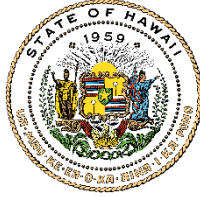


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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  
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FIRST DEPUTY

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

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ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

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

Before the House Committees on  
WATER AND LAND

Tuesday, April 7, 2026  
10:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of  
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 166  
And  
HOUSE RESOLUTION 156  
RELATING TO TREE PLANTING

House Concurrent Resolution 166 and House Resolution 156 request the Department of Land and Natural Resources to identify state lands in East O'ahu suitable for planting native Hawaiian trees. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure and offers comments.**

The Department encourages planting native tree species on State lands to benefit culture, biology, ecology, and climate. It urges students, schools, individuals, civic groups, and others to participate in tree planting and maintenance to help trees reach maturity. Support can include advocacy, donations, and volunteering. Milo (*Thespesia populnea*), a native species, is culturally significant in Hawai'i and thrives in full sun and dry conditions. The Department backs initiatives to plant Milo on public lands when suitable.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this resolution.



Aloha Tree Alliance (ATA) offers its strong support for HCR 166, urging Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to continue the identification and prioritization of state lands in East O‘ahu suitable for the planting of native Hawaiian trees.

ATA is a Honolulu-based nonprofit dedicated to ecological restoration, climate resilience, and the perpetuation of Native Hawaiian cultural practices through community-centered reforestation practice. Our work is rooted in aloha ‘āina , the deep, reciprocal relationship between people and the land they care for. We believe that restoring native trees to our ahupua‘a is not only an ecological imperative, but a cultural one.

East O‘ahu is home to rich native ecosystems and communities with a profound connection to the land. Identifying suitable state lands for native tree planting in this region would expand opportunities for reforestation, watershed protection, and the restoration of habitat for native wildlife. Equally important, it creates space for communities to gather, steward, and deepen their pilina with the ‘āina.

ATA has seen firsthand what becomes possible when land is made available for this purpose. Our recently blessed Kuli‘ou‘ou Hawaiian Hardwoods Community Forest, developed in partnership with DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), demonstrates the transformative potential of biocultural restoration on state lands. This site is already bringing together cultural practitioners, master artisans, families, and youth to plant and steward native hardwoods including Koa, Lama, ‘Uhi‘uhi, and the endangered Na‘u. It is a living example of what community-based natural resource management can look like in practice.

We encourage DLNR to approach this land identification process with a biocultural lens — prioritizing sites where native tree planting can serve both ecological, educational and cultural goals, and where communities can be meaningfully involved in long-term stewardship. Hawai‘i is a recognized global leader in community-based conservation, and this measure is an opportunity to deepen that legacy in East O‘ahu.

Aloha Tree Alliance stands ready to serve as a partner in this effort. We bring nursery capacity, volunteer networks, restoration expertise, and established relationships with cultural practitioners and conservation agencies. Together, we can contribute to something far greater than ourselves, a legacy of healthy land for the generations to come.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Chang  
Executive Director, Aloha Tree Alliance  
[info@alohatreealliance.org](mailto:info@alohatreealliance.org)

**HR-156**

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:47:49 PM

Testimony for WAL on 4/7/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert Fung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My son proposed the idea of planting native Hawaiian plants when he saw that the Hahaione ridge was brown and barren. Native Hawaiian plants are important for our local ecosystem, creating homes for native animals, and strengthening the land. Also, native Hawaiian plants would not only improve the beauty with greenery, but also it would restore the natural aesthetic and create a connection with the indigenous Hawaiian culture.

**HR-156**

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:54:23 PM

Testimony for WAL on 4/7/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chenoa Leopard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this request.

**HR-156**

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:55:32 PM

Testimony for WAL on 4/7/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Catherine Fung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I want to support this resolution to combat the invasive plants and keep our 'aina Hawaiian. Many plant species are endemic, found only in Hawaii, and are critical to preserving and maintaining our ecosystem. These species are highly threatened by invasive species and urban development.

**HR-156**

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 9:48:16 PM

Testimony for WAL on 4/7/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maya Gaudiano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee,

I stand in **support** of this resolution. As a member of the Maunalua community and that of East O‘ahu, I urge you to recognize the cultural and ecological importance of supporting our native Hawaiian trees. Restoring native species can help with erosion and flooding, both severe and pressing issues for our island communities. This resolution also encourages the committee to consider opportunities that may involve schools, community groups, and youth participants. As a senior in high school, I have worked hard throughout my time in school to help steward the native plants and animals in Hawaii through hands-on learning, and this resolution would contribute to continuing to support youth civic engagement and environmental stewardship

Sincerely,

Maya Gaudiano

**HR-156**

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 4:34:02 AM

Testimony for WAL on 4/7/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sarah Delgadillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

i support further research into planting trees and native trees in particular. This could help with wildfire protection, erosion protection and cooling. This could provide habitat for animals and birds.

Sarsh Delgadillo