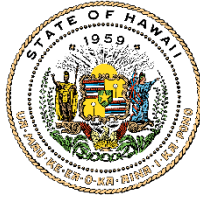


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES  
ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
Acting Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on  
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Friday, April 17, 2026  
1:15 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of  
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 61  
RELATING TO REFORESTATION

House Concurrent Resolution 61 calls on the Department of Land and Natural Resources to collaborate with its partners to boost investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this resolution.**

The Department promotes the development of policies and investments that expand forest cover in the state and reduce barriers to reforestation. Reforesting degraded public forest lands and planting trees on private lands will boost climate resilience and help protect Hawai'i from the impacts of disasters such as fire, flood, and landslides. Reforestation will also lead to diverse and productive landscapes that hold great potential to generate and sustain jobs, and support forest-based industries like local wood products, voluntary carbon markets, and other value-added processing. Increasing forest cover can also promote cultural use and biological diversity when native species are planted.

The Department supports investments in its existing production nurseries, which support reforestation efforts and require capacity, modern facilities, and upgrades in management efficiencies to successfully increase plant availability through seed collection, storage, and scaled propagation techniques. The state nurseries serve public and private landowner partners seeking to reforest lands.

The Department is eager to collaborate with private industry, conservation groups, and policy experts to develop incentives, programs, and funding arrangements to cover the costs of reforestation and harness the many benefits that expanding forest cover will bring to the State. The Department supports these measures that aim to create conditions for expanding reforestation and increasing forest cover in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this important resolution.

# The Reforestation Investment Hui of Hawai‘i



April 17, 2026

Hawai‘i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Re: Testimony in **Support** of HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and esteemed members of the committee,

On behalf of the Reforestation Policy Hui, a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to forest stewardship, ecological restoration, mālama ‘āina, and sustainable land use in Hawai‘i, we write in strong support of HCR61, urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai‘i’s public and private lands.

Healthy forests are foundational to Hawai‘i’s environmental, cultural, and economic resilience. Forested watersheds protect freshwater resources, reduce erosion, mitigate wildfire risk and provide critical habitat for native species. Reforestation efforts also play a key role in climate adaptation and carbon sequestration, while supporting local economies through forestry, agroforestry, and restoration-based jobs.

Achieving meaningful reforestation at scale requires a coordinated and sustained investment in multiple areas. Expanding nursery capacity ensures the availability of high-quality, locally appropriate plant material. Strengthening workforce development creates pathways for local communities to participate in restoration efforts. Additionally, policies and incentives that support landowners—both public and private—are essential to accelerating reforestation across the state.

HCR61 appropriately recognizes that reforestation is not a single program, but a comprehensive effort requiring collaboration across agencies, communities, and sectors. By prioritizing investment in these key areas, Hawai‘i can restore degraded landscapes, enhance ecosystem services and build long-term resilience for future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.



## Testimony on HCR61

# URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

**DATE:** 04/17/2026 1:15PM

**ROOM:** Room 224

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Dear **chair Lee**, **vice chair Inouye** and members of the committee,

I support this measure to encourage reforestation efforts by the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

As a lifelong Hawai'i resident and business owner in Kaka'ako, I recognize the importance of green spaces in urban environments and the positive impact they have on community well-being. Reforestation is a critical tool for enhancing the natural beauty of our islands, improving air quality, and providing recreational opportunities for residents and their pets.

This measure aligns with my values and experiences, having witnessed firsthand the benefits of well-maintained green spaces in cities across the country. Expanding reforestation efforts will not only help restore native ecosystems but also contribute to healthier, more vibrant communities as Hawai'i continues to grow.

I respectfully encourage the Legislature to ensure that reforestation initiatives prioritize native species and include opportunities for community involvement, so that the benefits of these projects are maximized for all residents.

Sincerely,

Pierce Young

**LATE**

**HCR-61**

Submitted on: 4/17/2026 9:33:12 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/17/2026 1:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Z. Arakawa	Testifying for Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**HCR 61 LAND USE\_Reforestation**

**Support for HCR 61 URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii (LURF) is a private research and trade organization originally founded in 1979, whose members include major Hawaii landowners, developers, utility companies, and land use professionals. LURF's mission is to research, educate, and advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, laws, and regulations that encourage well-planned and sustainable economic growth in agriculture, housing, renewable energy, commercial and industrial uses, health care, and tourism, while safeguarding Hawaii's significant natural, environmental, historic, and cultural resources, public health, and safety.

**LURF supports HCR 61.**

**LURF's Position.** LURF members own forests in all of Hawaii's counties and share the priority of forest restoration with the State. Forest restoration is essential for watershed health, climate resilience, and long-term land productivity. However, the State and landowners face barriers that make forest restoration challenging and sometimes infeasible at scale, including limited nursery capacity, shortages in native seed supply, workforce gaps, and the need for clear, stable incentives.

Collaboration between DLNR, landowners, and community partners is essential for successful reforestation across Hawai'i. HCR 61 urges coordination and public and private investments, which can expand nursery and seed-banking capacity, strengthen the restoration workforce, and develop practical incentives will help accelerate reforestation efforts across the state.

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF is in **support of HCR 61**, and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill.

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



April 17, 2026

Hawai‘i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Re: Testimony in Support for HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Hanna Lesiak, and I am writing in strong support of HCR 61, urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai‘i’s public and private lands.

I submit this testimony as an individual and as a member of the Care for ‘Āina Now Coalition and the Ocean Legislative Task Force, a network committed to protecting and restoring Hawai‘i’s natural and cultural resources. While this measure focuses on forests, it is important to recognize that Hawai‘i’s environment functions as an interconnected system. The health of our forests directly impacts our watersheds, nearshore reefs, fisheries, and ultimately the well-being of our communities.

Reforestation is one of the most effective strategies we have to strengthen climate resilience, protect freshwater resources, and reduce erosion and sediment runoff that degrades coral reefs. Investing in upland restoration is, in many ways, an investment in the long-term health of our oceans and coastal ecosystems.

To achieve meaningful and scalable reforestation outcomes, a comprehensive approach is needed. Expanding nursery capacity is critical to ensuring a reliable supply of native and climate-appropriate plant materials. At the same time, building a skilled and locally rooted workforce creates economic opportunities while empowering communities to participate in long-term stewardship of these lands. Strategic policies and incentives are also necessary to support both public and private landowners in undertaking restoration efforts.

HCR 61 appropriately recognizes that reforestation is not a single initiative, but a coordinated, statewide effort that requires sustained investment and collaboration across sectors. By strengthening these foundational elements, Hawai‘i can restore degraded landscapes, enhance ecosystem services, and build resilience in the face of increasing environmental pressures.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

Hanna Lesiak

**Testimony in Support of [HCR61](#)  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts  
Position: Support**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren Buck, and I am submitting written testimony in strong support of HCR61, which would urge the Department of Land and Natural Resources to collaborate with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands. I am a student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa majoring in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (NREM) with a specialization in watershed and coastal management, and I have a strong interest in preserving and protecting our natural resources here in Hawai'i.

Forests play an essential role in protecting and enhancing the local ecosystem. They contribute to improving watershed functions, providing habitats for native species, and supporting the community and recreational activities of Hawai'i's residents. As a powerful tool against climate change, healthy forests are essential in reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide by trapping greenhouse gasses during the process of photosynthesis. Forested watersheds also help to protect freshwater resources by reducing erosion and wildfire risks.

For these benefits to take place, sustainable forestry and meaningful reforestation needs to be ran with a holistic approach across multiple areas. Expanding the nursery capacity ensures that there will be land availability for native plant species. Improving workforce development can create a pathway for communities to participate in restoration efforts. Accessibility to students to learn and assist in sustainable forestry practices would become more available. HCR61 would also support policies that aid landowners in implementing reforestation practices across their private and public lands. This collaboration across communities and agencies would see restoration of degraded land accelerated.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to pass HCR61 and ensure Hawai'i's commitment to protecting its natural resources and support agencies that prioritize sustainable practices. This bill will ensure that these ecosystems and their services are available for future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your leadership on this important issue.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,  
Lauren Buck  
O'ahu  
96826

Hawai'i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts

**Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stephanie Dunbar-Co, and I am the owner and founder of Hulili Consulting, a part-owner of Kainalu Ranch, and a resident of Kainalu, Molokai. I am a member of The Reforestation Investment Hui of Hawai'i, a multidisciplinary group helping to build a community of practice to scale reforestation efforts in Hawai'i. Created in 2022, the Hui is a strategic collaboration composed of researchers, landowners, resource managers, foresters, economists, and representatives from government and private industry. We are dedicated to forest stewardship, ecological restoration, mālama 'āina, and sustainable land use in Hawai'i.

I am writing in **strong support of HCR 61**, urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands.

Healthy forests are foundational to Hawai'i's environmental, cultural, and economic resilience—protecting water resources, reducing erosion and wildfire risk, supporting native species, and strengthening local economies. Working landscapes that provide environmental, economic, and community benefits are imperative to Hawai'i's future resilience, yet we have few models and no scale.

Scaling reforestation requires coordinated investment in nursery capacity, workforce development, and policies that support landowners. HCR 61 recognizes this and advances a comprehensive, collaborative approach to restoring landscapes and building long-term resilience.

Having watched the steady decline of Molokai's landscapes, including parts of Kainalu, and their subsequent vulnerability – which was painfully evident during the March storms – I strongly support HCR 61.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

**HCR-61**

Submitted on: 4/16/2026 11:30:30 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/17/2026 1:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Seiichi Nagai	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony on HCR61

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.

DATE: 04/17/2026 1:15PM

ROOM: Room 224

COMMITTEE: Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Dear chair Inouye, vice chair Elefante and members of the committee,

My name is Seiichi Nagai, and I am a Hawai'i resident writing in support of H.C.R. No. 61.

Healthy forests are directly tied to Hawai'i's water security, ecosystem stability, and long-term resilience. Continued degradation from invasive species, feral ungulates, and historical land use changes makes reforestation a necessary priority.

This resolution appropriately focuses on the enabling conditions required for meaningful progress: investment in nursery capacity, workforce development, and coordination across public and private partners. Increasing the supply of high-quality native seedlings and strengthening partnerships with landowners and community organizations are practical steps that address real bottlenecks.

Reducing upfront costs for reforestation, including fencing and invasive species management, is also critical. Without addressing these barriers, large-scale restoration will remain limited.

H.C.R. No. 61 signals that reforestation is a State priority and supports a coordinated, scalable approach.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,  
Seiichi Nagai



**HCR-61**

Submitted on: 4/16/2026 12:22:46 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/17/2026 1:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Emilie Parry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Reforestation, particularly guided and informed by Indigenous Hawaiians and the traditional ecological knowledge and practices in which these islands are rooted, is crucial for the islands to mitigate the root causes and impacts of climate change, to protect the islands and reduce impact from diverse climate change aggravated disasters, to recover ecocultural health and wellbeing for all beings across the archipelago, from mauka to makai. Forests nourish and protect many beings across species, including humans. Forests reduce erosion, keep our air and waterways clean, and sequester, sink and store carbon. It is important that a shift towards forests and ecosystems health evolves Hawai'i toward (returns to) a mutually respectful and dynamically healthy whole system, which can encompass all facets of society, economy, relationality and culture. Ideally our policies, Malama/care and commitments can shift away from anthropocentric presumptions, toward the eco-centric interconnected understanding which benefits humans alongside all. Thank you.

Hawai'i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts

**Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Natalie Kurashima. I was born and raised in Hawai'i, am Native Hawaiian, and a graduate of the University of Hawai'i Botany PhD program. I serve on the State Forest Stewardship Committee and have dedicated my career to caring for Hawai'i's 'āina. I am a resident of Kealahou on Hawai'i Island and a member of the Reforestation Investment Hui of Hawai'i, a multidisciplinary collaboration working to scale reforestation across the state.

I am writing in **strong support of HCR 61**, which urges increased investment in the policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity needed to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands.

Healthy forests are foundational to Hawai'i's resilience—protecting water resources, reducing erosion and wildfire risk, supporting biodiversity, and strengthening local economies. Scaling reforestation requires coordinated investment in nursery capacity, workforce development, and landowner support, and HCR 61 advances this collaborative approach.

Through my work and time spent mauka in Kona with my 'ohana, including my young son, I have witnessed the accelerating degradation of both native ecosystems and ranchlands. Invasive species, new pests and pathogens such as the two-lined spittlebug and Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death, unmanaged ungulates, and increasing wildfire risk are placing growing pressure on these systems. I also hear directly from ranchers and landowners that these challenges are increasing costs, risks, and there are added liabilities, all threatening their ability to continue stewarding these lands. Yet these same stewards are deeply committed to mālama 'āina, caring for places that are essential to our water recharge, economic sustainability, biodiversity, and fire and flood resilience. Supporting them is critical to sustaining the landscapes and resources that all of Hawai'i depends on.

HCR 61 supports these stewards by expanding technical assistance, workforce pathways, funding, and alternative market opportunities such as sustainable native forestry and silvopasture, where native forestry is combined with grazing. In just two years, the Reforestation Investment Hui has already identified key data, policy, and financing needs, while also increased funding support for these collaborative priorities and advanced demonstration projects across public and private lands; this resolution would help align and scale these efforts.

By investing in reforestation today, we are not only restoring forests, we are securing Hawai'i's water, supporting those who steward our lands, and ensuring that future generations, like my son's, can inherit a thriving and resilient 'āina.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

Aloha,

Natalie Kurashima, Ph.D.

April 17, 2026

Hawaii State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT for HCR61, Relating to The Department of Land and Natural Resources

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Calista Ancog, and I am submitting testimony in support of HCR61. I am currently studying environmental science at Chaminade University, with the intention of entering into conservation work.

Growing up in Hawai'i, I was taught from an early age that our environment is deeply interconnected with our daily lives. Our native forests are more than just landscapes. They are vital to maintaining healthy watersheds, protecting biodiversity, and sustaining the natural balance that our communities rely on. When forests thrive, they capture and filter water, prevent erosion, and provide habitat for native species found nowhere else in the world. Their health directly affects the quality of our drinking water and the resilience of our islands in the face of climate change.

Through my work in conservation, I've grown closely acquainted with the Native Hawaiian land snails. Heavily dependent on native forests for shelter and food, their decline is linked to the degradation of Hawaii's forests. While they depend on forests for shelter, they play a crucial role in nutrient cycling, maintaining forest health.

Protecting our native forests is an investment in Hawai'i's future. Reforestation is the basis of all conservation work, this resolution will safeguard our water sources, biodiversity, and cultural practices. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HCR61.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Respectfully,  
Calista Ancog



**Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 61, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN POLICIES, INCENTIVES, WORKFORCE, AND NURSERY CAPACITY TO REFOREST HAWAII'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS.**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nicholas Wilhoite, I am a resident of Hilo on the Island of Hawaii, and I am writing to you in **strong support of HCR 61**, urging the Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with its partners to increase investment in policies, incentives, workforce, and nursery capacity to reforest Hawai'i's public and private lands.

Healthy forests are foundational to Hawai'i's environmental, cultural, and economic resilience—protecting water resources, reducing erosion and wildfire risk, supporting native species, and strengthening local economies.

Scaling reforestation requires coordinated investment in nursery capacity, workforce development, and policies that support landowners. HCR 61 recognizes this and advances a comprehensive, collaborative approach to restoring landscapes and building long-term resilience.

I write to you as a professional with over 15 years of boots on the ground experience working in the field of conservation, natural resource management, and native forest restoration in Hawaii. I have worked across state, federal, and private organizations. Through these experiences I have seen firsthand the immense value and impact that our collective efforts to protect and restore these ecosystems have had. I can also say that I have seen the stark challenges that our native landscapes are facing, and the undeniable need for sustained, landscape-scale investment into reforestation.

Investing in forest management and restoration has been shown to work time and again, and the returns on these investments are truly profound. Healthy forests are the living infrastructure of our islands, they improve our watershed function and increase the resilience of our landscapes to help us combat the increasing effects of climate change, drought, wildfire, and flooding. Without this critical infrastructure, our landscapes, near-shore ecosystems, and our communities will continue to bear the brunt of these growing challenges. For these reasons I urge you to support the passing of HCR 61 in an effort to build collective action and investment into reforestation in Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure,

Nicholas Wilhoite  
786 Kupulau Road

Hilo, HI 96720