



STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

Telephone: (808) 587-2846
Fax: (808) 587-2824
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov/>

Statement of **MARY ALICE EVANS, Director**

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

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

in consideration of
HB1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

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

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) offers comments on HB1829, which declares the State as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation. Hawai'i's blue ocean economy has deep cultural roots and has historically represented an engine for economic prosperity into the present day.

OPSD finds that the Hawai'i State Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) identifies growing a "statewide blue ocean economy cluster" as an important objective for the State's economic prosperity. Hawai'i has already developed a substantial and expanding blue ocean economy with significant investments in aquaculture, shipbuilding, energy, recreation, marine research, and other areas.

When combined with Hawai'i's location at the center of the Pacific Ocean and a rich cultural tradition of ocean stewardship and innovation, these pre-existing investments provide Hawai'i unique comparative advantages in the development of a blue ocean economy.

Declaring the State an ocean cluster and establishing an Office of Marine Affairs serves to promote the implementation of CEDS and advance Hawai'i's blue ocean economy while preserving Hawai'i's natural and cultural ocean resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



WENDY GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HUI HO'OU LU AINA MAHIAI

TESTIMONY OF WENDY L. GADY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &
TECHNOLOGY
January 30, 2026
10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

HOUSE BILL NO. 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) **supports** the intent of H.B. 1829, which recognizes and advances the ocean economy as a key driver of Hawai'i's future economic growth and diversification.

Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to lead in ocean-based industries. As an island state with extensive exclusive economic zone waters, world-class research institutions, and a long history of maritime activity, Hawai'i has natural and strategic advantages in sectors such as aquaculture, marine biotechnology, ocean energy, coastal engineering, vessel technology, and data and sensing systems. These sectors represent some of the fastest-growing segments of the global economy and are increasingly aligned with national priorities related to food security, climate resilience, and sustainable resource use.

Globally and nationally, the ocean economy is expanding rapidly as countries invest in offshore food production, renewable energy, climate monitoring, and maritime technology. These industries offer high-quality jobs across a wide range of skill levels, from skilled trades and technicians to

HOUSE BILL NO. 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS
Page 2 of 2

engineers, scientists, and data specialists. H.B. 1829 appropriately positions Hawai'i to compete for these opportunities by recognizing the ocean economy as a strategic economic sector and encouraging coordinated planning, investment, and workforce development.

The growth of the ocean economy also complements Hawai'i's existing strengths in agriculture, food systems, and natural resource management. Ocean-based food production, value-added processing, and technology development can strengthen local supply chains, reduce reliance on imports, and create new opportunities for innovation that build on Hawai'i's research and cultural knowledge base. Strategic development of this sector can support both rural and coastal communities while contributing to statewide economic resilience.

ADC believes that a coordinated approach to ocean economy development will help attract federal research dollars, private investment, and public-private partnerships. It will also help align education and workforce programs with emerging industry needs, ensuring that Hawai'i residents can access the jobs created by this growing sector.

For these reasons, ADC supports H.B. 1829 and appreciates the Legislature's leadership in recognizing the ocean economy as a fast-growing and strategically important opportunity for Hawai'i's economic future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.



NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAII AUTHORITY



An Authority of the State of Hawaii attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

Statement of
Laurence Sombardier
Deputy Director
For Riley M. Saito, Executive Director
Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority
before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

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

in consideration of

HB 1829 **RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.**

The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and a dedicated staff position, and transfers the personnel and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the new office.

NELHA is a self-sufficient state agency supporting more than 55 companies and generating an estimated annual economic impact of \$148 million for Hawai'i, according to the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization's analysis for calendar year 2022. Our mission includes advancing ocean research, innovation, and technology development at the 870-acre Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology (HOST) Park on Hawai'i Island.

A robust and environmentally responsible blue economy is essential to strengthening Hawai‘i’s economic resilience, protecting natural resources, addressing climate-related challenges, and creating high-quality local jobs. Hawai‘i already possesses many of the foundational assets needed to lead globally in this sector, including:

- A strategic location in the Pacific
- World-class infrastructure such as HOST Park
- Exceptional marine biodiversity
- Indigenous knowledge systems, including sustainable loko i‘a practices
- Leading research institutions in ocean and climate sciences
- Established and successful ocean-focused businesses
- Strong public support for marine stewardship

Centralized leadership through an Office of Marine Affairs would help coordinate efforts across agencies and stakeholders, leverage existing strengths, and develop a cohesive statewide strategy. A dedicated office can also ensure that data, research, and community input are translated into actionable policy that advances Hawai‘i’s blue economy in a sustainable and culturally grounded manner.

We also note that other measures—such as HB1615/SB3167 and SB2374—address related aspects of blue economy development. Coordinating the efforts envisioned across these bills would be beneficial to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions strongly SUPPORTS HB 1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as a leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular emphasis on ocean and coastal systems that are essential to the State's economy, resilience, and long term sustainability.

Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions is a Hawai'i based drone technology and remote sensing company founded to address real world challenges in infrastructure, environmental monitoring, and coastal management. Our work spans commercial construction, public infrastructure, and research driven technology development, with a growing focus on autonomous systems designed for demanding coastal and marine environments. We operate statewide and routinely support projects on O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i Island, and neighbor islands, where coastal exposure and environmental variability are everyday operational realities.

HTDC's programs have played a critical role in enabling companies like ours to grow technical capability while remaining rooted in Hawai'i. The State's marine and ocean ecosystem is not abstract to us. It is the operational environment in which our technology is developed, tested, and refined. Hawai'i's coastlines provide a uniquely challenging testbed for advanced sensing, autonomy, and data driven decision making. Establishing a formal Office of Marine Affairs creates the coordination structure needed to ensure that innovation in this space is intentional, measurable, and aligned with statewide priorities rather than fragmented across agencies and initiatives.

HB 1829 would directly benefit our business and others like it by strengthening the connective tissue between research, commercialization, and deployment. As a company currently engaged in federally funded research focused on autonomous aerial systems for coastal monitoring, we see first hand how difficult it can be to navigate the gap between technical innovation and practical adoption. A dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator would help align public agencies, research institutions, and private sector innovators around shared goals such as coastal resilience, erosion monitoring, and sustainable marine resource management.

From an economic perspective, the marine technology sector represents a durable growth opportunity for Hawai‘i. Our company currently employs a small but highly skilled local workforce, with roles spanning engineering, data processing, flight operations, and STEM education support. As our technology matures, our commercialization plan is centered on licensing and platform integration rather than relocating operations out of state. The intent is to grow intellectual property, high wage technical jobs, and long term economic activity within Hawai‘i, not extract value from it. HB 1829 supports this vision by formally recognizing marine technology as a strategic economic cluster deserving of coordinated oversight and reporting.

Equally important, the bill reinforces accountability. Annual reporting requirements ensure that marine focused initiatives are not just aspirational, but tracked against outcomes that matter to Hawai‘i’s people, economy, and environment. This transparency is essential if Hawai‘i is to lead credibly in the blue economy while balancing innovation with stewardship.

In summary, HB 1829 strengthens Hawai‘i’s leadership in marine and ocean innovation, supports the growth of high quality technology jobs, and provides a clear framework for aligning research, industry, and public interest. Hawaii Pacific Drone Solutions supports this bill regardless of individual funding outcomes because it reflects a long term commitment to building a resilient, locally anchored marine technology ecosystem.

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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

HTDC strongly supports HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as a leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a distinct focus on developing the space and ocean sectors. By centralizing marine affairs functions and creating a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator, HB1829 will enhance coordination, streamline policy implementation, and foster innovation in the blue economy.

Hawai'i's ocean sector represents a significant opportunity for economic diversification and technological advancement. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. blue economy contributed over \$373 billion to the national GDP in 2018, supporting 2.3 million jobs. Hawai'i, with its unique geographic and cultural assets, is well positioned to capture a larger share of this growth through targeted investment and coordination. Establishing the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC leverages our expertise in technology development, innovation accelerator programs, and research and development to drive commercialization and sustainable growth in marine industries.

The transfer of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to HTDC will consolidate expertise and resources, reducing administrative duplication and ensuring that marine policy is informed by both scientific research and economic development best practices. The annual reporting requirement will promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in marine policy, supporting data-driven decision-making and responsive governance.

Moreover, the appropriation for a full-time Marine Affairs Coordinator is a strategic investment. This position will serve as a vital link between government, industry, academia, and community stakeholders, helping to accelerate projects in renewable energy technology, ocean innovation, and advanced manufacturing. These efforts are essential for Hawai'i to remain competitive in the global blue economy and to achieve sustainable economic development.



Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation

521 Ala Moana Blvd, Ste 255
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

808-539-3806
www.htdc.org

In summary, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in ocean innovation, support the growth of high-value jobs, and advance the state's economic resilience. HTDC urges swift passage of this bill to realize the full potential of Hawai'i's ocean sector.





DATE: January 28, 2026

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

Representative Ikaika Hussey
Vice Chair, Economic Development & Technology

FROM: Pacific Economics

RE: **H.B. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

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 1829**, which advocates for the recognition of Hawai‘i as an “ocean cluster” and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs.

Pacific Economics is a strategic advisory firm with a goal to see Hawai‘i and the broader Pacific become a global leader in sustainable economic growth. We use data to make well-calculated decisions, and the data in this bill makes a clear case: Hawai‘i’s Blue Economy already supports nearly 100,000 jobs and generates \$9.2 billion in GDP for our state. We strongly believe that formally recognizing Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster is the only way to scale these numbers and ensure a prosperous future.

Establishing the Office of Marine Affairs facilitates the unification of Hawai‘i’s fragmented marine sectors into a high-performing force. Designating Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster leverages our geography and Kanaka ‘Ōiwi stewardship to attract investment and drive maritime innovation. Because our challenges parallel those of the broader Pacific, Hawai‘i’s success serves as a blueprint for transitioning island economies into a globally recognized hub for marine technology.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Pacific Economics



HB-1829

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 3:20:57 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
PROVIDING COMMENTS ON HB1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit these comments on HB1829, which declares the State as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC).

HB1829 reflects a clear recognition by the Legislature that Hawai‘i’s ocean economy, or blue economy, is both substantial and strategically important. As the bill notes, Hawai‘i is already a national leader in marine-related activity, supported by a growing base of marine businesses, research institutions, and longstanding cultural knowledge rooted in ocean stewardship. Formalizing the State’s role as an ocean cluster provides an opportunity to better organize, coordinate, and strengthen these existing assets .

The establishment of the Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC has the potential to improve coherence across a complex and fragmented landscape. Marine-related policy, research, infrastructure, and commercialization efforts currently span multiple agencies and stakeholders. A centralized coordinating function, paired with a clearly defined Marine Affairs Coordinator role, can help align strategy, reduce duplication, and improve the State’s ability to translate marine innovation into durable economic and workforce outcomes.

Of particular value is the bill’s emphasis on technology-enabled marine industries, including ocean data systems, marine biotechnology, autonomous maritime systems, and port and harbor modernization. These areas sit at the intersection of research, manufacturing, cybersecurity, and commercialization, and are well aligned with HTDC’s existing role in supporting technology development, startup formation, and access to capital.

At the same time, successful implementation will depend on clarity of scope and authority. HB1829 assigns the Office of Marine Affairs a broad mandate that includes strategy development, interagency coordination, funding pursuit, policy recommendations, and ecosystem development. To be effective, the Office will need sufficient administrative support, clear

coordination mechanisms with existing HTDC programs, and disciplined prioritization to avoid becoming overstretched.

Ongoing engagement with industry, research institutions, and community stakeholders will also be important. Hawai‘i’s marine economy is diverse, spanning traditional industries and emerging technologies, and inclusive engagement will help ensure that the State’s ocean cluster strategy reflects real market needs, cultural considerations, and workforce realities.

In summary, HB1829 establishes a strong framework for recognizing and advancing Hawai‘i’s role as an ocean cluster. With thoughtful implementation, clear accountability, and adequate resourcing, the Office of Marine Affairs can become a valuable coordinating mechanism that strengthens marine innovation, supports technology commercialization, and advances long-term economic diversification.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

HB-1829

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 4:50:08 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 1829.

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 shrimp production. It generates \$20 M in export sales from Hawaii/year. It is an excellent example of Blue Food 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 1829.

Mahalo for your time and opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jim Wyban
Founder/Chair HIplan

HB-1829

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 4:50:08 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 1829.

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 shrimp production. It generates \$20 M in export sales from Hawaii/year. It is an excellent example of Blue Food 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 1829.

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
HB1829

RELATING TO HAWAII TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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

Small Kine Farm **supports** HB1829 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-1829

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 11:40:08 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 (HOPS). My company produces Halona, which is a wave powered data gathering buoy based on the Halona blowhole. Our wave energy technology is the product of Office of Naval Research funded research at the University of Hawaii. HOPS is commercializing the technology to meet our state's energy independence goals. This past year, we participated in the NOAA Ocean Enterprise Accelerator program with Braid Theory. Braid Theory is a part of an Ocean Cluster system located in Los Angeles at Altasea. I was able to see first hand the benefits of designating an ocean cluster has on the technology ecosystem. Hundreds of companies cluster around that area, bringing jobs, ideas, and benefit to the community. From local NGOs connecting with technology leaders on kelp farming, to underwater robotics companies partnering with local harbors to clean them up autonomously, the cluster is able to identify technology partners with end-users to help the business community thrive. With Hawaii's strong value system at the forefront, I believe that an ocean cluster would be extremely effective at attracting talent back to the islands. I was born and raised on Oahu and my company has a commitment to hiring locally. We had to engage with continental programs because we lacked the coordination and ocean cluster designation here at home. If we hope to keep our keiki here, keiki born and raised in the ocean, we need to create systems to set them up for success. Hawaii is a world leader in ocean technology, but our tech ecosystem works in silo. We need to do better to coordinate. Coordination does not preclude competition, but it produces healthier competition with better outcomes. I have seen clusters in Portland, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Miami. Each one has created thriving business communities in a very short time period after the creation of their ocean cluster organization.

Hawaii has a workforce predisposed to being experts in ocean technology and the blue economy. You will not find a population in the world so immersed in the ocean environment with such a strong connection. Cultivate it to our states benefit, pair it with the Green Fee, and designate the Ocean Cluster.

I have had the joy of working with HTDC this past year to help talk with the ocean tech community. From being able to come together, we were able to bring up common goals, identify federal opportunities, and go after funding. This past month, multiple Hawaii ocean tech companies were successful in bringing in US Navy funds to support dual-use projects, such as wave-powered fish identification buoys. This happened because of HTDC meetings on ocean technology. Our greatest frustration in this effort has been that there was not a central organizer to rally behind. We were having separate side conversations after the fact, creating email threads

and group chats. There was a lot of opportunity for miscommunication, and had it not been for the diligence of key individuals, we critical coordination mistakes could have been made. This is why we need to create an ocean cluster and have a group to organize behind. This is why we 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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Gtscientific LLC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1615, strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC’s mission to position Hawai‘i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of

annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

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. By having the office under HTDC it is anticipated that advanced manufacturing companies like Gtscientific LLC may be better connected with entities that will find their services of value in supporting their operations in Hawaii.

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 **HB1829**:
“Relating to Marine Affairs”

Testimony in Support

Date: January 28, 2026

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

To: Chair Rep. Greggory Iiagan,
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 **support of HB1829**.

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.

HB1829 declares that Hawai‘i is an **ocean cluster**. It establishes an **Office of Marine Affairs** within the **Hawai‘i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC)** and creates a **Marine Affairs Coordinator** position.

Hawai‘i’s ocean and coastal strengths are real. They touch energy, food systems, transportation, climate resilience, research, and tourism. **HB1829** creates a clear home for that coordination and a dedicated point of accountability.

A **Marine Affairs Coordinator** can help align strategy with execution. This includes identifying barriers, building partnerships, and pursuing public and federal resources that local companies and researchers can use to test, deploy, and scale solutions in Hawai'i. The bill's focus on investment readiness and commercialization pathways is especially important for turning ideas into **jobs** and deployable projects.

HB1829 supports outcomes that matter statewide. It strengthens **economic diversification**. It improves **resilience** through coastal and ocean-related innovation. It expands pathways to **higher wage jobs** in technology-enabled ocean sectors. It helps attract and retain **talent and investment** by presenting a clear statewide strategy and a coordinated entry point for engagement across all islands.

HB1829 is a practical step toward stronger coordination and stronger results for Hawai'i's **blue economy**. We respectfully urge the Committee on Economic Development and Technology to **pass HB1829** with a recommendation of support and advance it through the remaining referrals.

Mahalo,

Chenoa Farnsworth

Managing Director

Blue Startups



Testimony in Regards to HB1829 and HB1615

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.1000oceantstartups.org>



DATE: 1/28/2026

TO: Rep. Greggory Iilagan
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. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs**
HEARING DATE: 1/30/2026 10am

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

Hohonu **strongly supports** House Bill 1829 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.

Establishing an office of marine affairs with a marine affairs task force and declaring the state an ocean cluster 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. Establishing Hawai'i as an ocean

cluster, with a marine affairs task force acting as a coordinator to address these problems across the cluster, we have a better chance at solving them.

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 1829 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



WaiHome LLC
59-477 Hoalike Road
Haleiwa, HI, 96712

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
HB1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

WaiHome LLC **strongly supports** HB1829 which seeks to formally recognize Hawaii as an "Ocean Cluster" and establish an Office of Marine Affairs within HTDC. WaiHome is a Hawaii-based startup focused on innovative wastewater solutions that protect our nearshore water quality and coastal ecosystems. Our work is currently supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), and we support this Bill for the following reasons:

- **Fuels Innovation:** As an HTDC-funded startup, we see the need for an Office of Marine Affairs to help local companies commercialize coastal protection technologies that address critical issues like Hawaii's cesspool mandate.
- **Maximizes Federal Dollars:** WaiHome has secured significant federal funding from the NSF and NOAA. This bill ensures the State is an active partner in "pursuing federal funding" to scale these ocean-tech ecosystems.
- **Removes Growth Barriers:** The bill's focus on solving "permitting and regulatory barriers" is critical for startups like ours trying to deploy environmental solutions in Hawaii.
- **Global Leadership:** By designating Hawaii an "Ocean Cluster," the State provides the market validation needed for Hawaii-born companies to lead the global Blue Economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Wong".

Gregory Wong
Co-founder and Engineer
WaiHome LLC



Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions

DATE: 1/28/2026

TO: Gregggor 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. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

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 1829, which declares the state of Hawaii as an ocean cluster, and establishes the office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation.

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. Establishing the state as an ocean cluster puts us on equal footing with the other national ocean clusters such as Washington state and Maine. This would garner national interest in the blue economy, potentially bringing millions of dollars in federal funding.

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 a unique and vital foundation for constant sustainable advancement and innovation in marine sciences. Establishing Hawaii as a national ocean cluster is essential for continuing this innovation.

Mahalo for your time and opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Duncan Lajousky, Hawaii Ocean Power Solutions

Chief Technology Officer



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 1829
RELATING TO THE MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Builders VC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC’s mission to position Hawai‘i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

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. 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 ecosystems are critical in supporting and developing innovative technologies and businesses that Builders would potentially invest in.

In summary, HB1829 is a timely and necessary measure to catalyze Hawaii’s leadership in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity 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.



29 January 2026

TO: Chair Ilagan; Vice-Chair Hussey

r.e. In Strong Support of House Bill No. 1829

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 HB1829, that declares that the State of Hawaii is an ocean cluster, and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs to further the uses and connections between Hawaii's people and our oceans.

There are tremendous benefits to be gleaned from establishing a more focused administrative approach to the potential bounty that could flow from Hawaii's Blue Economy. HTDC already does a fantastic job of supporting early-stage R&D in the state. Extending this reach to a focus on ocean-based opportunities would appear to us to be a very appropriate use of State funds. We are confident that such a commitment from the State would – in the long run - generate much greater benefits than costs, through facilitating and accelerating expansion of our Blue Economy.

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. In my experience, Hawaii offers an unparalleled confluence of ocean knowledge and interests, from the depth of the traditional relationship with moana, to the range of today's subsistence and recreational uses of marine resources, to the variety of ocean ecosystems – coral reefs, estuaries, and open ocean – all within close proximity, and readily accessible.

We would be most grateful for your support to further amplify all of these benefits, through the creation of this Ocean Cluster.

Thank you in anticipation.

Sincerely, with aloha,

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

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



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

RE: Testimony in Support of HB1829

Date: Friday, January 30, 2026

Time: 10:00 am

Place: Conference Room 423, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Rep. Greggory Iiagan 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 support House Bill 1829 and respectfully urge the Committee to advance this important legislation. By formally establishing an Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation and creating a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator position, HB 1829 will ensure that our state has the organizational structure and leadership to develop and implement strategic policies related to marine resource management, ocean innovation, climate resilience, and the growing blue economy. This bill recognizes the essential role that the marine environment plays in Hawaii's culture, economy, and sustainability.

I support this bill because Hawaii's unique geographic and economic context demands focused coordination and expert leadership on marine issues. Our islands' marine ecosystems provide critical habitat, support our state's economy, and connect us culturally and strategically to the Pacific region. However, the complex challenges of ocean conservation, climate change impacts, sustainable aquaculture, and coastal community resilience require sustained attention and integrated policymaking. HB 1829 enables the state to centralize marine affairs functions, improve planning and reporting to the Legislature and the Governor, and elevate Hawaii as a leader in the national and global blue economy. This investment will help protect our natural resources, support innovation and economic development in ocean industries, and foster partnerships across government, academia, and the private sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 1829. I appreciate the Legislature's thoughtful consideration of measures that strengthen Hawaii's position within the blue economy. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill so that our state can continue to advance comprehensive, forward-looking marine policy and economic development.

Thank you,

Veronica Rocha

Veronica Rocha

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.



NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAII AUTHORITY



An Authority of the State of Hawaii attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

Statement of
Laurence Sombardier
Deputy Director
For Riley M. Saito, Executive Director
Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority
before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

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

in consideration of

HB 1829 **RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.**

The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and a dedicated staff position, and transfers the personnel and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the new office.

NELHA is a self-sufficient state agency supporting more than 55 companies and generating an estimated annual economic impact of \$148 million for Hawai'i, according to the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization's analysis for calendar year 2022. Our mission includes advancing ocean research, innovation, and technology development at the 870-acre Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology (HOST) Park on Hawai'i Island.

A robust and environmentally responsible blue economy is essential to strengthening Hawai‘i’s economic resilience, protecting natural resources, addressing climate-related challenges, and creating high-quality local jobs. Hawai‘i already possesses many of the foundational assets needed to lead globally in this sector, including:

- A strategic location in the Pacific
- World-class infrastructure such as HOST Park
- Exceptional marine biodiversity
- Indigenous knowledge systems, including sustainable loko i‘a practices
- Leading research institutions in ocean and climate sciences
- Established and successful ocean-focused businesses
- Strong public support for marine stewardship

Centralized leadership through an Office of Marine Affairs would help coordinate efforts across agencies and stakeholders, leverage existing strengths, and develop a cohesive statewide strategy. A dedicated office can also ensure that data, research, and community input are translated into actionable policy that advances Hawai‘i’s blue economy in a sustainable and culturally grounded manner.

We also note that other measures—such as HB1615/SB3167 and SB2374—address related aspects of blue economy development. Coordinating the efforts envisioned across these bills would be beneficial to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



Statement of
Grace Iwashita, Manager – Business Development
Hawaiian King Candies, 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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Hawaiian King Candies, LLC strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

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 is deeply connected to Hawai'i's people, environment, and economy. While we are not directly engaged in marine industries, the health of Hawai'i's oceans is vital to the overall sustainability, quality of life, and economic stability of the islands.

HB1829's recognition of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and the creation of the Office of Marine Affairs will help ensure strategic coordination and long-term planning for ocean health and innovation. These efforts support a resilient environment and economy that benefits local manufacturers, employees, and communities that have built their businesses in Hawai'i for generations.

In summary, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy, foster innovation, and create high-quality jobs while ensuring that marine resources are managed sustainably.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



Hawaii's Finest Macadamia Nuts ~ Chocolates ~ Confections

Statement of
Batdelger Jaavaa, CFO
Purdyco, Ltd dba Island Princess
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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Purdyco, Ltd. dba Island Princess strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

Purdyco Ltd is a Hawai'i-based agricultural company engaged in the farming and processing of macadamia nuts. Although our business is not directly involved in marine industries, the health of Hawai'i's oceans is closely connected to responsible land stewardship, water quality, and environmental sustainability. As a local agricultural operation, we recognize that healthy marine ecosystems are essential to Hawai'i's communities, food systems, and long-term economic resilience.

The establishment of the Office of Marine Affairs under HTDC will strengthen coordination, innovation, and accountability in protecting Hawai'i's ocean resources. **HB1829 supports a more integrated approach to environmental and economic stewardship**, benefiting not only ocean-based industries but also land-based businesses like ours that depend on clean water, healthy ecosystems, and a sustainable future for Hawai'i.

In summary, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy, foster innovation, and create high-quality jobs while ensuring that marine resources are managed sustainably.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



Statement of
Charna Rae Naeole, General Manager
COHI, Inc. dba Coffees of Hawaii
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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

COHI, Inc. dba Coffees of Hawaii strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai'i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC's mission to position Hawai'i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

COHI, Inc., dba Coffees of Hawai'i, operates a coffee farm and roasting facility on the island of Moloka'i, supporting local agriculture, employment, and long-term economic sustainability. Although we are not directly involved in marine industries, Moloka'i's rural communities are closely tied to the health of surrounding ocean and coastal ecosystems, which are essential to the island's environment, culture, and way of life.

The creation of the **Office of Marine Affairs under HTDC**, as proposed in **HB1829**, will improve coordination, accountability, and long-term planning for ocean stewardship. These efforts support environmental resilience that benefits both ocean- and land-based industries, including agriculture, and help ensure a sustainable future for Moloka'i and Hawai'i as a whole.

In summary, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai'i's leadership in the blue economy, foster innovation, and create high-quality jobs while ensuring that marine resources are managed sustainably.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

HB-1829

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 11:38:33 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 HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC’s mission to position Hawai‘i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

In summary, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai‘i’s leadership in the blue economy, foster innovation, and create high-quality jobs while ensuring that marine resources are managed sustainably.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Forest Frizzell

DATE: January 28, 2026

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

FROM: George Yarbrough, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow

RE: **H.B. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

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 1829**, which advocates for the recognition of Hawai'i as an "ocean cluster" and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs.

I am an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). For the past several years, I have worked to support the development of Hawai'i's ocean technology ecosystem through ecosystem coordination and economic development efforts—convening stakeholders, attracting investment, and supporting locally based ocean tech startups.

Through this work, I have collaborated with partners including the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation, the Port of San Diego's Chief Sustainability and Innovation Officer, and the University of Rhode Island Research Foundation, learning from established ocean clusters and exploring how Hawai'i can position itself within the global blue economy.

Hawai'i's Blue Economy already supports nearly 100,000 jobs and generates \$9.2 billion in GDP. Formally recognizing Hawai'i as an ocean cluster signals to the local innovation community and federal funding agencies that ocean tech development is a state priority. This top-down commitment positions Hawai'i to pursue large-scale ecosystem development grants that can transform our blue economy.

From my experience, I have seen how fragmented efforts limit our collective impact. This bill offers a pathway to unify Hawai'i's marine sectors, leverage our unique geography and cultural heritage, and position our state as a leader in maritime innovation—not only for our economy, but as a model for island communities across the Pacific.

Mahalo for your time and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

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

DATE: 2026-JAN-28

TO: Representatives Greggory 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 Greggory 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: HB1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs
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 to express my **strong support** for **HB1829, Relating to Marine Affairs**. This measure designates Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster, establishes the Office of Marine Affairs, creates a Marine Affairs Task Force, and funds a Coordinator within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC).

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 have worked with HTDC and the University of Hawai‘i with developing our local ocean technology and innovation ecosystem. 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’s blue economy contributes [nearly \\$10 billion USD to our state GDP and supports 100,000 jobs](#), with marine-related business activity increasing by 23% over the past decade. Our location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and within the U.S.’s second largest Exclusive Economic Zone makes us a natural leader in the blue economy and a bridge between the islands and other countries. What is unique and sets us apart is our Kanaka ‘Ōiwi stewardship, and Hawai‘i can be the model for the Pacific.

HB1829 will help Hawai‘i take a more coordinated, systems-level approach to addressing statewide marine-related challenges and opportunities, with technology and innovation. By streamlining efforts, supporting technology and innovation, and building public-private partnerships, this bill strengthens our tech ecosystem and enhances our disaster preparedness and resilience. The designation of Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster will also help us to remain business competitive; attract federal, philanthropic, and private investments; and create jobs.

Similar initiatives in regions, such as San Diego, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Maine, New England, Florida, Norway, Singapore, and New Zealand, have shown that coordinated ocean clusters drive innovation, economic growth, and workforce development. By passing HB1829, Hawai‘i can build on its natural strengths and be a model for the Pacific in ocean technology and innovation.

I urge you to support HB1829 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

DATE: January 29, 2026

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

Representative Ikaika Hussey
Vice Chair, Economic Development & Technology

FROM: Natalie Piper

RE: **H.B. 1829 – Relating to Marine Affairs**

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

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

My name is Natalie Piper; I was born and raised on the Windward side of O'ahu, and I am currently an intern for Pacific Economics. I am here today in **strong support of House Bill 1829**.

While Pacific Economics has submitted formal written testimony, I wanted to share why this bill is personally significant to my generation. As of 2024, roughly [87% of jobs within Hawai'i's blue economy are tied to tourism](#). While that sector is vital, it shouldn't be our only path. HB1829 offers a vision for a marine sector that isn't just about hospitality, but about high-growth technology, Kanaka 'Ōiwi stewardship, and innovation.

As a young professional, this bill represents a "ladder" of opportunity. By formally recognizing Hawai'i as an Ocean Cluster and establishing the Office of Marine Affairs, we are creating the infrastructure for sustainable, high-paying jobs that allow my generation to stay home and contribute to our state's future.

Most importantly, I strongly support the establishment of the Marine Affairs Coordinator. While Hawai'i is already a successful blue economy hub, our efforts have historically been fragmented. Even if it is a few steps down the line, I believe the ultimate goal of this position could be to strategize a diverse blue economy that moves beyond a reliance on tourism. This position allows for leadership to facilitate that long-term vision, ensuring our ocean resources provide true economic security for our people.

I urge the committee to pass HB1829 to ensure that Hawai'i remains a leader in the Pacific for generations to come.

Mahalo for your time and for the opportunity to testify.

/s/ Natalie Piper

HB-1829

Submitted on: 1/29/2026 8:49:11 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 sectors, I strongly SUPPORT HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC’s mission to position Hawai‘i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

In summary, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai‘i’s leadership in the blue economy, foster innovation, and create high-quality jobs while ensuring that marine resources are managed sustainably.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



AI.FISH

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

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

I submit this testimony on behalf of Ai.Fish in **strong support** of House Bill 1829, Relating to Marine Affairs.

Ai.Fish is a Hawai'i-based ocean technology company using AI-powered computer vision and electronic monitoring systems to support sustainable fisheries management, efficient commercial fishing operations and marine conservation. We develop and deploy technology that helps fisheries operate more sustainably while improving data collection for science and management.

I've spent decades building technology companies in Hawai'i, and I've seen many well-intentioned initiatives come and go. But this one makes sense in a way others haven't. We're not trying to be the next Silicon Valley—we're leaning into what Hawai'i is actually positioned to lead. Our university is world-class in ocean sciences. We sit at the center of the largest U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. Our culture has deep connections to the sea. And there is growing federal investment in marine innovation that Hawai'i is well-positioned to capture. The foundation is here. HB1829 gives us the structure to build on it.

Ai.Fish strongly supports this bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



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

Sincerely,

Jimmy Freese

CEO and Co-Founder

Ai.Fish





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 1829
RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS

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

Namaka Algae, Inc. strongly **SUPPORTS** HB1829, which recognizes the State of Hawai‘i as an ocean cluster and establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) for administrative purposes. This bill aligns directly with HTDC’s mission to position Hawai‘i as the leading technology innovation hub in the Pacific, with a particular focus on the space and ocean sectors. The creation of a dedicated Marine Affairs Coordinator and the formalization of annual reporting requirements will ensure that marine innovation and economic development are prioritized, tracked, and strategically advanced.

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, HB1829 will strengthen Hawai‘i’s leadership in the blue economy, foster innovation, and create high-quality jobs while ensuring that marine resources are managed sustainably.



Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Aloha,

Valerie Harmon

Valerie Harmon

TESTIMONY ON HB1829 WITH SERIOUS CONCERNS

Establishing the Office of Marine Affairs

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Friday, January 30, 2026

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

I support coordinating Hawai‘i's ocean economy, but **I have serious concerns about HB1829 as currently written**. This bill could **fast-track extractive industries while gutting environmental protections under the banner of "removing barriers to innovation."** The office is tasked with identifying and eliminating regulatory and permitting barriers to ocean industry growth, which sounds efficient until you realize that environmental impact assessments, water quality reviews, and cultural consultation requirements could all be labeled as barriers and targeted for removal. **The Task Force is stacked eleven to two in favor of economic development agencies and business representatives over conservation voices, with zero seats for environmental nonprofits, subsistence fishers, or community conservation leaders.** The bill says strategies will prioritize "sustainable use" but lacks definitions, science-based metrics, enforcement mechanisms, or accountability when projects cause ecological harm. Without these guardrails, "sustainable" becomes whatever industry says it is, and we could see industrial aquaculture polluting coastal waters with fish waste and antibiotics, port expansion enabling more cruise ship traffic and reef damage, and deep-sea mining framed as innovation while devastating to our ocean ecosystems.

The bill also could better represent the communities and cultural practitioners who live with and depend on healthy oceans. OHA gets one vote out of thirteen on the Task Force, which is not true decision-making power. The Coordinator reports annually to the Legislature but not to the public, there should be **requirements for public hearings, community input periods, and environmental impact dashboards**, otherwise communities won't know what's happening until projects are already approved and operating. The bill needs to put forth regenerative systems like fishponds, limu, and community-based fisheries management that has and can sustain Hawai‘i's food system.

I urge you to amend HB1829 before passage by **defining "sustainable use"** with enforceable science-based ecosystem health metrics and consequences for violations, **balancing the Task Force** by adding four seats for environmental nonprofits, subsistence fishing practitioners, coastal community representatives, and independent marine scientists, **mandating quarterly public hearings and transparent environmental dashboards** that track coral health and fish populations, requiring the office to **dedicate a large percent of resources to ecosystem restoration and traditional methods before promoting industrial expansion, and adding specific protections against harmful open-ocean net-pen aquaculture, biopiracy, and deep-sea extraction with full environmental review.** Without these protections, I respectfully but firmly oppose HB1829. As currently written, the bill prioritizes economic growth over ecosystem health and biodiversity, and as the extinction capital of the world, **Hawai‘i cannot afford sustainability measures that fail to center environmental balance.** With the right amendments, **this bill could instead strengthen our local food systems** in ways that truly sustain our population and reinvest locally by creating a meaningful multiplier effect for our communities.

Respectfully,

Merideth Welch
Policy Advocacy Committee Chair,
U.S. Youth Leadership Council for Our Ocean