. Greggor Ilagan
Chair on Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Rep. Ikaika Hussey
Vice Chair on Committee on Economic Development and Technology

FROM: Hohonu

RE: **H.B. 1615 – Relating to Marine Affairs**
HEARING DATE: 1/30/2026 10am

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology,

Hohonu **strongly supports** House Bill 1615 as a catalyst for growing the ecosystem of companies around the state working in the blue economy. Hohonu was founded in 2019 in Hawai'i by Dr. Brian Glazer, a professor at UH Manoa, to address persistent gaps in flood monitoring. Today, Hohonu operates flood monitoring networks across 18 states, including Hawai'i, serving federal partners, state agencies, counties, municipalities, institutions of higher education, and the private consulting sector. Hohonu is headquartered in Honolulu where it designs, develops and manufactures its water level sensors.

Leadership from the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation, and the use of an expert focused on planning and executing a blue economy strategy, will have the positive effect of coordinating the local blue economy ecosystem and aligning stakeholders in both the private and public sector. Companies, especially hardware companies like Hohonu, thrive when there is a strong, connected ecosystem of companies growing the local skill base and supply chain. There are compounding benefits to having related companies in a single area: similar job opportunities allow local talent to develop related skills early on, knowledge spillover accelerates innovation, local suppliers and service providers can specialize and grow to meet increased demand and a cluster attracts more investment and more outside interest from buyers.

Hohonu is in a strong position to grow and thrive, but as we grow we will be constrained by the local availability of specialized talent, availability of suppliers capable of scaling with us and logistics challenges related to both fulfillment of orders and imports of necessary components. These challenges are neither unique to Hohonu nor new. The Hawai'i Technology Development

Corporation is well positioned to address these problems across a blue economy cluster and we have a better chance at solving them by bringing in expertise and focus.

Hawai'i is a unique and challenging location to start a technology company and it requires a focused, highly collaborative effort to be successful. We believe House Bill 1615 will enable that collaboration and success and **we strongly support its passage**

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Noah Pentelovitch
Head of Hardware
Hohonu



Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions

DATE: 1/28/2026

TO: Greggor Ilagan
Chair on Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Ikaika Hussey
Vice Chair on Committee on Economic Development and Technology

FROM: Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions

RE: **H.B. 1615 – Relating to Hawaii Technology Development Corporation**

HEARING DATE: Friday, January 30, 2026

Dear Chair Ilagan and Vice Chair Hussey of the Economic Development and Technology Committee,

I submit this testimony on behalf of Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions in **strong support** of House Bill 1615, which requires the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract a consultant to support the development, coordination, and implementation of certain state ocean technology and innovation initiatives.

Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions is a local marine technology startup born from research at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. We provide self-sustaining aid to navigation and observation buoys powered by solar and wave energy conversion. We are working closely with other local companies in the blue economy to provide an offshore observation platform for aqua culture and marine sciences. Having this consultant would provide a vital resource for connecting and strengthening local companies' positions in the blue economy.

Hawaii has a rich history of innovation in this sector and has the potential to become national and global leaders in the blue economy. Our relationship with the ocean around us provides unique and vital foundation for constant sustainable advancement and innovation in marine sciences. Having a state appointed consultant to strengthen connections between local leaders in the industry and guide new startups through growth is essential.

Mahalo for your time and opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Duncan Lajousky, Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions

Chief Technology Officer

Statement of
Gregory Wong
Co-Founder and Engineer at WaiHome LLC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
9:15 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

To: Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee

WaiHome LLC **strongly supports** HB1615, which requires the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract a consultant to implement a statewide blue economy strategy and appropriates funds for this vital mission. As a Hawaii-based startup funded by the NSF, NOAA, and HTDC, we believe this bill is a critical step in building the infrastructure needed for local ocean-tech companies to thrive. We support this Bill for the following reasons:

- **Strategic Roadmap:** By funding a statewide blue economy and ocean technology strategy, this bill ensures that Hawaii's growth in this sector is intentional and provides a clear roadmap for startups like ours to align with state goals.
- **Focus on Coastal Resiliency:** We are particularly encouraged by the bill's explicit focus on coastal resiliency. At WaiHome, our mission is to provide wastewater solutions that directly enhance coastal health; this bill ensures that such technologies are a core part of the state's economic future.
- **Infrastructure for Innovation:** The support for a "statewide ocean technology innovation hub" is exactly what the local ecosystem needs. A dedicated space for research, commercialization, and public-private collaboration will help bridge the gap between initial federal research grants and long-term commercial success.
- **Economic Opportunity:** With the global blue economy projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2030, this bill provides the \$500,000 in necessary funding to ensure Hawaii-born innovations lead that market rather than falling behind other coastal states.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments,



Gregory Wong
Co-founder and Engineer
WaiHome LLC

Statement of
Gregory Wong
Co-Founder and Engineer at WaiHome LLC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
9:15 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

To: Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee

WaiHome LLC **strongly supports** HB1615, which requires the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract a consultant to implement a statewide blue economy strategy and appropriates funds for this vital mission. As a Hawaii-based startup funded by the NSF, NOAA, and HTDC, we believe this bill is a critical step in building the infrastructure needed for local ocean-tech companies to thrive. We support this Bill for the following reasons:

- **Strategic Roadmap:** By funding a statewide blue economy and ocean technology strategy, this bill ensures that Hawaii's growth in this sector is intentional and provides a clear roadmap for startups like ours to align with state goals.
- **Focus on Coastal Resiliency:** We are particularly encouraged by the bill's explicit focus on coastal resiliency. At WaiHome, our mission is to provide wastewater solutions that directly enhance coastal health; this bill ensures that such technologies are a core part of the state's economic future.
- **Infrastructure for Innovation:** The support for a "statewide ocean technology innovation hub" is exactly what the local ecosystem needs. A dedicated space for research, commercialization, and public-private collaboration will help bridge the gap between initial federal research grants and long-term commercial success.
- **Economic Opportunity:** With the global blue economy projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2030, this bill provides the \$500,000 in necessary funding to ensure Hawaii-born innovations lead that market rather than falling behind other coastal states.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments,



Gregory Wong
Co-founder and Engineer
WaiHome LLC



January 29, 2026

To: House Committee on Economic Development and Technology

Subject: Support for HB 1615

Aloha mai,

Purple Mai'a Foundation supports HB1615, which directs the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract with a technical expert to support the development, coordination, and implementation of a statewide blue economy, ocean technology, and innovation strategy.

The bill establishes a clear role for a technical expert to coordinate efforts across state agencies, conduct analysis of ocean industries, pursue funding opportunities, and develop strategic roadmaps with actionable milestones for maritime, aquaculture, coastal resilience, and ocean sensing technologies.

We see this bill as an important step toward strengthening Hawai'i's blue economy in ways that support sustainable innovation, workforce development, and long-term industry growth. Given the scale of Hawai'i's ocean economy and its importance to local communities, a coordinated strategy can help ensure technology and innovation efforts are efficient, collaborative, and impactful.

At Purple Mai'a, we work at the intersection of culture, community, and innovation, and we believe advancing ocean technologies can create pathways for regenerative industries, resilient food systems, and meaningful economic opportunity for local residents. Bringing public, private, academic, and community partners together will help build an inclusive innovation ecosystem that benefits Hawai'i.

We urge the Committee to pass HB1615 and support the continued development of a strong, sustainable, and locally rooted blue economy.

Kelsey Amos
Co-CEO, Purple Mai'a Foundation



builders | vc

Statement of
Johnny Chankhamany
Executive Director
Builders VC
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII' I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Builders VC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Builders VC is a venture capital firm based in Hawaii for nearly a decade, with headquarters in San Francisco and regional offices across the globe. We invest in early and growth stage companies with ~\$1 Billion in assets under management. Builders has invested millions into several Hawaii-based companies and spends hundreds of thousands annually in Hawaii. HTDC's programs and efforts in the Marine and Ocean ecosystem are critical in supporting and developing innovative technologies and businesses that Builders would potentially invest in, which would help create new local job opportunities, increase economic diversity, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii residents.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Johnny Chankhamany
Executive Director, Builders VC



Ai.Fish Inc
424 Iliwahi Loop
Kailua, HI 96734
<http://www.ai.fish>

TO: Representative Ilagan, Chair, Committee on Economic Development
Representative Hussey, Vice Chair, Committee on Economic Development
FROM: Jimmy Freese, CEO, Ai.Fish
RE: H.B. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs
HEARING DATE: January 30, 2026

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee,

I am Jimmy Freese, CEO of Ai.Fish, a Hawai‘i-based ocean technology company that uses AI-powered computer vision and electronic monitoring systems to support sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation. I am writing in strong support of HB1615, relating to the Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation.

HB1615 funds coordination support for Hawai‘i’s emerging blue economy. With this capacity, HTDC and its partners will be better able to connect companies like Ai.Fish with agencies, researchers, and fishers; design and manage pilot projects; and position Hawai‘i to compete for federal and private investment. In our experience, the biggest barrier is not ideas or technology, but the time and capacity required to convene the right public-private teams and move from pilots to operational deployments.

Over seven years, HTDC has been a critical partner for Ai.Fish—from funding and commercialization support to navigating opportunities with the Department of Defense. Having dedicated ocean technology coordination capacity, as this bill provides, is exactly what companies like ours need to scale. It also helps ensure that Hawai‘i’s ocean technology companies can stay headquartered here, hiring locally and contributing to a coordinated statewide strategy for the blue economy.

Ai.Fish strongly supports HB1615. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Freese

CEO and Co-Founder

Ai.Fish

DATE: January 29, 2026

TO: Chair Ilagan and Vice Chair Hussey of the Economic Development and Technology Committee

FROM: Havoc AI

RE: **H.B. 1615 – Relating to Hawaii Technology Development Corporation /
H.B. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs / S.B.2907 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

HEARING DATE: Friday, January 30, 10 AM HST

Dear Chair Ilagan and Vice Chair Hussey of the Economic Development and Technology Committee,

I submit this testimony on behalf of Havoc AI in support of House bills 1829 and 1615 and Senate bills 2907 and 3167. Havoc AI is a maritime technology company focused on creating various classes of autonomous surface vessels (ASV).

In 2025, Havoc AI began development in Hawaii, conducting testing for newly developed ASVs and conducting on-water demonstrations for potential customers and partners. These Hawaii demonstrations are crucial to establishing relationships with international customers and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Successful demonstrations in 2025 have led to opportunities allowing Havoc AI to expand operations in Hawaii, providing job opportunities for local engineers, operations and logistics specialists, and business professionals. Continued support from HTDC and the State of Hawaii could allow Havoc AI to grow manufacturing, development, and testing operations, stimulate Hawaii's economy through ocean technology, and most importantly, continue creating high-paying and engaging job opportunities for engineers in Hawaii.

Thank you so much for your consideration and support of ocean technology in Hawaii!

Sincerely,

Kelsey Kim

Embedded Software Engineer



29 January 2026

TO: Chair Ilagan; Vice-Chair Hussey

r.e. In Strong Support of House Bill No. 1615

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee on Economic Development and Technology,

Our company - Ocean Era, Inc. – and our team of scientists and technicians – all strongly support HB1615, that instructs HTDC to contract for the services of a consultant to support the development, coordination, and implementation of ocean technology and innovation initiatives.

It is highly appropriate – given HTDC’s recognition of the potential value of the Blue Economy for future high-tech development in the state – that there be an expert review of the opportunities and cautions that would accompany any accelerated ocean industry focus. There are great benefits that could flow from Hawaii’s Blue Economy, but it is essential that we learn from the experiences of other ocean clusters, around the world, and build on those, in a way that is culturally sensitive and appropriate for our islands and our people.

HTDC has a dedicated, exceptionally-skilled team, but the ocean cluster represents a far wider range of cultural, recreational, subsistence and industry interests and backgrounds. Some specialized expertise would be invaluable, as we start to approach these questions.

I moved to Hawaii early in my career as a marine biologist, because of the exceptional opportunities that were offered here in the ocean space. I have worked at NELHA for over 35 years, founding a number of various aquaculture start-ups. I have seen many grand aspirations falter and fail because they did not have the initial expert guidance from the outset, and I would hope that – through this consultant – HTDC can ensure that the ocean cluster initiative moves forward smoothly, with focus, and with broad community support.

We would be most grateful for your support through this bill, to ensure the success of HTDC’s Ocean Cluster initiative.

Thank you in anticipation.

Sincerely, with aloha,

Neil Anthony Sims, M.Sc.
Founder, CEO, Ocean Era, Inc.



Veronica Rocha
CEO
Essential Leap, LLC
P.O. Box 26451
Honolulu, HI 96825

RE: Testimony in **Support of HB1615**

Date: Friday, January 30, 2026
Time: 10:00 am
Place: Conference Room 423, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Rep. Greggor Ilagan and Vice Chair Rep. Ikaika Hussey,

Essential Leap is a Honolulu based consultancy that helps to accelerate cleantech adoption through results-driven, end-to-end market development.

I am writing in support of House Bill 1615, which would direct the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract for expert consulting services to help develop, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive blue economy and ocean technology strategy for our state. This bill takes important steps toward positioning Hawaii as a leader in sustainable ocean innovation and responsible economic growth. The expertise gained through these contracted services will ensure that the HTDC has the strategic guidance needed to advance initiatives in maritime technology, aquaculture, coastal resiliency, and ocean observation, while strengthening Hawaii's competitive edge in emerging ocean industries.

I support this bill because it addresses critical opportunities for Hawaii's economic and sustainable future. Our geographic location and cultural heritage connect us deeply to the Pacific Ocean — yet fully realizing our potential in ocean-related technology and industry requires strategic planning and coordination that go beyond current capacity. By engaging a consultant with technical expertise, the State can develop a clear blue economy strategy with actionable steps, attract new investment, enhance workforce development, facilitate commercialization of innovative technologies, and strengthen public-private partnerships. This will benefit Hawaii by creating high-quality jobs, diversifying our economy, and advancing sustainability in sectors ranging from marine robotics to coastal resiliency, while honoring Native Hawaiian stewardship of marine resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1615. Your consideration of this measure demonstrates a commitment to long-term economic innovation, sustainability, and strategic investment in Hawaii's future. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill so that Hawaii can build a strong, forward-looking blue economy that benefits all residents and protects our precious ocean resources for generations to come.

Thank you,

Veronica Rocha

Veronica Rocha



Statement of
Valerie Harmon
Founder and CEO
Namaka Algae, Inc.
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII' I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Namaka Algae, Inc. strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Namaka Algae, Inc. is a technology first company focused on low-cost algae biomass for fish superfoods. We produce in Hawaii for Hawaii markets and plan to expand to the US mainland and globally for larger market access and profitability. Aquaculture has the potential to provide efficient, low carbon footprint protein to feed our growing populations, and at Namaka we aim to support the growth of this industry by providing quality, reliable and nutritious feed ingredients made from microalgae. We support HTDCs programs which benefit our company greatly. The focus on Marine and Ocean tech and industries is vital to continue the growth and expansion of our industries to support job growth, and ultimately improved food security for our Islands.



In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Aloha,

Valerie Harmon



Statement of
Valerie Harmon
Founder and CEO
Namaka Algae, Inc.
before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII' I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Namaka Algae, Inc. strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Namaka Algae, Inc. is a technology first company focused on low-cost algae biomass for fish superfoods. We produce in Hawaii for Hawaii markets and plan to expand to the US mainland and globally for larger market access and profitability. Aquaculture has the potential to provide efficient, low carbon footprint protein to feed our growing populations, and at Namaka we aim to support the growth of this industry by providing quality, reliable and nutritious feed ingredients made from microalgae. We support HTDCs programs which benefit our company greatly. The focus on Marine and Ocean tech and industries is vital to continue the growth and expansion of our industries to support job growth, and ultimately improved food security for our Islands.



In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Aloha,

Valerie Harmon



DATE: January 29, 2026

TO: **Representative Greggor Ilagan**
Chair, Economic Development & Technology

Representative Ikaika Hussey
Vice Chair, Economic Development & Technology

FROM: Pacific Economics

RE: **H.B. 1615 – Relating to Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation**

HEARING DATE: Friday, January 30, 2026 at 10:00 AM
Conference Room: 423

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Economic Development & Technology Committee:

We submit this testimony on behalf of Pacific Economics in **strong support of House Bill 1615** which advocates for the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to procure specialized consultant services for a statewide blue economy strategy.

Pacific Economics is a strategic advisory firm dedicated to positioning Hawai‘i as a global leader in sustainable economic growth. We drive decisions through calculated data, and the evidence for a prioritized "Blue Economy" is undeniable: Hawai‘i’s marine sectors already support nearly [100,000 jobs and contribute \\$9.2 billion to our GDP](#). To move from a successful hub to a global center of excellence, Hawai‘i must transition from fragmented initiatives to a unified, data-driven implementation roadmap.

We strongly support the procurement of technical expertise via HB1615, as professional project management is essential to scaling ocean technology and innovation. **Furthermore, we recommend that the committee consider merging the technical strategy goals of HB1615 with the governance framework proposed in HB1829.** A standalone strategy risks becoming another "report on a shelf" without the permanent administrative home offered by the Office of Marine Affairs in HB1829. Conversely, a new office is most effective when guided by the professional technical roadmap funded in HB1615. By integrating these measures, the State creates a cohesive system where high-level strategy and daily operations work in tandem to attract investment and drive maritime excellence.

Hawai‘i’s unique geography and Kanaka ‘Ōiwi stewardship provide a competitive advantage that parallels the strengths of our Pacific neighbors. We urge the committee to pass HB1615 and

consider its integration with HB1829 to ensure a comprehensive and resilient future for our maritime economy.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Pacific Economics

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe B.", with a stylized flourish at the end.



Statement of
Grace Iwashita, Manager – Business Development
Hawaiian King Candies, LLC
before the

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Hawaiian King Candies, LLC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Hawaiian King Candies, LLC is a Honolulu-based manufacturer of confections and snack products and has been proudly operating in Hawai'i for over 40 years. As a long-standing local manufacturer, our business depends on a healthy environment, strong infrastructure, and sustainable practices that support our employees, suppliers, and the communities we serve. While we are not directly involved in ocean technology, Hawai'i's ocean health is essential to the overall well-being of the state and its economy.

HB1615 supports efforts that protect and strengthen Hawai'i's natural resources, including its ocean environment, through innovation and coordinated planning. Investments that help keep Hawai'i's oceans clean and healthy contribute to a resilient local economy and a sustainable future for residents and locally owned businesses like ours that have deep roots in the islands.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

ISLAND PRINCESS



Hawaii's Finest Macadamia Nuts ~ Chocolates ~ Confections

Statement of
Batdelger Jaavaa, CFO
Purdyco, Ltd dba Island Princess
before the

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

Purdyco, Ltd dba Island Princess strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

Purdyco Ltd is a Hawai'i-based agricultural company engaged in the farming and processing of macadamia nuts. While our business is not directly involved in ocean technology, the health of Hawai'i's oceans is closely connected to responsible land use and agricultural practices. Clean water, healthy ecosystems, and effective environmental stewardship are essential to our community, our workforce, and the long-term sustainability of local farming operations.

HB1615 supports these shared goals by strengthening Hawai'i's capacity to protect and manage its ocean resources through innovation and coordinated expertise. Investments that help keep Hawai'i's oceans clean and healthy ultimately benefit the entire state, including agricultural businesses like ours that depend on a resilient environment and strong natural systems.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

A Division of Purdyco Ltd.
2846 Ualena Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96819-1910
Phone: (808) 839-5222 • Fax: (808) 836-2019 • e-mail: info@islandprincesshawaii.com
Website : www.IslandPrincessHawaii.com



Statement of
Charna Rae Naeole – General Manager
COHI, Inc. dba Coffees of Hawaii
before the

Friday, January 30, 2026
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 1615
RELATING TO THE HAWAII'I TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

COHI, Inc. dba Coffees of Hawaii strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

COHI, Inc., dba Coffees of Hawai'i, operates a coffee farm and roasting facility on the island of Moloka'i. As a vertically integrated agricultural business, we are deeply committed to responsible land stewardship, sustainable farming practices, and protecting Hawai'i's natural resources. While our operations are land-based, the health of Hawai'i's oceans is closely connected to agriculture through watershed management, water quality, and environmental sustainability.

HB1615 supports innovation and strategic coordination that help protect Hawai'i's ocean resources while strengthening the broader environmental systems that agricultural communities rely on. Advancing ocean technology and research contributes to cleaner water, healthier ecosystems, and a more resilient future for islands like Moloka'i, benefiting local farms, workers, and communities.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawai'i's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

COHI, Inc.
PO Box 37 Kualapuu, HI 96757 USA Tel: 808-567-9490 Fax: 808-567-9180

HB-1615

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 11:37:11 AM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Forest Frizzell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Technology.

I strongly SUPPORTS HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Forest Frizzell

DATE: January 28, 2026

TO: **Representative Greggor Ilagan**, Chair, Economic Development & Technology
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair, Economic Development & Technology

FROM: George Yarbrough, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow

RE: **H.B. 1615 – Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation**
HEARING DATE: Friday, January 30, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Conference Room 423

Dear Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Economic Development & Technology Committee:

I submit this testimony in **strong support of House Bill 1615**, which appropriates funding for the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) to contract for consultant services to support the development, coordination, and implementation of ocean technology and innovation initiatives.

For the past several years, I have worked alongside HTDC and its team which include consultants to support the development of Hawai'i's technology ecosystem. In the past 6-8 months I have witnessed firsthand HTDC, with consultant support, move at the speed of private enterprise and convene the overall tech community and ocean tech community like no other time before. There is true momentum happening in this agency that would not have happened without the help of consultants that can support the amazing HTDC team faster and provide quick operational breadth. The work in the past 8 months has also brought together government agencies to start the development of a coordinated oceans strategy, finally.

This bill recognizes that advancing ocean technology requires specialized expertise. This consultant with ocean technical background has been and can coordinate cross-agency collaboration among DLNR, DOT, DBEDT, UH, NELHA, and other entities with missions that intersect the blue economy faster in preparation for a full time staff. And critically, they can leverage national and regional partnerships to bring pilot projects and investment to Hawai'i while building the coalition and documentation needed to compete for federal funding.

Perhaps most importantly, this consultant capacity is essential for positioning Hawai'i to compete for large federal grants. The federal Ocean Regional Opportunity and Innovation Act (S.1392/H.R.3048), currently before Congress, would direct the Secretary of Commerce to designate at least seven "Ocean Innovation Clusters" nationwide and provide grants for their establishment and operation. A consultant can galvanize Hawai'i's ocean tech community quickly around a shared vision and coordinate the cross-sector partnerships required to submit competitive applications for these multi-million dollar opportunities. If we don't move quickly, this opportunity will pass us.

This \$500,000 investment positions Hawai'i to leverage significantly larger federal funding while building the foundation for a sustainable ocean innovation ecosystem. I urge the committee to pass H.B. 1615.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

George Yarbrough
IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow | gyarbrough@economicrecoverycorps.org

HB-1615

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 9:35:37 PM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni DeFranco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1615 and its effort to advance a coordinated statewide strategy for ocean technology and innovation through the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation. By engaging a technical expert to guide planning, analysis, and collaboration across agencies, this bill helps move Hawai'i toward a more organized and forward-looking approach to growing the blue economy.

Hawai'i's ocean sector plays a major role in our economy and in the daily lives of our communities. Creating a unified strategy to support emerging technologies, sustainable maritime industries, aquaculture, and coastal resilience can help attract investment, strengthen local businesses, and prepare a skilled workforce for the future.

From my experience at Purple Mai'a Foundation working in community-based innovation and economic development, I see great potential in ocean technology to support regenerative industries, improve food and energy resilience, and create meaningful career pathways for local residents. Coordination between state agencies, educators, industry, and communities will be essential to realizing these opportunities.

HB1615 provides an important framework to bring these efforts together and position Hawai'i as a leader in sustainable ocean innovation. I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

DATE: 2026-JAN-28

TO: Representatives Greggor Ilagan, Ikaika Hussey, Mark Hashem, Dee Morikawa, Chris Todd, and Jenna Takenouchi

FROM: Brennan Yamamoto

RE: HB1829, RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS *and* HB1615, RELATING TO THE HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Aloha Representatives Greggor Ilagan, Ikaika Hussey, Mark Hashem, Dee Morikawa, Chris Todd, and Jenna Takenouchi, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the House Committees on Economic Development & Technology, Water & Land, and Finance, and others to whom this testimony concerns. My name is Brennan Yamamoto and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of House bills HB1829 and HB1615.

I was born and raised on Oahu, graduating from Moanalua High school in 2009, and subsequently earning my mechanical engineering BS (2013), MS (2015), and PhD (2019) degrees from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I then worked for the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai'i from 2020 to 2025 as a Robotics Engineer, developing multiple maritime systems and technologies in service of Hawai'i's local community and the United States Department of Defense. I am currently the Robotics Engineering Lead for HavocAI, the industry leader for collaborative autonomous systems in the maritime domain, where we partner closely with PacMar Technologies, a local multi-generational naval architecture and maritime technology company, to operate fleets of cutting-edge autonomous surface vehicles in waters just south of Honolulu.

Hawai'i is surrounded by a diverse and easily accessible ocean environment, making it an ideal location to develop ocean-related technologies from multiple sectors, including, but not limited to: marine biology, renewable energy, environmental protection, aquaculture, naval architecture, and robotic/autonomous systems. Unfortunately, a lack of an effective, forward-thinking government agency specifically responsible for incubation of these emerging technologies has substantially limited growth in these sectors. I can reference one prominent example from personal experience.

While working with the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Hawai'i in 2022, I was involved in research toward detecting sea disposed munitions in littoral (shallow) waters; this problem directly affects Hawai'i residents and many coastal communities around the world. This process involves evaluating the effectiveness of cutting-edge sensing and robotic technologies in real-world environments seeded with inert, surrogate munitions. Hawai'i's exceptional diversity of littoral zones, year-around access to the ocean, proximity to world class maritime biology resources at the University of Hawai'i, and *real* public benefit from the solutions discovered in this research, made Hawai'i an excellent candidate for evaluating these emerging technologies. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic structures associated with permitting use of new technologies in the ocean simply do not exist, which dramatically delayed project timelines, reducing eligibility for future federal funding, and negating the benefits our persistent access to the ocean provide. A government agency tasked with stewardship and advocacy of ocean technologies can act to *proactively* support essential efforts like this example.

I am a proud product of the State of Hawai'i, graduate of the UH system, and an advocate for diversifying opportunities for talented kama'āina to work in high technology at home in the islands. I believe that Hawai'i can and should be a pioneer in ocean technology, and that the efforts proposed in HB1829 and HB1615 are the first *baby steps* toward developing a thriving local ocean technology industry that will serve many future generations of engineers and scientists.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Brennan Yamamoto, PhD and Gizmologist

DATE: January 28, 2026
TO: Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Economic Development and Technology Committee
FROM: Doreen Wong
RE: HB1615 – Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation
HEARING DATE: January 30, 2026, 10:00 am | Conference Room 423

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Economic Development and Technology Committee,

I am writing in **support of HB1615, Relating to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation**, which will provide essential resources for Hawai'i to advance its ocean technology and innovation efforts.

I am a blue economy, ocean technology and innovation professional with experience working globally, regionally, and locally. I currently advise NOAA-funded Ocean Enterprise Accelerators, including UC San Diego's StartBlue and VentureWell, and my collaborations with HTDC and the University of Hawai'i have given me insight into the potential for Hawai'i's blue economy and ocean technology and innovation efforts. As a Contributing Member of the 1000 Ocean Startups coalition, a global network of over 60 incubators, accelerators, venture capital firms, and other capital providers (several with ties to Hawai'i), I have seen firsthand the rapid growth of this ocean innovation and investment ecosystem worldwide. Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to be a leader in the Pacific, guided by Native Hawaiian values and knowledge.

Hawai'i's blue economy already contributes [nearly \\$10 billion USD to our state GDP, supporting 100,000 jobs](#). Other coastal regions—such as San Diego, Washington, Alaska, Oregon, New England, Florida, Norway, Iceland, Singapore, Canada, and New Zealand—have shown that strategic investments and public-private collaboration in the blue economy and ocean innovation can help double economic returns and increase marine-related business activity by 20% or more. HB1615 represents Hawai'i's opportunity to build on our state's natural strengths and achieve similar gains.

Since August 2025, HTDC has convened over 45 organizations and 80 individuals from the government, academia, industry, and the community to co-design a statewide ocean technology strategy. This collaborative effort has revealed significant opportunities for Hawai'i to further grow its blue economy and address marine-related challenges.

HB1615 is a crucial next step. This bill funds a consultant to help HTDC shift from planning to implementation, enabling systems-level coordination across public and private sectors, supporting research and policy development, advancing workforce training, and building out the tech and innovation ecosystem—allowing Hawai'i to model the way for the Pacific.

I urge you to support HB1615 to ensure that Hawai'i remains economically competitive, resilient, and at the forefront of ocean technology and innovation. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Doreen Wong

Contributing Member, 1000 Ocean Startups | Ocean Technology and Innovation Advisor

HB-1615

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 8:47:42 AM

Testimony for ECD on 1/30/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlie Field	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a worker in the Marine and Ocean sector, I strongly support HB1615, which directs the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to contract for a consultant to advance the state's ocean technology and innovation initiatives and provides critical funding for this purpose. Hawaii's unique geographic position and rich ocean resources present a significant opportunity to lead in the emerging blue economy, a sector projected by the OECD to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030. Developing robust ocean technology not only aligns with HTDC's mission to position Hawaii as a premier innovation hub in the Pacific, but also creates high-quality jobs, attracts investment, and diversifies our economy beyond tourism.

In summary, HB1615 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii's leadership in ocean innovation, drive sustainable economic growth, and realize the vision of a resilient, tech-enabled future for our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.